

STRESS!



Not me - I'm perfectly calm

Stress Management

I. What is Stress?

A. Definitions

1. Stress - "The nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it." (Dr. Hans Selye, Father of Stress Theory.) The demand can be a threat, a challenge, or any kind of change which requires the body to adapt. The response is automatic and immediate.
2. Eustress - Good stress can help us perform better
3. Distress - Harmful stress causes us to be upset or makes us sick
4. Stressor - An activity or event that makes demands on the body

B. The Stress Reaction

1. Adrenaline pours into the blood stream. This action, in conjunction with stress hormones, produces a number of changes in the body which are intended to be protective. This is known as the "fight-or-flight response" because it provides the strength to either fight or run away.

a. Body Changes

- 1) ↑ heart rate and blood pressure (to get more blood to the muscles, brain, and heart--the most important organs for coping with danger)
- 2) ↑ breathing (to take in more oxygen)
- 3) ↑ muscle tension (preparation for action)
- 4) ↑ mental alertness and sensitivity of sense organs (to assess the situation and act quickly)
- 5) ↓ blood to the skin, digestive tract, kidneys, and liver (where least needed in time of crisis)
- 6) ↑ blood sugar, fats, and cholesterol (for extra energy)
- 7) ↑ platelets and blood clotting factors (in case of injury)
- 8) ↑ perspiration (to cool body)

C. Common Symptoms of Stress (check list)

1. Physical

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> muscle aches/pains | <input type="checkbox"/> headaches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> backaches | <input type="checkbox"/> heart palpitations | <input type="checkbox"/> chest pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> insomnia | <input type="checkbox"/> abdominal cramps | <input type="checkbox"/> nausea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> trembling | <input type="checkbox"/> cold extremities | <input type="checkbox"/> flushing/sweating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frequent colds | <input type="checkbox"/> easily startled | <input type="checkbox"/> dry mouth |

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2. Mental

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> decrease in concentration | <input type="checkbox"/> loss of sense of humor | <input type="checkbox"/> indecisiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> confusion | <input type="checkbox"/> forgetfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> negative attitude |

3. Emotional

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> nervousness | <input type="checkbox"/> depression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anger | <input type="checkbox"/> frustration | <input type="checkbox"/> worry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fear | <input type="checkbox"/> irritability | <input type="checkbox"/> impatience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> short temper | <input type="checkbox"/> overreacting | <input type="checkbox"/> mood swings |

4. Behavioral

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> pacing | <input type="checkbox"/> fidgeting | <input type="checkbox"/> nervous habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> smoking | <input type="checkbox"/> drinking | <input type="checkbox"/> yelling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> throwing | <input type="checkbox"/> hitting | <input type="checkbox"/> increase/decrease eating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crying | <input type="checkbox"/> blaming | |

D. Stressors - triggers of stress

1. External

- a. Physical environment: noise, bright lights, heat, confined space, etc.
- b. Social: rudeness, bossiness, aggressiveness on the part of someone else
- c. Organizational: rules, red tape, deadlines
- d. Major life events: death, lost job, promotion, birth of a baby
- e. Daily hassles: commuting, losing something, car trouble

2. Internal

- a. Lifestyle choices: caffeine, not enough sleep, overloaded schedule
- b. Negative self talk: pessimistic, self-critical, over-analytical
- c. Mind traps: unrealistic expectations, taking things personally, "all or nothing" thinking, exaggerating, rigid thinking
- d. Personality traits: Type A, perfectionist, workaholic, pleaser

II. Now that I know what stress is, how do I get rid of it?

A. There are a number of techniques that can be used when dealing with a stressor. Some techniques deal directly with the stressor while others focus on our response to the stressor. It is important to remember that most stress is actually self-generated.

1. Change lifestyle habits

- a. Decrease caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate)
- b. Well-balanced diet, vitamins
- c. Decrease junk food
- d. Eat slowly; chew food well

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- e. Regular exercise (at least 30 minutes, 3 times a week)
 - f. Adequate sleep (determine what you need and then get it)
 - g. Leisure time (a little a day goes a long way)
 - h. You know what smoking does!
2. Change stressful situations
 - a. Confront the stressor
 - b. Leave the situation
 - c. Avoid the stressor
 - d. Ignore the stressor
 3. Techniques to deal with attitudinal responses to stressors
 - a. Take a positive attitude about the stressor
 - b. Keep things in perspective
 - c. Don't "awfulize" (See a rope as a rope, not a snake)
 - d. Develop realistic expectations
 - e. Talk about the stressor to a supportive third party
 - f. Diversion & Distraction: Take time out (anything from a short walk to a vacation). This gives you a break to clear your head, decrease your stress level, and deal with the problem in a better frame of mind.
 - g. Keep your sense of humor
 - h. Refute negative thoughts
 - i. Faith and spiritual comfort

B. Techniques that deal with physiological responses to stressors

1. Exercise
2. Release of tension through crying/laughing
3. Relaxation techniques (see attachments)
 - a. Deep breathing
 - b. Progressive muscle relaxation
 - c. Imagery
4. Meditation and prayer

III. Positions for Practicing Relaxation

A. Sitting

1. Use a comfortable chair that supports your back and allows your feet to touch the ground, with your knees bent. Keep your back straight. Either sit on the edge of the chair, using pillows for support, or to the back of the chair if it is shaped correctly.
2. Let your hands rest on your legs or on the arms of the chair.
3. Feel your head as free on top of your body. (Imagine a helium balloon.)
4. Lengthen your spine.

