



# RETHINKING *stress*

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rethinking how you choose to respond to stress



# Rethinking How You Choose to Respond to Stress

## **Fight or Flight** → *Threat Response*

- Cortisol, Adrenaline
- Liver dumps fat and sugar into the bloodstream for fuel to mobilize resources for energy
- Breathing deepens and heart rate speeds up to deliver oxygen and energy quickly to the brain and muscles
- Self-survival

## **Performance Stress** → *Challenge Response*

- Higher level of DHEA, which lets you recover and learn from stress
- Focused, but not fearful (e.g., a state of “flow”)
- Helps the brain learn, grow and integrate experiences

## **Prosocial stress** → *Tend-and-Befriend Response*

- Primarily driven by the hormone oxytocin (“cuddle or love” hormone)
- Motivates you to protect those you care about
- Dampens fear and increases courage
- Encourages you to seek social support

## **MINDSET CHALLENGES**

- When you experience the normal signs of stress (e.g., racing heart, increased respiration, sweaty palms), pause to consider two things: 1) your body is signaling to you that this is something that’s IMPORTANT (high stakes) and 2) this is your body’s way of giving you the energy to rise and meet the challenge! Research has shown that viewing stress as helpful has many positive outcomes, both physically and psychologically.
- Think of **problems** as **challenges** not **threats**.



The Balanced Student

# What is Your Stress Mindset?

A *mindset* is an established set of one's beliefs, attitudes and assumptions.

## **Mindset 1: *Stress is Harmful***

- Experiencing stress depletes my health and vitality.
- Experiencing stress debilitates my performance and productivity.
- Experiencing stress inhibits my learning and growth.
- The effects of stress are negative and should be avoided.

## **Mindset 2: *Stress is Enhancing***

- Experiencing stress improves my health and vitality.
- Experiencing stress enhances my performance and productivity.
- Experiencing stress facilitates my learning and growth.
- The effects of stress are positive and should be utilized.

## **Steps to cultivate a new mindset**

1. Acknowledge stress when you experience it.
2. Welcome stress by recognizing that it's a response to something you care about.
3. Make use of the energy that stress gives you. Don't waste energy trying to manage your stress.
4. Try to practice this at least once a day.

## **MINDSET MINDFULNESS**

- When you acknowledge your stress, ask yourself what part of the stress response you need the most. Is it to fight, escape, engage, connect, find meaning or grow? Because stress is a biological state designed to help you learn from experience, focusing on how you *want* to respond can shift your biology to support you.