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Thinking of Stress

Stress is said to be one of the leading causes of death in modern society. When people get stressed, their hearts work too hard, leading to heart attacks and other diseases. However, Kelly McGonigal, a psychologist in the United States, is trying to change the way people commonly see stress. She says research shows that people with a lot of stress are more likely to die young but only if they think stress is bad. In fact, according to research at the University of Wisconsin, this (21) stress is actually killing about 20,000 Americans every year.

In one experiment at Harvard University, researchers observed how participant's hearts reacted to stress. At first, the participant's hearts beat faster and became tighter. However, once the participants were told that stress was a natural and good response to a difficult situation, their hearts began to react differently. Their hearts beat faster without becoming tight. The heart becoming tighter leads to heart disease and possibly death. (22), a rapidly beating heart causes no damage.

McGonigal also says that oxytocin, a chemical produced by the body during stress, may have a positive impact on the heart. While oxytocin is most known for its ability to make people happier and more social, it also encourages the heart to relax during times of stress. In fact, studies have found that it can even help the heart recover from damage. This means that stress can (23), McGonigal hopes people will learn that the way they think about stress can improve their experience of it.

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| 21. | a. rare idea about
c. negative view of | b. modern cure for
d. common cause of |
| 22. | a. Unfortunately
c. In addition | b. As a result
d. On the other hand |
| 23. | a. be good for people's health
c. improve the quality of sleep | b. be a problem for relationships
d. increase the heart's speed |