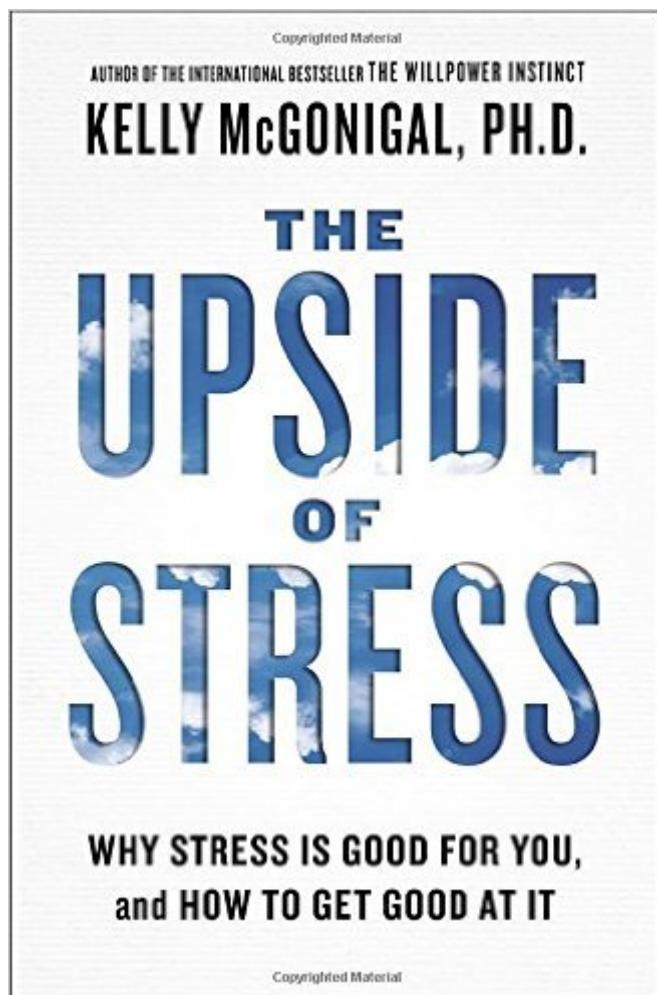


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# The Upside Of Stress: Why Stress Is Good For You, And How To Get Good At It



## Synopsis

Drawing from groundbreaking research, psychologist and award-winning teacher Kelly McGonigal, PhD, offers a surprising new view of stress—“one that reveals the upside of stress, and shows us exactly how to capitalize on its benefits. You hear it all the time: stress causes heart disease; stress causes insomnia; stress is bad for you! But what if changing how you think about stress could make you happier, healthier, and better able to reach your goals? Combining exciting new research on resilience and mindset, Kelly McGonigal, PhD, proves that undergoing stress is not bad for you; it is undergoing stress while believing that stress is bad for you that makes it harmful. In fact, stress has many benefits, from giving us greater focus and energy, to strengthening our personal relationships. McGonigal shows readers how to cultivate a mindset that embraces stress, and activate the brain’s natural ability to learn from challenging experiences. Both practical and life-changing, *The Upside of Stress* is not a guide to getting rid of stress, but a toolkit for getting better at it—“by understanding, accepting, and leveraging it to your advantage.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Avery; Reprint edition (May 10, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1101982934

ISBN-13: 978-1101982938

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (82 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #17,941 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #77 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Applied Psychology #95 in Books > Self-Help > Stress Management #1486 in Books > Science & Math

## Customer Reviews

Sometimes, you need 3.5 stars. The book flowed as follows: Part 1, Rethink Stress - Chap 1: McGonigal works to show that you can change an established mindset, and that changing said mindset leads to positive outcomes (in relation to stress). She backs this stuff up with lots of research, which is a big plus in my view and made the chapter interesting to read. Lastly, she defines what a “changed mindset” looks like in relation to stress. She’s telling us that our view shouldn’t be that stress is all-good or that stress is all-bad, but that stress is a little of both. Overall,

solid chapter. - Chap 2: Reframing stress. Why stress is actually not bad for you, and why stress can be harnessed and translated into good. Research cited: young monkeys separated from their mothers actually had bigger prefrontal cortices (making them more resilient). More surprising research: Men who are stressed out (contestants on a game show) had unusually high rates of trust and cooperation - around 75%. "Stress made the men prosocial. The stronger their hearts' response to stress, the more altruistic they became." Surprising and informative. - Chap 3: A meaningful life is a stressful life. That's the title and, frankly, a good summary of this chapter. This is the point at which the book started to get a bit more choppy for me. Chapter three felt like chapter 2, continued. I underlined this sentence: "The most meaningful challenges in your life will come with a few dark nights." That rings absolutely true. However, is it really materially different from saying that stress can be good for us? I don't think this section needed to be a standalone chapter.

This book was disappointing. I enjoyed McGonigal's first book on willpower. However I have to agree with the other reviewer who generously described the book as excessively descriptive (Code for tedious and repetitious). I usually enjoy research, but in this book it is layered on so thick, that I kept finding myself skimming through the research and looking for the next pearl of wisdom - which were few and far between. I'm not sure how a person who isn't interested in research would be able to persevere? In one of my breaks from the book (which were many) I had a closer look at some of the research quoted. For example early on in the book McGonigal references research by Alia Crum (McGonigal's pinup girl for mindsets) suggesting that a milkshake that was labelled as having high calories resulted in people feeling fuller (they had lower levels of ghrelin) than the same milkshake labelled as having low calories. The problem is if you read the research it says "This study did not find any significant differences with respect to subjective hunger regardless of mindset" I then checked out more of Crum's research referenced by McGonigal - this one linking a "stress is good" mindset to cortisol response. And again the research found no significant relationship between cortisol and the type of stress mindset. It seems that McGonigal may be inadvertently selectively quoting her research to prove her point. This piqued my interest and I started to explore the research on mindsets - and what I found is that the research is mixed at best. More often than not the research design is poor, with lots of confounding factors, and often not replicated when tested in the real world.

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