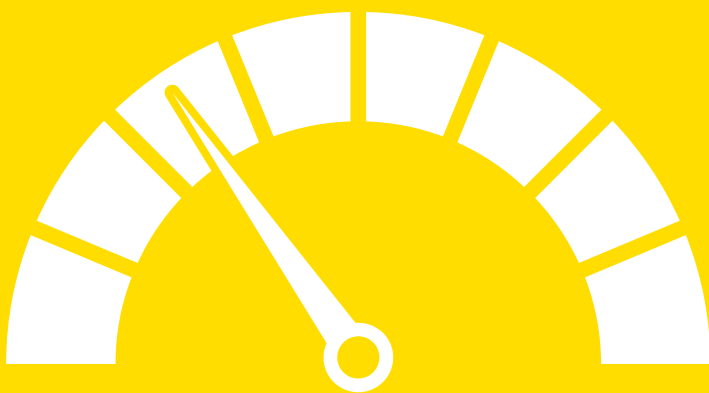


Stress: Good , Bad, and Toxic



“Stress can be something that makes you better, but it is a question of how much, how long and how you interpret or perceive it.” - Daniela Kaufer, associate professor of integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley.

GOOD STRESS



EVERYONE HAS STRESS (AND IT’S NORMAL)

Stress is an unavoidable reality for every person in any age, stage, or season of life.

It’s actually impossible to live a “stress free” life – and most of us don’t really want to, because stress isn’t only normal – it’s necessary.



SOME STRESS IS GOOD!

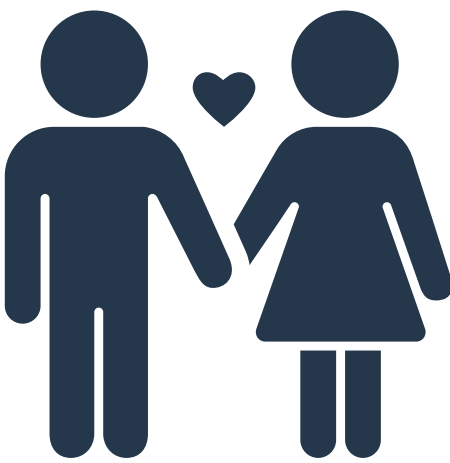
Study shows that stress that leads to a positive experience is actually beneficial for our lives.

EUSTRESS refers to stress that leads to a positive response. It tends to be short-term and often feels exciting. People perceive this type of stress as manageable and even motivating.



GOOD STRESS LEADS TO

- A sense of accomplishment
- Positive self-worth/self-esteem
- Resiliency
- A hope focused outlook on life



EXAMPLES OF GOOD STRESS

- A first date
- A challenging work opportunity or problem
- A new job
- Buying a home
- Getting married
- Exam season



ADD GOOD STRESS

- Competitive sports
- New and challenging hobbies
- Setting goals for mind, body, and soul (learning a new language, getting an advanced degree or certification, training for a marathon)



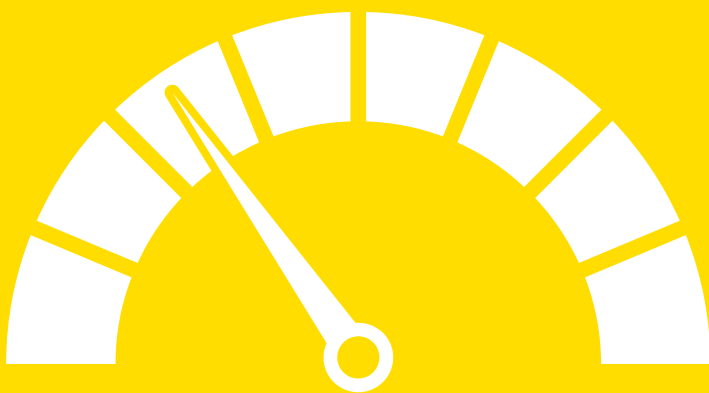
GOOD STRESS FEELS LIKE BAD STRESS SOMETIMES

Physically, eustress can often resemble distress in many ways. You might feel nervous; your heart might pound; your thoughts might race. The difference is how these physical sensations are perceived.

EMBRACE THE GOOD

- How do I see my stress?
- Do I love a challenge?
- Does my job, life, family give me a sense of challenge – purpose – passion and meaning?
- Am I bored? If so, what hobbies, activities, problems and opportunities can I add or embrace to experience more positive and good stress in my life.

Stress: Good , Bad, and Toxic



“Stress can be something that makes you better, but it is a question of how much, how long and how you interpret or perceive it.” - Daniela Kaufer, associate professor of integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley.

BAD STRESS



THE TERRIBLE TOO’S (TOO MUCH - GREAT - LONG)

Any stress (from positive or negative circumstances) can become bad if the stress is persistent, overwhelming, unmanageable, and/or suddenly serious.

