



## Eustress and Distress

Lyndsay T. Wilson 26.2K reads

The word "stress" is often regarded as negative, so you may be surprised to learn that not all stress is bad for you. While some types of stress may leave you feeling demotivated and anxious, others could actually encourage you to improve your life.

Theorist Hans Selye found it necessary to distinguish between two main types of worry – eustress (or "good stress") and distress (or "bad stress"). In keeping with the understanding that a moderate amount of worry in daily life is not only normal but perfectly adaptive, Selye suggested a way to understand different kinds of pressure an individual can face.

**EXPLORABLE**  
*Quiz Time!*

Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2

Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2

Quiz: Flags in Europe

[See all quizzes =>](#)

## When Is a Situation Stressful?

Crucially, this is not a characteristic of the stimulus itself, but rather a quality in the way that an individual appraises and copes with a situation. Therefore, a situation can be classed as stressful or distressing if an individual lacks the psychological resources to deal with it, regardless of how the stimulus seems to others.

## Positive Stress - Eustress

Eustress is any kind of challenging stimulus that stresses the individual but with the result that they feel energized, motivated or compelled to respond or make some kind of beneficial action

for themselves.

## **How Can Eustress Impact Your Life?**

Eustress is therefore something like the stress of healthy competition/rivalry, the manageable fear of an impending exam (which causes the person to study more) or a "wake up call" that motivates an individual to remove themselves from a dangerous situation or make radical changes to their lifestyle. In other words, the result of eustress is directly or indirectly positive.

## **Negative Stress**

Distress, on the other hand, is when stress, trauma, anxiety and worry are not productive and instead of inspiring healthful action, cause the person to shut down. Stress that paralyzes a person in fear, interferes with their ability to think clearly, work, interact with others or fulfil their obligations in daily life is not helpful stress. When the result is less action, the stress is directly or indirectly negative and therefore a problem.

## **What About You?**

What do you think? Does this theory ring true when you think about your own worry?

---

**Source URL:** <https://explorable.com/e/eustress-and-distress>