

05

Stress Management

STRESS QUIZ

Fill in a number for each question 0 = Never ----- 3 = Sometimes ----- 5 = Habitually

Adapted from *Managing Stress in the 90's*, Lauren E. Smith, Charter Greenville Behavioral Health System

1. I have a lot on my mind that worries me - at work, at home, or both. _____
2. I have too much responsibility. _____
3. My family makes too many demands on me. _____
4. My work situation is unclear; there are too many people to satisfy. _____
5. I don't have enough time for leisure and to take care of personal needs. _____
6. There is a great deal of time pressure at work. _____
7. I have difficulty expressing how I feel about situations or people. _____
8. I have trouble focusing on a task. _____
9. I have difficulty communicating with my spouse, children, family, boss, or co-workers. _____
10. I handle most things alone, with little support from family, co-workers, etc. _____
11. I do not have enough say in decisions that affect me. _____
12. My personal needs are in conflict with my organization or family. _____
13. Other people or circumstances keep me from doing what I want or have to do. _____
14. I am often fatigued. _____
15. People or things often irritate me. _____
16. There is considerable illness in my life; of my own or in my family. _____

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23. I have difficulty expressing how I feel about situations or people. _____

24. I have trouble focusing on a task. _____

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28. My personal needs are in conflict with my organization or family. _____

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31. People or things often irritate me. _____

Score under 35: Congratulations! you're in good shape.

Score under 35-36: Average, but you could lower your stress level.

Score under 66-85: Think seriously about changes in your life.

Score under 86 or above: Act now to reduce stress.

TOTAL: _____



SOCIAL STRESSES

LIFE CYCLE:

Each stage of life has its accompanying stressors:

1

Growing up: Transitions from infancy to childhood, adolescence to adulthood, etc.

2

Dating, courtship, and marriage

3

Separation and divorce

4

Pregnancy and parenthood: Raising children, letting them go (empty nest), grand parenting

5

Job and career: Training for and starting out in the work world, job hunting, unemployment, advancement/promotion, retirement

6

Death of parents

7

Widowhood

8

Aging: Illness, infirmity

PERSONAL STRESSES

Changes in your values and attitudes,
awareness of your needs and limitations

Attitudes: Liking (or disliking) what
and who you are

1

Expectations of yourself: Feeling successful,
capable and competent; feeling helpless or
trapped; finding contentment and happiness

2

Feelings: Coping with strong emotions (both
positive and negative)

3

Expectations of others: Getting along with
others and resolving conflicts, coexisting
with people who have different values

4





SOCIAL STRESSES

Changes affecting family; community; economic, political, legal environments:

1

Maintaining quality of life

2

Economic pressures

3

Urban sprawl; inner-city decay

4

Environmental crises: hazardous waste, uncertainty concerning energy sources, overpopulation, parking and transportation

5

World economy

6

Technological changes

7

Values: changing composition and definitions of “family”; new social attitudes toward sex, roles of women and men, aging, parenting, drug and alcohol use.

BAD WAYS OF COPING WITH STRESS



1. from family and friends
2. Drinking alcohol or using drugs
3. Eating too much
4. Sleeping too much
5. Smoking too many cigarettes
6. Acting like stress isn't really happening
7. Blaming yourself
8. Thinking about what's stressing you out all the time
9. Always seeing the bad in situations and people
10. Trying to be perfect
11. Acting helpless
12. Wishing problems away (not dealing with reality)
13. Giving up
14. Getting an attitude, becoming angry and taking stress out on others
15. Getting stuck thinking about the problem rather than ways to solve it

GOOD WAYS OF COPING WITH STRESS



1. Laugh! Find something funny about the situations
2. Talk about it
3. Take care of yourself
 - Get enough sleep
 - Eat enough food
 - Exercise
 - Find ways to relax
4. Be patient with yourself.. “I’m doing the best I can.”
5. Try to avoid negative situations
6. Use time wisely
7. Make a plan to deal with stress
8. Take one thing at a time
9. Think positively
10. Spend time with upbeat people
11. Ask for what you need
12. Pray
13. Help others who are in worse shape
14. Focus on what you can control, not on what you can’t control
15. Prioritize and set goals

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

01

Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.

02

Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.

03

Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc.

04

Do nothing which, after being done, leads you to tell a lie.

05

Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the yard and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

06

Practice preventative maintenance. Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart “at the worst possible moment.”

07

Eliminate or restrict the amount of caffeine in your diet.

08

Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.

09

Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below 1/4 full; keep a well-stocked “emergency shelf” of home staples. Don't wait until you're down to your last postage stamp, etc. to buy more.