Stress has a cumulative and compound effect and stress that is typically manageable can move to unmanageable when life circumstances change.



STRESS CHEMICALS

Our brains and bodies can and will adjust to stress hormones and chemicals (adrenaline, cortisol – these chemicals/hormones are responsible for physiological and neurological response to challenges – they make us stronger, faster, more alert and focused)

- o In low and appropriate amounts – they are good
- o In high or inappropriate amounts – they are not



TOO MUCH CORTISOL

Cortisol – which stimulates the brain for focus and alertness, is also responsible for regulating the brain and telling our brain to calm down – in small amounts it is amazing – in large amounts it is toxic (it can shrink the prefrontal lobes by 20%) and can completely disrupt neurological growth and development.



WHERE IT LEADS

Essentially – if we are in stress for long and extensive periods of time – we get used to it – our brains and bodies adjust and we start to operate in and even create highly stressful environments to feel “normal” – all the while doing damage to our mind, body, and soul.



RECORD YOUR STRESSORS

Are there any stressors that you can remove from your life without creating new or more stress?

Circle them – consider what you can do to eliminate them.

Reflect on, identify, and record coping skills and strategies that you use to tolerate the stress (ex. Talk with a trusted friend, enjoy a glass of wine/beer/beverage, go for a walk, spend time with family, spend time alone, read, pray, exercise...etc.)

Are your coping skills sufficient for the level of stressors and terrible “toos”?

If yes – are you currently utilizing them regularly? If not, what is your plan to do so?

If no – it may be time to implement some new skills and seek help...

WORK	HOME	FAMILY	LIFE/OTHER

- o Plant your feet firmly on the ground (standing or sitting) and take 2-3minutes to be still and grounded – Do this between tasks and during breaks in the day
- o Breath in through your nose and out through your mouth for 4.5seconds for a minimum of 3minutes – in a relatively quiet and distraction free space
- o Place your hands in a bowl or sink full of water for 2-3 minutes and focus on how the water feels (temperature, sensation)
- o Look for 5 objects in your room/office area | Listen for 4 unique sounds | Touch 3 items | Say 2 words that you bring you joy |Taste 1 food or beverage that is satisfying
- o **Be Mindful of Vices and Devices** | Drinking | Smoking | Shopping | Binge watching | These can be helpful in small amounts – but too much can lead to avoidance and excess
- o Interacting with a **digital device** is a form of escape – but it actually neurologically stimulates and never gives the brain a break (PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY)

Stress: Good, Bad, and Toxic



“Stress can be something that makes you better, but it is a question of how much, how long and how you interpret or perceive it.” - Daniela Kaufer, associate professor of integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Toxic Stress



TOXIC STRESS - TRAUMA

A type of stress that comes from experiences that leave us in a state of hurt, horror, hopelessness, and powerlessness.

Toxic stress can actually change the patterns and structures of the brain: When we experiences toxic stress, the brain responds by flooding the body with stress-related chemicals.



TRAUMA IS A RESPONSE

Our brain perceives some kind of threat or danger and floods the body with the chemicals necessary for survival. The buildup of stress chemicals are so intense that it can cause permanent, and irreversible, neurological damage... In adulthood this is a sad and challenging reality, in childhood this can be catastrophic to human development.



EXAMPLES OF TOXIC STRESS

- A sudden and/or tragic loss or accident
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Exposure or Experience to/with Intense Mental illness
- Exposure or Experience to/with Divorce
- Exposure or Experience to/with Substance Abuse
- Prolonged Exposure or Experience to/with any or all of the list above (Vicarious Trauma/Compassion Fatigue)
- Prolonged Loss of Agency (the ability to choose or control one's environment and day-to-day actions, the belief and feeling of personal autonomy and freedom, the feeling of physical and emotional safety in an environment).



HEALING FROM TOXIC STRESS

- When exposed to toxic stress the most important step is seeking professional help
 - Talk with a coach, counselor, trained professional
 - Research shows that 3-4 session with a trained professional decreases symptoms of stress and depression by 50%
 - Utilize benefits from Counseling Partnerships | Church Resources
- Don't suffer in silence
 - Say something
 - Share honestly with trusted people (you don't have to tell everyone everything – but someone (besides you) should know everything)
 - If you have persistent nightmares, destructive thoughts, or explosive anger – get help right away
- Be patient with the process
 - It can take years to work through significant trauma
 - Set reasonable goals for your healing and hold reasonable expectations for yourself
 - Our bodies and brains are amazing creations – we can grow and change and overcome a lot – but it takes time – don't give up
- 75% of people who experience toxic stress exhibit post traumatic growth

“Whatever You’re Going Through, Don’t Go Through It Alone...”



Josh Zoerhof, MA, LLPC
616.795.3132