



# Mindset Challenge:

## Pros and Cons of Stress

### EXPLORE

Watch Kelly McGonigal's Ted Talk: How to Make Stress Your Friend, read the pros and cons of stress below and discuss the pros and cons of stress in your life.

### DISCUSS

#### How to Make Stress Your Friend

List your own pros and cons of stress in your own life. How do you view stress? Do I believe stress is harmful and should be avoided? Or do I believe that stress is helpful and should be accepted and embraced? How does my view of stress affect me? How might it affect my outlook and performance if I change my view?

| Pros of Stress  | Cons of Stress   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focuses attention</li><li>• Heightens senses to prepare for action</li><li>• Can increase motivation and mobilize energy</li><li>• Increases oxytocin increasing desire to connect to others for help</li><li>• Can dampen fear and increase courage</li><li>• Helps the brain learn and grow</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Causes the release of cortisol resulting in feeling 'on edge'</li><li>• Can cause muscle tension and fatigue</li><li>• Can cause restlessness and trouble sleeping</li><li>• Can lead to avoidant coping behavior</li><li>• May lead to feeling overwhelming and shutting down</li></ul> |

\*McGonigal. (2016). The Upside of Stress: Why Stress Is Good for You, and How to Get Good at It

#### Creating a New Stress Mindset

A mindset is a frame of mind or a collection of thoughts and beliefs about something. Mindsets are powerful because they shape how you make sense of the world and affect your behavior and attitudes. Research indicates that people who have a positive mindset about stress are less depressed, more productive, have more energy, have less health problems, and more satisfied with life. Which mindset do you have?

| Mindset 1   | Mindset 2   |
|---|---|
| Stress is harmful. I should focus on getting rid of stress and distract myself from it. | Stress can be helpful. I should accept that stressful events are real and plan strategies for dealing with stress |

### CHALLENGE

Think about a recent event that was stressful. What were the sensations in your body? Did your stress response give you more energy? Did you have the impulse to connect to others for help? What were you motivated to do? What emotions did you have before, during, and after? How did you view your reactions? Did you see them negatively? Choose to rethink your reactions in a positive light, seeing how your body helped you. Notice the different responses in your feelings, thoughts, and reactions regarding your stress response.