10

Don't put up with something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers - whatever - are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

11

Allow an extra 15 minutes to get to appointments. Arrive at the airport 1 hour before domestic departures.

12

Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.

13

Always set up contingency plans, “just in case.” (“If for some reason either of us is delayed, here’s what we’ll do...” kind of thing. Or, “If we get split up in the mall, here’s where we’ll meet.”)

14

Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn’t get mowed this weekend, if the sheets get changed on Sunday instead of Saturday, etc.

15

Pollyanna-Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 blessings. Count ‘em!

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

16

Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours. (The old “the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get” idea.)

17

“No!” Saying no to extra projects and social activities you know you don’t have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday needs quiet time to relax and be alone.

18

Drum up the courage to temporarily unplug your phone. Take a bath, meditate, sleep or read without interruption. The possibility of a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil.

19

Turn “needs” into preferences. Our basic human needs are: food, water and warmth. Everything else is a preference. Don’t get attached to preferences

20

Simplify, simplify, simplify

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

21

Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you in the habit of worrying faster than associating with worrywarts

22

Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in the summertime) to relieve tension.

23

Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet time at home but junior must practice piano, pop in some earplugs (available at drugstores) and smile.

24

Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.

25

Create order out of chaos. Organize your room or workplace so you always know where things are. Put things away where they belong, and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

26

When stressed, most people tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. This breathing means stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissues is incomplete, and muscle tension may result. Check your breathing throughout the day, and before, during, and after high-pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles are knotted, and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. Note how, when you're relaxed, both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe.

27

Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal, or on paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.

28

Try this yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax: inhale deeply through your nose to the count of 8. Then, with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 16, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound, and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times

29

Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Just as a vaccine can protect you from illness, if you expose yourself to one or more of the dreaded aspects of an experience beforehand, you can often mitigate your fears. For example: Before speaking in public, take time to go over every aspect of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what questions there will be, and how you'll answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be. You'll likely find that when the actual time comes for the presentation, it will be "old hat" and much of your anxiety will have fled.

30

When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion (a voluntary change in activity and/or environment) may be just what you need.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

31

Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires you to sit for extended periods.

32

Avoid unnecessary stress by selecting an environment (work, home, leisure) which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job requiring you to sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don't associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.

33

Learn to live one day at a time.

34

Everyday, do something you enjoy.

35

Add an ounce of love to everything you do.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

36

Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.

37

Do something for somebody else.

38

Focus on understanding rather than being understood, on loving rather than on being loved.

39

Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.

40

Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments; allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

41

Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and sometimes it is okay to compromise.

42

Eliminate destructive self-talk: “I’m too old...,” “I’m too fat...,” etc

43

Use your days off for a change of pace. If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is some action and time for spontaneity in your off days. If work is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude on your days off. Feel as if you are not accomplishing anything tangible at work? Tackle a project around the home which you can finish to your satisfaction.

44

“Worry about the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves.” That’s another way of saying: take care of today as best you can and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.

45

Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or nothing else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

46

Allow yourself time - every day - for privacy, quiet, and introspection.

47

If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then the rest of the day will be free of anxiety

48

Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.

49

Don't forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it's just for 15 or 20 minutes.

50

Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.

52 PROVEN STRESS REDUCERS

50

Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact we live in an imperfect world.

51

Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe most people are doing the best they can.

POSITIVE COPING TECHNIQUE

ABDOMINAL BREATHING

This positive coping technique is especially helpful for emotional calming

- 1.** Get into a comfortable position either sitting upright with your head supported, or lying on your back. Loosen tight, constricting clothing, especially at your neck and waist.
- 2.** Close your eyes and place your left hand on your abdomen and your right hand on your chest. Breathing normally, notice which hand moves as you breathe.
- 3.** Mentally, slowly count from one to four as you inhale through your nose. Pause for two counts. Then open your mouth and mentally count from one to six (or one to eight if comfortable) as you exhale through your mouth.
- 4.** As you continue breathing this way, try to shift most of the movement toward your lower hand, which is the level of your diaphragm. Consciously let your abdomen push your hand out as you inhale and pull your abdomen in, letting your hand fall or move in as you exhale.
- 5.** After several minutes of slow, rhythmic breathing, let your hands slowly move to your sides as your abdomen continues to move freely in and out with each breath.
- 6.** After several more minutes, slowly open your eyes and sit quietly.

STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

01

Body Awareness Our bodies register stress before we're even aware we are under stress. By learning your individual body response to stress, you can actively respond to relieve it. By consciously relieving your body of the stress response, you can help to prevent stress related symptoms and illness.

