

Attitude Is Everything

Unfortunately, it seems that we are living in a stressful era. However, Kelly McGonigal, a health psychologist, has some good news which could help us relax a bit: Stress may not be the enemy of good health! Read the article below to practice your reading skills and improve your vocabulary on the topic.

Before you read

Match the words with the definitions.

attitude	a tube that carries blood
participant	a feeling or opinion about something
narrow	someone who studies the human mind and human emotions and behavior
heartbeat	a person who takes part in something
vessel	probable
psychologist	of small width
likely	damaging
harmful	the pulsation of the heart

Article

Kelly McGonigal is a health psychologist with some good news: Stress may not be the enemy of good health. McGonigal came to this conclusion after looking at three important health studies. In the first study, researchers at the University of Wisconsin asked 30.000 adults how much stress they had experienced during the past year. They also asked whether the participants thought this stress was harmful to their health. Eight years later, one group of participants was 43% more likely to have died - the people who had a lot of stress and believed that stress was bad for them. Those who had a lot of stress but did not believe it was harmful actually had the lowest risk of dying!

According to McGonigal, the way we think about stress is important because, "Your body believes you." In fact, our mind and attitude can have beneficial effects on our health and may help prevent some kinds of serious illness. In a study at Harvard, researchers taught participants to believe that signs of stress - a faster heartbeat, for example - were the body's way of preparing them to meet a challenge. Under stress, most people's blood vessels become narrower. That makes it harder for blood to flow and may contribute to heart disease. But the blood vessels of the study participants stayed open and relaxed, simply because they thought about stress in a different way.

McGonigal also points to a study of the connection between stress and human contact. Researchers from the University at Buffalo studied people who had experienced very stressful events during the past year. Surprisingly, if they had spent a lot of time helping others, they had no increased risk of dying. Compare that to a 30% increase for those who had not helped others. It seems that enjoyable activities such as giving a friend a ride or babysitting a neighbor's child can help us stay healthy even under stress.

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After you read

What's your take on the topic? Talk to a friend and see if they have a different idea. Also, try to use three new words that you have learned from the article.

