
TED TALK

***HOW TO MAKE STRESS
YOUR FRIEND***

BY KELLY MCGONIGAL

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

INSTRUCTIONS

Individually or as a group, watch the TED Talk “How to Make Stress Your Friend” by Kelly McGonigal (available at leanin.org/stress-friend). Use the questions below for a group discussion on the ideas presented in the video.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Prior to watching Kelly’s TED Talk, how did you think about stress? Did you view it as harmful to your health? Has this video changed your perspective? Why or why not?
- According to our Women in the Workplace study, at every stage in their careers, women are less eager than men to become a top executive. Women with and without children are more likely to cite “stress/pressure” as a top issue. Why do you think this is?
- What do you do to manage stress now? As a group, share your strategies with one another.
- Kelly claims that when you change your mind about stress, you can change your body’s response to it. Why physical symptoms do you associate with stress?
- According to Kelly, research proves that “chasing meaning is better for your health than trying to avoid discomfort.” Have you ever avoided an opportunity you wanted to pursue because of the potential stress it would cause? If so, what was it, and would you have made a different decision if you focused on finding meaning?
- Kelly shares research showing that stress releases oxytocin, which motivates you to seek support and crave contact with friends and family. When you’re stressed, do you seek support? Is it an effective strategy for you? How does it make you feel?

ONE ACTION

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

Step 1: Identify the action you’re going to take

Kelly references a study that found caring for other people reduces the harmful effects of stress and extends life expectancy. When you choose to connect with others while you’re feeling stressed, she says, “you can create resilience.”

Between now and the next meeting identify one person you will reach out to when you experience stress. Use the questions below to help you create a plan for connecting with this person.

- Whom do you plan to reach out to?
- How will you reach out to this person?
- What do you expect from the interaction?
- Why did you choose this person?

Step 2: Share your One Action with your Circle

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statements:

- I plan to connect with . . .
- In doing so, I expect to . . .
- I chose this person because . . .

Move quickly from member to member, and consider cheering one another on as you go.