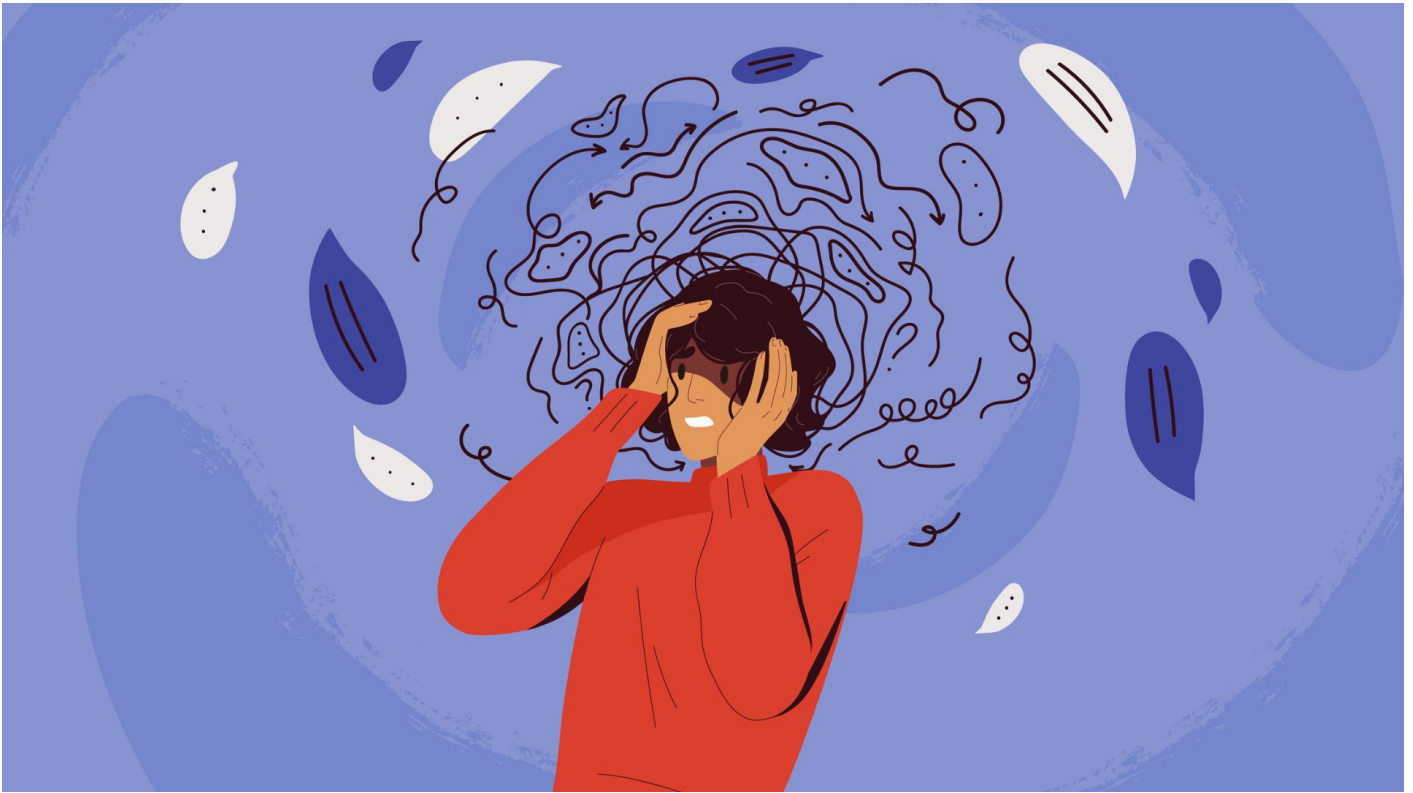


Stressed out? Learn how to transform it into something positive



While **most people define stress** as a list of **things they don't want in their lives**, Stanford University professor and health psychologist **Kelly McGonigal** said this isn't necessarily true.

In conversation with Rosalinda Ballesteros, Director of the **Institute of Integral Wellbeing Sciences**, McGonigal expressed the need to **view stress as a phenomenon that brings out our strengths**, rather than our weaknesses.

*"Stress is what crops up when the things that matter to us are at stake, and that **brings out strengths** that are sometimes **hidden** within us, **such as concentration and courage**,"* explained the expert.

Through Kelly McGonigal's participation in Tecmilenio's [Wellbeing 360](#), CONECTA shares tips on how to **change your perception of stress and how to use it to your advantage**.



