

Managing Positive Stress: Learning from Entrepreneurs

Eustress

= positive stress

Experienced when you are enjoying what you do because of or despite a feeling of pressure. Eustress gives you a boost and drives you to learn, to use your creativity and to work more effectively.

Eustress project

The research project 'Eustress – energy from stress' (2014-2015) focuses on work-related experiences of eustress, positive side of stress, which is seen beneficial for increasing wellbeing, finding innovative solutions and stimulating growth and learning. Exploring the potential of eustress is seen creating new opportunities for leading oneself or others. This is crucial especially in turbulent times – finding the potential from enhancing positive experiences and savoring eustress.

Main research questions:

- What kind of mindsets and practices occur among entrepreneurs experiencing positive stress?
- What kind of tools and digital solutions could support experiencing positive stress?

Our main goal is to create knowledge for recognising, stimulating and utilising eustress at work and in life in general. We aim at increasing understanding of the phenomenon of positive stress by studying work-related eustress experiences of entrepreneurs, who we assume to have and most benefit from eustress.

Methods

Our research approach is multi-methodological, combining interviews, physiological measurements, diary keeping and co-design activities.

- First, 21 entrepreneurs were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured but open, concentrating on entrepreneurs' personal experiences of positive stress.
- Second, nine of the interviewed entrepreneurs recorded a positive stress diary, including a three-day physiological measurement analysing their heartbeat variability. In second interviews they described and interpreted the eustress experiences reflected in diary notes and physiological data.
- Currently, co-design workshops are organised based on the research data.

Results

Among the interviewed entrepreneurs, the phenomenon of experiencing positive stress was recognised by everyone. Eustress was seen as a state of enjoyment and productivity worth aspiring towards.

It is like dancing on the water. Like getting wings ... Things are solved although there is some pressure. Or I'd claim that they are solved because of the pressure.

Based on the experiences of the entrepreneurs, the toolbox of reflective practice to facilitate eustress experiences has been created. The toolbox consists of the following six tools: changing the mindset, organising work, stimulating positive pressure, harnessing a feeling of joy, mental preparing and recovering. The tools facilitate recognising, stimulating and balancing with eustress.



The eustress toolbox created based on the experiences of entrepreneurs.

Implications

We believe that the results support entrepreneurs, leaders and employees in their efforts for effective but meaningful and fulfilling work. The results can be utilised in developing new digital tools and ways of working that support eustress.

Contacts

Päivi Heikkilä
Tel. +358 50 3655111
paivi.heikkila@vtt.fi

Kati Tikkamäki
Tel. +358 40 1901309
kati.tikkamaki@uta.fi

www.eustress.fi