02

Breathing Improper breathing prevents us from taking in adequate oxygen and expelling poisonous carbon dioxide. By diminishing the flow of these gases, we make it more difficult to cope with stress. Shallow breathing contributes to headaches, fatigue, panic attacks, anxiety, muscle tension, and depression.

03

Progressive Relaxation Learning to relax your muscles properly can reduce heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension. When deep muscle relaxation techniques are mastered, they work very effectively toward reducing anxiety.

04

Meditation Focusing your attention completely on one thing so that you lose consciousness of everything around you can promote deep relaxation and mental stillness.

05

Visualization Imagine you are in a safe and beautiful place. Visualization combines muscle relaxation and mental relaxation by using all 5 senses to transport yourself into a mental vacation. With practice, you can produce an almost immediate relaxation response wherever you happen to be.

06

Thought Stopping Overcoming nagging worries and doubts significantly reduces stress. Research shows that negative and frightening thoughts precede negative and frightening emotions; conversely, positive and happy thoughts precede positive and happy emotions.

STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

07

Refuting Irrational Ideas We continuously engage in self-talk. It's the way we interpret the world. When the self-talk is accurate and rational, we function well. If it's inaccurate and irrational, we experience stress and emotional disturbance. If we can recognize an irrational pattern of thought and restructure this thinking, we will reduce our stress and improve our mood.

08

Goal Setting and Time Management These help to clarify our values, define our goals, and develop a plan for reaching desirable outcomes. By setting priorities we can better decide where to devote time and energy.

09

Assertiveness Training Assertive communication helps reduce stress by setting limits with others and asking for what we need.

10

Job Stress Management A 1985 study by the National Center for Health Statistics found more than half of the workers surveyed experienced at least moderate stress in their jobs. If not addressed, this can lead to job burnout.

11

Exercise One of the most effective means of stress reduction, releasing the natural chemicals that build up during the stress response and returning your body to a normal equilibrium.

12

Humor and Play Learning to laugh, especially at ourselves, helps us to look at life less seriously and allows us to place day to day stresses in a more proper perspective. Learning to play allows us to take ourselves less seriously, a real plus for stress reduction. Our goal should be a minimum of 10 good laughs each day, and at least one scheduled activity for play each week.

20

WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS DURING THE WORKDAY



- 1** Take a few minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate; sit or lie down to be with yourself. Gaze out the window, listen to the sounds of nature, or take a slow, quiet walk.
- 2** While your car is warming up, take a minute to quietly pay attention to your breathing.
- 3** While driving, become aware of body tension, i.e. hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel, shoulders raised, stomach tight, etc. Consciously work at releasing, dissolving that tension. Does being tense help you drive better? What does it feel like to relax and drive?
- 4** Decide not to play the radio and be with yourself.
- 5** Stay in the right lane and go the speed limit.
- 6** Pay attention to your breathing, or to the sky, trees, etc. when stopped at a red light.

20 WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS DURING THE WORKDAY

- 7 Or, close the door, if you have one, and take some time to consciously relax.
- 8 Decide to “stop” for 1-3 minutes every hour during the workday. Become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations. Use it as a time to regroup and recoup.
- 9 Use the everyday cues in your environment as a reminder to “center” yourself, e.g. the telephone ringing, turning on the computer, etc.
- 10 Take time at lunch or break to share with close associates. Choose topics not necessarily work related.
- 11 Choose to eat 1 or 2 lunches a week in silence. Eat slowly and use it as time to be with yourself.
- 12 At the end of the workday, retrace your day’s activities acknowledging and congratulating yourself for what you’ve accomplished and make a list for tomorrow.
- 13 Pay attention to your walk to the car; breathing the crisp air, the feeling of cold or warmth on your body, to accept it rather than resist it. Listen to the sounds. Can you walk without feeling rushed?
- 14 While the car is warming up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home. Take a moment to simply be. Enjoy it! Like most of us, you’re heading home into your next full-time job: home!
- 15 While driving, notice if you’re rushing. What does this feel like? What could you do about it? Remember, you’ve got more control than you can imagine.

20 WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS DURING THE WORKDAY

- 16 When you pull into your parking spot, take a minute to come back to the present. Orient yourself to being with your family or household members.

- 17 Change out of your “work” clothes when you get home. It helps make a smoother transition into your next role. You can spare the 5 minutes to do this. Say hello to each family member. Center yourself at home. If possible, make the time to take 5 to 10 minutes to be quiet and still.

- 18 After parking your car at your workplace, take a moment to orient yourself to your workday.

- 19 Use your breaks to truly relax rather than pause. For example, instead of having coffee or a cigarette, take a 2-5 minute walk, or sit at your desk and recoup.

- 20 At lunch, changing your environment can be helpful.