# The Good Stress: How Eustress Helps You Grow

by[Jamie Wiebe](https://www.talkspace.com/blog/author/jamie-wiebe/%22%20%5Co%20%22View%20all%20posts%20by%20Jamie%20Wiebe) Oct 05, 2019--3 minute read

[Americans are more stressed than ever](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/do-the-right-thing/201812/americans-are-stressed-out-and-it-is-getting-worse) — but if you’re a glass-half-full kind of person, that statistic might not be so terrifying. There are two types of stress: the awful, normal stress that leads to late-night hair-tearing sessions, and **eustress**, or good stress.

Good [stress](https://www.talkspace.com/blog/category/stress/)? It’s not as wild as you think. If you’re a scary movie fan, you know the feeling: The killer is right around the corner, the last protagonist alive is hiding behind the tree, and your heart is pounding. Yes, you’re stressed. You’re also excited, intrigued, and eager to keep watching.

You’ll experience bouts of eustress throughout your life, and it’s easy to mistake them for regular distress. Perhaps you’re about to [start your first year at college](https://www.talkspace.com/blog/college-what-i-wish-i-knew/). Sure, you’re petrified; You’ll be living alone in a new place where you know no one.

Eustress pushes you to new heights. It encourages you to dive into new career experiences, finish that tough workout, and take on that major renovation project.

Here’s what you need to know about stress’s less-scary side.

How is Eustress Good For You?

No, eustress doesn’t always feel good. You’re preoccupied, your heart’s pounding, and you can *feel* the adrenaline in your veins. But in reality, it’s good for you.

Eustress drives you to achieve better things. Imagine you’ve just been rejected by a person you really wanted to date. Yes, that’s stressful — but it also encourages you to improve yourself, reevaluate your approach, and search for the silver lining.

It’s also key to developing [resilience](https://www.talkspace.com/blog/category/resilience/), which is super-important for your emotional health. For most of us, resilience isn’t something we’re born with. It’s something we develop through times of struggle — times of *eustress*. Living through hard days teaches us how to survive hard days. Eustress is vital to that process.

It’s also essential for our physical wellbeing. Anxious about that tough workout? Eustress powers you through. Sure, it’s difficult, but no one got biceps by lazing on the couch.

**Examples of Eustress**

Eustress manifests in a number of different arenas. Here are some examples, so you can start identifying it in your own life:

* **Traveling.**Dealing with international flights and unfamiliar customs can be stressful, but the end result is worth the pain. These new experiences shape your worldview and expand your mind.
* **Life changes.** Bride and grooms might pause on their wedding day and think, “This is a happy time. Why am I stressed?” Similarly, new parents are notoriously overwhelmed. Big life changes inherently spark eustress — but lead to great things.
* **New hobbies.** We’ve all felt stressed and embarrassed when starting something new — like our first art class or language lesson. Pushing through that feeling teaches you new skills and keeps your brain active.

**How Can I Tell if it’s Eustress or Distress?**

Eustress is good, but *di*stress can be bad for you. Cumulative negative stress can affect your physical wellbeing and increase your risk for anxiety and depression. But how can you tell if you’re experiencing eustress or distress?

Start by thinking of events in terms of “threats” and “challenges.” Undeniably, a threat is a bad thing — like an abusive relationship, a failing grade, or a family member’s illness. These events are distressing, and over a prolonged period of time, they can lead to all the negative ramifications of distress.

Eustress indicates a challenge, like a hard workout, a new language, a promotion, or a brand-new house. Challenges are difficult, and will definitely raise your hackles momentarily, but they can be *overcome*.

Remember that distress can turn into eustress, if you have the right mindset. No, you aren’t expected to immediately transform every setback into a challenge — no one’s blaming you if you’re feeling legitimately distressed for a few weeks after losing your job. It’s what comes after those few weeks that’s important. *Job loss* becomes a *job hunt*, and you’ve gone from distress to eustress. The threat came and passed, and now you’re fighting a challenge on the other side.

Avoiding stress may come naturally, but consider leaning *into* eustress. Positive stress encourages positive growth — so next time you feel your heartbeat pounding, think about how the sensation can help you learn.

**HOMEWORK**

I want you to look at our current situation with the CoVid 19 disease and our shelter in place. Obviously it has caused a lot of distress for a majority of people. In a minimum of 200 words, what has been the most stressful thing(s) that you and/or your family has had to deal with? In looking at that distress, how might you look at that situation and turn that around into a challenge, or a eustress? What have been some of the highlights, or good things, to come from all of this? And finally, what things are you looking forward to being able to do once our lives return to “normal”? Please write at your grade level. I will be grading these using the 6 Traits of Writing. Please don’t waste my time!