

EQ @ Home or School

MANAGING STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU

DS4.2: Gaining Mastery Over Stressors

How do thoughts affect stress levels?

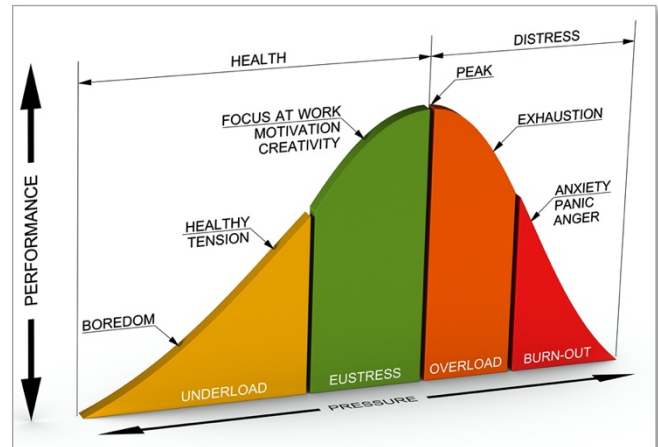
Our beliefs or “mindsets” can greatly affect our behavior and life experiences. For example, a belief that we can learn and “grow smarter” through effort increases our motivation to learn and our academic achievement. In a similar way, our beliefs about stress can affect how our body responds to stress—and ultimately how healthy we are—and even our academic performance.

A positive mindset about stress helps us understand that it can be stimulating and beneficial to us. Stress helps us focus our attention on things we want to accomplish or pursue and motivates us to work toward our goals. Good stress is often called “**eustress**.” You may experience it playing a sport, working on a deadline, setting a challenge or goal you care about, or trying something new for the first time.

Without some stress, we might not live up to our potential in what we can do and achieve. And without any stress, life might seem boring and unexciting—even depressing. Some people like the stress that adventures bring on. Adventure-seekers often say that it is when they feel “most alive.”

Studies show that eustress has many benefits. It can:

- Be motivational
- Enhance learning
- Boost brain function
- Be good for internal organs
- Get us sweating, which cleans out our skin pores



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Bad stress is called “**distress**.” This is usually ongoing stress that builds over time. It can include the stress of feeling unsafe and not having a sense of control over what happens in our life. We don’t have the chance to recover when our mind and body is in a constant threatened state. Yet how our mind thinks about stress affects how *much* distress we experience.



By understanding that eustress can build stronger brains and more optimistic outlooks, we can learn to seek the help we need and manage our stress level to make stress work for us, rather than against us.

✓ **Recommended resource:** Check out [Dr. Kelly McGonigal’s TedTalk: How to Make Stress Your Friend](#). Available on YouTube.

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EQ @ Home or School Video Review:

In the EQ @ Home or School video, part 2, Coach Rudy describes how our thoughts about a situation can influence our emotions, our actions, and the outcome.



THOUGHTS: What are your predominant thoughts about the coronavirus and the precautionary methods (e.g., quarantine, school closures)?

EMOTIONS: What emotions best describe how you're feeling about the COVID-19 effects? Check your top five.

anger	disappointment	hopeful	loneliness	pleasure
annoyance	envy	hopeless	melancholy	regret
anxiety	excitement	insecurity	optimism	sadness
caring	fear	irritation	panic	sorrow
contentment	happiness	isolation	pity	worry

PERCEPTION: To gain perspective about your ability to influence your emotions, it is better to say:

I feel _____ about the coronavirus.

Instead of:

The coronavirus makes me feel _____.

The first statement gives you more of a sense of power over your emotions (rather than helplessness). This dynamic is called "**emotional locus of control.**" By changing your perspective about the situation, you are better positioned to understand, accept, manage, and potentially reframe your emotions.

To help with a perception shift, list at least eight good things that have happened or could happen during quarantine time (e.g., extra sleep, time with family):

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 5) |
| 2) | 6) |
| 3) | 7) |
| 4) | 8) |

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How does stress affect you, personally?

Refer back to the "Perception of Stress" article, and apply it to everyday life. On average, do you experience no stress, eustress, or distress in the following areas? Categorize them below.

- Math schoolwork
- English schoolwork
- Social studies schoolwork
- Science schoolwork
- With friends
- With family
- At work (if applicable)
- In sports
- Giving a presentation
- Taking a test
- Coronavirus outbreak
- Add one: _____

NO STRESS	EUSTRESS	DISTRESS

What do you think? How are your thoughts influencing your stress level? Choose two of the items you put in the "DISTRESS" column above. What is a negative thought you might have about that subject? What is an alternative thought that would help you get in the eustress zone?

Negative thought causing **DISTRESS**:

- 1) Example: "I'm going to fail the math test this week."
- 2)
- 3)

Alternative thought to promote **EUSTRESS**:

- Example: "I'm going to try Khan Academy to figure out how to do these math problems."
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What did you learn? From this EQ @ Home or School video and article, summarize how you can have more mastery over your emotions. List at least three interesting facts.

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