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7 tips for accepting stress in your life and transforming it

To create a more positive view of what stress is and incorporate it into day-to-day life, the **health psychologist** shared seven key tips.

*“These **ways of accepting and coping with stress** can be used by **those suffering from extreme stress** caused by loss or other serious situations, as well as by those who experience short-term or moderate stress in their day-to-day,”* said McGonigal.

1. Change your view of stress into a proactive one.

According to the academic, rethinking the way we perceive stress is the first step to **incorporating it into our toolbox** for a fulfilling life.

*“Looking at stress as more than the things we’re worried about helps us to use it as a **reminder of everything we value** and don’t want to lose,”* Kelly said.

She suggests accepting negative experiences as part of your stress response and **mentally turning them into something positive**, remembering how you’re getting closer to a goal, how much you care about something, and what you’re doing to protect it.

2. Use stress as a reminder that you’re not alone.

The speaker mentioned that **feelings of loneliness and isolation** are one of the **negative effects** most commonly **associated with stress**.

*“Reaching out to others allows us to work on what we call **the biology of trust**, and that reminds us that we have a **support network to help us achieve anything**,” she said.*

In order to **avoid loneliness when stressed** and to be able to turn to others, Kelly suggests working on our sense of interdependence and recognizing that many of our **challenges will require outside help** and that is a shared experience.



3. Remember what you learned from past experiences.

As far as McGonigal is concerned, **memory can be a powerful tool for remembering stress** and our response to it **in a more positive light**.

*“The physical responses to stress that we have experienced, such as **sweaty palms or nausea**, can be **taken as signs that we are ready to face another challenge**,” reflected the expert.*

In this case, the psychologist suggests **taking our body’s stress signals** as a **constant reminder of our ability and interest** in what caused or is causing stress.

*“Reaching out to others allows us to work on the **biology of trust** and reminds us that we have a **support network to help us achieve anything**.”*

4. Turn stress into a source of empowerment.

While stress can be associated with unpleasant emotions, McGonigal explains that this phenomenon can lead us to feeling **more emotionally empowered**.

*“The **biochemistry that occurs in moments of stress** can make us more predisposed to learning, producing adrenaline, and even to **feeling that extra confidence**,”* she explained.

Kelly suggests taking advantage of **“butterflies in the stomach”** in these situations and using this **bodily reaction to stress** as part of a sense of empowerment in whatever it is that you’re doing instead of blocking it out.



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5. Don't be embarrassed to “practice” for stress.

Contrary to what others may think, the Stanford professor explained that **practicing our responses to situations** we know cause us stress can **help us deal with it** when it comes.

*“Thinking about the things we’ll say, how a certain conversation will go, what will come up in an exam, are situations that **prepare us mentally and physically** for those moments,”* she reflected.

Kelly McGonigal points out that thinking about possible scenarios, ways to deal with situations that haven't occurred, and even putting ourselves through mental simulations can help us to be **better prepared and more confident when handling moments of stress.**

6. Observe and prioritize what matters the most in the moment.

Although our stress response can cause us to experience a feeling of “**tunnel vision,**” the expert says **that this is not necessarily a bad thing.**

Taking a moment to carefully observe our thoughts and **put them in order of priority** is something that doesn't just **help us deal with stress,** but also stems from it, the panelist said.

“It's not just about looking for joy but using joy as a resource for resistance against despair.”

*“It may seem counterproductive but **focusing on just one** thing can give us the opportunity to **organize our ideas** and establish what we're able to focus on,” she explained.*

7. Don't be afraid to feel joy to balance out stress.

Although she admitted this is a point that she hadn't previously considered essential, she now says that joy is essential for both stress and mental health.

*“It's not just about looking for joy but **using joy as a resource for resistance against the despair** that stressful situations can bring. It's a way of choosing hope and connection with others,” she emphasized.*

According to the health expert, things such as **spending time with friends and family, participating in our hobbies, and listening to music,** are ways of actively practicing this type of joy.



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More about Wellbeing 360

Wellbeing 360 is an annual event organized by Tecmilenio's **Institute of Integral Wellbeing Sciences**.

Taking part are international experts on global wellbeing issues such as Raj Raghunathan, Robert Quinn, Karen Reivich, and Kelly McGonigal.

McGonigal is known for her work on translating insights from psychology and neuroscience into **practical strategies that support health and wellbeing**.

She has earned a reputation as an advocate on the **topic of self-compassion and mindfulness** as **stress-coping strategies**.

The 10th edition of **Wellbeing 360**, which was previously known as the International Forum of Happiness Sciences, was held in a hybrid format from October 17 to 20, 2022.

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