

# Stress: Good, Bad and Ugly

By Dr. David McDeavitt



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Dr. McDeavitt received a Bachelor of Science in health and physical education from Slippery Rock University and a Master of Education, K-12 Principal Certification and Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility from Gannon University. He earned his doctorate through the Educational Leadership Doctoral Degree program at Drexel University.

Stress and the administrator's role are synonymous. A recent article that was written for *Education Week* showed that nearly half of principals leave their position after three years (Superville, 2019). Nearly one in five principals leave their school each year, with the average building leader's tenure lasting about four years, says a new report from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2020).

The stress associated with the principal position is the root cause of the departures. There is no real good way to reduce the stress associated with this position, but there are ways to manage the stress and remain healthy and effective. This process starts with knowing how to differentiate between good stress and bad stress.

As I am sure you are all aware, there are many negative effects that stress and worry has on our wellbeing. Khansarie, Murgu and Faith (1990) illustrate that stress, distress and notably the affective stress are associated with immunosuppression. More recent studies clearly show that there is a strong relationship between stress and several disorders that include inflammation, metabolic, reproductive and autoimmune diseases (Çakmur, 2020). Many of us can easily identify with how a negative stressor affects our emotions, and on the contrary, the right amount of good stress or *eustress* may benefit our health, cognition and wellbeing.

The intensity of the stressor is a key factor in determining the stress response, and an individual's mindset could be a resource in endorsing eustress. Moreover, a stress-is-enhancing (SIE) mindset advocates the belief that experiencing stress has enhancing consequences for performance, while a stress-is-debilitating (SID) mindset appraises these consequences to be debilitating (Bosman, 2019). The SIE mindset is linked to eustress, which is considered a positive response toward our overall wellbeing.

Seeger (2019) believes eustress is a healthy, positive and constructive response to a stressful event and can actually improve performance, health and well-being. Items such as a board meeting could be considered a eustress that would be enough to enhance the preparation period that will result in a successful meeting.

To promote the capacity to handle stress in a positive way, we should rise early in the morning and exercise. This is one way to enhance our well-being and provide a roadway to cope with stressful situations during the day. Morning exercise coupled with a nutritional plan comprised of fresh food and lean proteins help to promote healthy cells in the body are used to combat stress and the release of cortisone.

Even though taking care of yourself is important and can actually improve overall effectiveness on the job, it is simply hard to accomplish. Research has shown ways to build wellness into the work and family balance; start by focusing on boosting physical, emotional and cognitive energy through exercise and a balanced diet (Çakmur, 2020).

## Ideas for increasing your ability to reduce stress are below:

- **Limit multitasking:** Research shows that multi-tasking actually diminishes productivity.
- **Healthy rituals:** Set some healthy rituals and stick to them, go to bed at the same time each night.



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- **Stop unhealthy lifestyle factors:** Pick one thing and STOP doing it.
- **Set and stick to a schedule:** Learn how to delegate a committee role to someone else.
- **Make meetings matter:** Often, meetings do not start on time and last too long. Make it a point to start on time and keep all meetings under an hour.
- **Relationships matter:** Greet students and staff every morning with a big smile.
- **Relax:** Finding a good book, going for a walk and spending time with family are all good suggestions for reducing stress.

For additional information, contact Dr. McDeavitt at [david.mcdeavitt@acvdsd.org](mailto:david.mcdeavitt@acvdsd.org)

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## Submit Your Video to “School Spotlight”

The PA Principals Association has announced a new initiative exclusive to members. The **“School Spotlight”** will be a regular feature on the new **YouTube channel**. The idea behind this is to give our members the chance to do something that they normally don't do... brag! There are so many amazing programs being implemented across Pennsylvania that go unnoticed. These videos will put the spotlight on the many amazing initiatives that are helping our students. **Below you will find a link for directions on how to record and submit a video of your own.**



Remember, we want anything that you feel is helping your students grow academically, socially or physically. *So, get out there and record a video of what your staff and students are doing!* **Please see the link below for instructions on how to submit a video.**

**How to submit a video:** [www.tinyurl.com/bgwxpurb](http://www.tinyurl.com/bgwxpurb)

**April School Spotlight Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LUMQCpEtiM>  
*(Klinger Middle School's “Free Farmers Market” - Sponsored by Lexia Learning)*

**Subscribe to our YouTube Channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiy1vfKVYzkQ2AGmmhSBc3A>

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