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# Parent Academy: Distress or Eustress?

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Mr. Drew Krause, Principal, Ridge High School

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR OUR 2019

*Parent Academy*  
Wednesday February 27th  
7:00-8:00pm  
Location WAMS Auditorium

## DISTRESS OR EUSTRESS?

Join us for a discussion about healthy stress, and how you can support your children with managing stressors.

All parents are encouraged to attend.

"When you choose to view your stress response as helpful, you create the biology of courage."

- Kelly McGonigal,  
Stanford Health  
Psychologist and Lecturer



# This Evening's Program

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## **Part I: Introducing the Parent Academy Series**

- Three part series this spring
- Challenge Success

## **Part II: The Purpose of this Call to Conversation**

- Defining Distress and Eustress
- What this conversation is not.
- The view from inside & larger societal trends.

## **Part III: Highlighting Key Tenets of “The Upside of Stress” by Kelly McGonigal, PhD.**

- **Transforming Stress**
  - Alternative mindset: rise to the challenge, connect with others, learn and grow.
- **Connecting with Others**
  - Finding meaning in stress through our social connections

## **Part IV: Identify Key Resources for Times of Distress**



# *Part I: Introduction to the Parent Academy Series*



## *Three Part Series: Spring 2019*

1. Distress or Eustress? Managing Healthy Stress
2. Effective Study Habits, March 27th, 7pm
3. Debunking the College Myth, April 24th, 7pm

**Each session features Bernards Township staff, personalized to our school community. All are welcome to attend.**



# Challenge Success

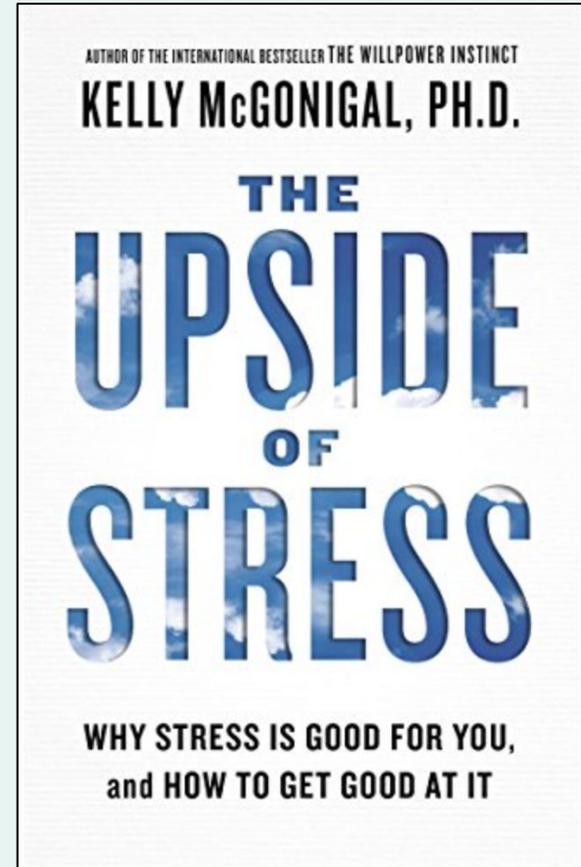
## **Challenge Success: Stanford University Graduate School of Education**

- Organization that provides schools and families with “*information and strategies they need to create a more balanced and academically fulfilling life for their kids.*”
- They work with schools and families on a variety of challenges:
  - They support schools to develop best practices and policies in areas such as curriculum, assessment, homework, school schedule, and a healthy school climate.
  - They provide support to parents by giving them the tools to help their children regain their balance, strengthen their sense of self, increase their motivation and critical thinking skills, and learn how to deal effectively with the inevitable challenges of life.

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## *Source of this conversation.*

**“The Upside of Stress”  
By Kelly McGonigal, PhD  
Psychologist, Stanford University**





# *Part II: The Purpose of this Call to Conversation*



# Defining Distress and Eustress

- Distress exists and its harmful effects are real.
- Tonight we are discussing an alternative viewpoint about stress.
- This is not “preaching”, we want to engage in dialogue with you.
- Research indicates that the simple exposure to an alternative perspective can forever change how you view a concept, according to *The Upside of Stress*
- Tonight we are sharing this perspective.
- As we move along, consider:
  - How might this apply to you?
  - How might you consider this new perspective the next time you and/or your children are confronted with stress?
  - This presentation provides conversational talking points that you can keep and use as a family, as you see fit.



