

Hi, everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week, I want to talk about is stress always bad. Last week, is pessimism good for you? This week, is stress always bad? It is like a theme here, but we'll try to get away from it next week. Okay. So, my daughter taught me about this sometime ago. We were talking, I was talking about probably at the dinner table how contractors live with this unrelenting stress in their lives. So, you finish one job and it's quite successful and you pat yourself on the back for half a second, and then you run off to the next job.

It's just unrelenting. I heard somebody say one time, being in construction is like being a baseball umpire. You have to be perfect on your first day at work, and they get better every day thereafter. So, I think there's some truth in that, isn't there? It's an incredibly stressful business. The pressure is unrelenting. So, is stress always bad? Now, there are two kinds of stress. This comes from an Austrian endocrinologist who coined this term in 1974. His name was Hans Selye. I probably butchered his name there, but Hans Selye.

And he defined the two different kinds of stresses, distress, which we know about, and eustress, E-U, from the Greek prefix for good, good stress. Okay. There's good stress. Stress isn't always bad. Let's talk about distress. Distress is negative. Eustress is positive more. Distress triggers a comprehensive stress response in the human body. So, it's kind of the fight or flight reaction almost. When you are stressed, when you are suffering from distress, your productivity goes down. You could have health complications over the long term if the stress continues for too long.

You could have anxiety, depression, irritability, a bad day. I mean, you could just go home with a bad day. Distress is negative. It's bad. We seek to avoid it. Eustress, on the other hand, is positive. It occurs when we face challenges and overcome them. The challenges that we face need to be within our abilities to cope, but we don't always know what abilities lie dormant within us. So, these eustress situations have to provide stresses sometimes that we just don't know if we can accomplish. So, distress can actually turn into eustress.

For example, a super challenging project. You're thinking, oh, I'm X years old. I've never managed a project like this. It's so complicated. The time duration, the money involved, the number of different trades on the job site. It's going to be crazy. I don't know if I can do it. That creates distress. But as you get through the project and you see yourself marching through and accomplishing daily goals and tasks, you realize you have this project in hand. That turns into eustress. You've learned that a project you thought was outside of your capability wasn't outside your capability at all.

Big presentations. You've got to go before a client and you're competing for work with these other AAA firms from around the region. You start a new job, you get promoted from project exec to assistant project manager, whatever it is. That's a real distress, uncomfortable situation that can turn into eustress as you become accustomed to doing the new job. Even things like training for a marathon. So, you think, oh gosh, I'm going to start running again. I'm actually not going to just run around the block a few times. I'm going to train for my first ever marathon.

I remember my mom did her first 10K race when she was 40 years old. She was very proud. She didn't think she could do it. Distress. It caused her some anxiety. She did it. Eustress. She accomplished the goal. Okay. Examples of eustress situations, riding a rollercoaster, a rollercoaster that causes you to be fearful. My wife loves a rollercoaster. I'm not sold. I'm okay on the smaller ones for us. My wife is crazy. She'll ride any rollercoaster. Holy moly, she loves it. Riding a rollercoaster is a eustress situation, potentially.

Exercise goals, the birth or the death of loved ones. That creates a different circumstance in life, so it creates distress that can turn into eustress. I know that neither Lisa nor I was really quite ready to be married when we got married, and we certainly weren't ready to have children. We had some distress, but guess what? We managed to muddle through, and we created a eustress out of it. Networking and business development. Lots of people are uncomfortable with BD. I'm not. I am uncomfortable with networking, however. I hate networking, but you get tossed into a crowd, by gosh.

You swim around for a while, you come up for air and you're fine. So that's again, a eustress type situation. And back to roller coasters. I do think business is like a rollercoaster in a way. Hopefully, your rollercoaster is relatively flat, but you do have great successes and on occasions, great challenges, and even great failures in business. It is quite a bit like a roller coaster. So maybe I should be, after 35 years, I should be more comfortable riding roller coasters. Your attitude and your interpretation of events determines whether you perceive something as eustress or distress.

So, you could perceive it as distress in the beginning and it turns into eustress later, or it just stays distress because it's a bad situation. It goes on for a long period of time and it doesn't really get any better and it creates real problems for you. Okay. What do you do? What do you do to minimize distress and maximize eustress? Seven quick tips. The first thing is this. You can't get to eustress if you're continually bombarded with distress. If you're overloaded, overworked, too many projects, too much pressure, too many deadlines, you're just overwhelmed, but things are going bad at home, it just seems like nothing in life is quite coming together for you, you're not going to be able to enjoy eustress because you've got too much distress.

You've got to shed that first. You've got to find a way. Whatever it is, you've got to find a way to shed some of that distress. Several ways to do that. Number one, ask for help. Go to your boss, ask for help. Be honest. Be truthful about the situation in which you find yourself. Ask for help, ask for assistance. Nobody wants to see their people struggle. Nobody wants to see their projects struggle. So, you'll get the help that you need. Second thing is talk about your priorities with your teams. Organize your priorities.

Maybe part of the distress you're experiencing, it's coming from not exactly having your priorities in the right order. So, discuss these things with your team and get their perspectives on what you can do and how you can do it. Third thing, clarify the scope of what you're doing. Make sure that you know exactly what you should be doing, but just as important what you should not be doing. Where are the boundaries? Where are the bright lines? The fourth thing, break every project. Everything in life that you're doing, break it down into small bite-sized chunks.

What's the Chinese proverb? A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. So, break everything you can into manageable chunks so you can get through. The fifth thing, create workflows. Man, Rob Hoover at FBI introduced workflows to us for routine things, things you do over and over and over again, and you have to reinvent the wheel every time. Oh, no. Create a workflow so that you can automate it and put it together. Maybe we should never Rob do a vlog on workflows at some point. The sixth thing, appreciate others. Everybody wants recognition in their jobs.

How do you get that? The way you get it is by appreciating and recognizing others in their jobs. If you want a friend, be one. I heard that ages ago from a very wise entrepreneur. If you want a friend, first be one. If you want appreciation and recognition in your job, give it first and it'll rebound to you. And the seventh thing, think positively. So, pessimism can help in business as we discussed last week, but generally in construction, you have to be optimistic. You have to find a way to be eager to get up and go to work in the morning and tackle the day ahead.

So, what do you think? Is stress always bad? And what have you used? What tools have you used to overcome stress in your life? We'd like to hear from you in the comments. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.