



## **Distress vs. Eustress**

By Danielle Ross

“It’s not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it”

-Hans Selye

Stress is the body’s response to changing stimuli or stressors. It has been linked to the cause of several health issues including ulcers. But is all stress bad for you? The answer is “No.” Stress can actually be a good thing as long as it’s not causing a negative affect on you. In fact, Hans Selye introduced the concept of stress having two categories: distress and eustress. Distress is stress that negatively affects you and eustress is stress that has a positive effect on you. Eustress is what energizes us and motivates us to make a change. It gives us a positive outlook and makes us capable of overcoming obstacles and sickness. Take a second and think about what works as a eustress for you. Is it exercising, practicing mindfulness, watching Tedtalks, or listening to music? Below is a list of how distress and eustress impact you and some examples of the different type of stressors.

**How Distress Impacts You      Vs.      How Eustress Impacts You**

Lack of sleep	Increased energy
Fatigue	Motivated
Headaches	Increased focus
Mood changes	Creates excitement
Change in appetite	Increased self-efficacy
Shortness of breathe	Increased productivity
Chest pains	Positive outlook
Digestion issues	Increases resilience
Feeling overwhelmed	Lack of focus

**Examples of Distress Stressors      Vs.      Examples of Eustress Stressors**

Deadlines	Exercise
Financial crisis	Socializing
Death of a loved one	Mindfulness/Meditation
Relationship problems	Build relationship/friendship
Abuse or feeling neglected	Vacationing
Illness or an injury	Listening to happy music
Work problems	Achieving a goal
Worrying about someone else	Go to a spa

So how do you really know if your stressor is distress or eustress? Ask yourself a couple of questions. How do you respond to certain stressors? Do you let it overwhelm you or make use of the energy? Another way to think of stressors is as [“threats” or “challenges”](#). Does this particular stressor feel like a threat to your health or happiness at this current moment or is it a challenge to overcome for the better? If asking yourself these questions isn't enough for you to discover what your distress and eustress stressors are then [Positive Psychology](#) has a Eustress vs. Distress worksheet you can fill out also.

Stress and how it affects you really depends on your mindset. For example, let's say you have a financial crisis and can either completely freak out, letting it overwhelm you or you can

use that to motivate you to make a change for the better and increase your income. It isn't always easy to change your mindset but with practice it is possible.

### Ways to change your mindset

Focus on breathing

Talk to someone

Find ways to stay busy and distract you

Exercise

Get more sleep

Write

Think positively

Meditate

Define the worst case senerio (maybe current situation isn't that bad)

### **Sources:**

Good Stress, Bad Stress and Oxidative Stress: Insights from Anticipatory Cortisol Reactivity <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4028159/>

"Stress" is 80 Years Old: From Hans Selye Original Paper in 1936 to Recent Advances in GI Ulceration <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28641541/>

*Ted talk: How to make stress your friend | Kelly McGonigal*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU&feature=emb_title)