## *What this conversation is not.*

- This presentation does not propose that stress is not harmful, or a real experience that causes or can be a serious consequence or symptom of psychological conditions such as anxiety and depression
- Abandonment of stress reduction efforts
- This is not a singular endorsement of this perspective of stress - this is just an additional viewpoint
- We are not trying to persuade. We are here to inform others about a perspective as an educational community.
- We are not suggesting that this solves all problems surrounding stress in our community



# *Our Viewpoint in Our Schools*

- Effective School Solutions established at Ridge
- Increase in Child Study Team Referrals for emotional or behavior concerns
- Increase in students seen by School Assistance Counselors at least once per month
- Increase in students out on Home Instruction because of Mental Health issues
- Increase in suicide intervention reports
- Drug and Alcohol issues in the community/opiate crisis
- Increase in students who are identified as School Refusals

*\*Data compiled by Ridge High School SEL Committee (2018) and WAMS School Counseling/SAC Professionals*



## *Viewpoint of Larger Society*

- National conversations about mental health, depression, anxiety
- Increased number of teens with mental health concerns
- Emphasis on mental health at collegiate level
- Similar high achieving school districts discussing students experiencing stress
- Kelly McGonigal, PhD on [NBC Today Show](#), February 19, 2019



*Part III: Highlighting Key  
Tenets of “The Upside of Stress”  
by Kelly McGonigal, PhD.*

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# “How to Make Stress Your Friend”

## TED Talk

Kelly McGonigal, PhD  
Stanford University





***What is your stress response?***



# Transforming Stress

- Debriefing the concept from the video:
  - Our stress response helps us: rise to the challenge, connect with others, learn and grow.
  - Finding meaning in stress: Understanding that the purpose of your stress is related to the meaning you have for the event, experience, or situation. A stress-free life is unrealistic
- The cost of avoiding stress:
  - Missed opportunities, Avoidant coping (self-destructive), Limiting your future
  - “What choice can I make right now, that is consistent with my goal?” Harness stress to work for you, not against you
  - Stress inoculation helps us grow
- Some commonly reported positive changes from dealing with stressful experiences:
  - A sense of personal strength
  - Increased appreciation for life
  - Enhanced social connectedness
  - Identifying new possibilities and/or directions

# Transforming Stress Activity



**Activity:** (Directly from “The Upside of Stress”)

***Think of a recent experience that brought a lot of stress. What were your physical stress responses at that time? Talk with those around you about the experience, and discuss one of the following prompts:***

- If there is a part of your stress response that you dislike, consider how it is helping you rise to the challenge, connect with others, or learn & grow.
- Can you identify similar feelings you have dealt with in the past and ask yourself, how did you get through it in the past?
- Based on your past experiences with stress, are there any positive benefits that you could apply to future experiences?



# *Connecting with Others*

- Stress and anxiety builds despair and hopelessness
- Hopelessness is defeated by our connections with others and caring for other people and lifting others up
- Serving or helping others decreases feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling a part of something bigger than oneself gives us purpose
- We build resiliency by social connectedness
- Biological response to stress innately makes us rely on others



# Connecting with Others Activity

**Activity:** (Directly from “The Upside of Stress”)

***Consider the same stressful experience and now discuss one of the following prompts.***

1. What is the “bigger than life” meaning of your stressful experience?
2. Think of the ways others have suffered similarly with stressful situations. What power do we have when we acknowledge the communal connection of dealing with stress?
3. How have you helped others while you were suffering yourself?



***Part IV: Identify Key Resources  
for Times of Distress & Crisis***

# Identifying Key Resources for Times of Crisis



**2NDFLOOR:** a confidential and anonymous helpline for New Jersey's youth and young adults. [Website](#)



**SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF TEEN SUICIDE:**  
[WEBSITE](#) WITH RESOURCES AND A HELPFUL [TIP SHEET](#) TO “ACT ON FACTS” WITH WARNING SIGNS



**NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE:** PROVIDES 24/7, FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE IN DISTRESS. [WEBSITE](#)



**SAMHSA'S NATIONAL HELPLINE** FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, 24/7, 365 DAY, IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH, FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES FACING MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.  
1-800-662-HELP (4357) [WEBSITE](#)

**IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, ALWAYS DIAL 9-1-1.**



# *Additional Resources*

[The Washington Post](#): Stress Doesn't Have to Be So Stressful, Here's How to Make It Work in Your Favor

[Edutopia](#): Can Stress Help Students?

[US News & World Report](#): Eustress, The Stress You Actually Need

[American Psychological Association](#): How Stress Affects Your Health

[Challenge Success](#): Tips to Help Your Child Thrive

[Challenge Success](#): Playtime, Downtime, and Family Time



***“When you choose to view your stress response as helpful, you create the biology of courage.”***  
***-Kelly McGonigal, PhD, Stanford Psychologist***