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B. Lying down (best position)

1. Lie flat on the floor with your arms extended at your side.
2. Keep your legs apart about hip width.
3. You may place a small pillow under your neck (if you have an exaggerated curve or feel strain) and/or your knees (especially if you have low back pain).
4. Make sure you are warm enough; use a cover if necessary.

IV. Breathing Exercises

A. Baby Breathe - Proper breathing is best seen in babies. If you watch an infant, you will see her/his abdomen rise and fall; actually the whole body seems alive with healthful energy. When a baby is unhappy and crying, breathing becomes shallow and moves into the chest; but when the baby is comfortable again, the breathing returns to the lower abdomen. Ideally, that is how we should all breathe: respond to a situation with the kind of breath we need and then return to normal abdominal breathing. But for most of us, our breath has become conditioned to respond in only one way - shallow.

B. Breathing Awareness - First, we must become attuned to our breathing. Observation, rather than changing our breathing, is the goal:

1. Begin by assuming a relaxed position (see previous descriptions) and closing your eyes.
2. Observe your breathing
 - a. What is the speed? Fast or slow?
 - b. What is the depth? Shallow or deep?
 - c. Where do you feel movement?
 - d. Notice where you feel the most breath and where you feel the least.
 - e. Is your breathing regular or irregular?
3. Focus on inhaling. Observe what it feels like. How much effort does it take?
4. Now focus on exhaling. Notice what the exhalation feels like. Do you take enough time to fully exhale? Are you doing anything to interfere with the flow? Are inhalation and exhalation the same? Do you like one better than the other?
5. Explore your breathing
 - a. Place your hand on your chest and take several breaths, noticing how it feels to breathe in and out of your chest.
 - b. Place your hand on your midsection, take several breaths, and notice how it feels to breathe in and out of your midsection.
 - c. Place your hand on your abdomen and breathe into it.
6. Keep your hand on your abdomen and continue breathing this way for several breaths.
7. Go back to your regular breathing. Has it changed in any way since you started?

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V. Abdominal Breathing

- A. The goal of deep breathing is to bring air into the lower parts of your lungs rather than just the top part. This exercise will not only increase your breathing capacity and initiate a relaxation response, but will also help to train you to breathe this way normally. As an exercise, practice for ten to fifteen minutes a day.
1. Start by noticing your breath without changing it. Notice the speed and depth.
 2. Place your right hand on your upper abdomen, spread your fingers with the little finger touching the navel, and let the left hand rest comfortably on your chest.
 3. As you inhale, breathe into your right hand, extending your abdomen but not forcing it. Your chest should move only slightly on the inhale. Exhale fully, letting your abdomen relax.
 4. Repeat, slowly inhaling and exhaling several times. Breathe normally after several deep breaths.
 5. Repeat the process, but take away your left hand and continue breathing into the right.
 6. You can continue with this breathing, passively watching your slow, even breaths.
 7. Note: your hands are there to help you initiate abdominal breathing; once you've learned the technique, do it without your hands. You may use your hands as an occasional check. This exercise may also be done sitting up.

VI. Three-Part Breathing

- A. This exercise is designed to encourage filling the lungs fully. To do this, visualize your lungs in three parts: lower, middle, and top.
1. Take a deep diaphragmatic breath and visualize the lower section of your lungs filling with air. Feel your ribs expanding front and back.
 2. As you continue to inhale, see the middle section of your lungs filling with air. Focus on both the front and back of your body.
 3. Finally, visualize the top of your lungs filling completely.
 4. As you exhale, see the air leaving the top of your lungs, moving down to the middle, and finally to the bottom.

VII. Fat Breathing

- A. When you are comfortable with diaphragmatic breathing, try this; it brings your breath even lower into your abdomen.
1. Place your right hand on your abdomen, with your thumb on your navel.
 2. On the inhalation, slowly blow up your belly like a balloon (gently, don't force).
 3. Exhale fully.
 4. Repeat this several times, then breathe normally.
 5. Expand the abdomen, and then hold the inhalation for as long as is comfortable.

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6. Breathe normally for several breaths and then repeat.

VIII. Color Breathing


- A. In this exercise, you will imagine breathing in a color, which fills your torso. Experiment with what color best suits you, your mood, your needs. This can be soothing or energizing, depending on the color you choose. Yellows and oranges are warming colors that can stimulate you or increase your sense of well-being. Blue and green are cooler and may calm you. Each person is different, so you'll need to try out the colors for yourself.

IX. Body Exercises

A. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a relaxation technique developed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson in 1929, that involves tensing and relaxing various muscle groups in your body in a specific sequence. Studies have found that practicing this exercise regularly leads to physical benefits and significantly diminishes anxiety, anger, or other painful emotions that habitually come up in your life.
2. Note: if you are on muscle relaxant drugs or have an injury, follow these activities with caution.
3. Practice the following exercise for about 20 - 30 minutes daily. In the beginning, you may find that it takes you a long time to relax. However, as you continue to practice, you will learn to relax more deeply and more rapidly.
4. Tighten each muscle group for 7 seconds and relax for 20 seconds. Tighten as hard as you can without straining. When releasing the tension, let go of it suddenly and completely. Notice the feeling of relaxation. (You may prefer to make a tape of the instructions or buy a professionally-made tape.)

B. Arms

1. Clench both hands tightly, making them into fists. Hold the tightness for 7 seconds. Pay attention to the sensations in the muscles as they contract. Now let go of the tension and notice the difference. Stay focused on the sensations you are feeling. After 20 seconds of allowing the muscles to relax, clench your fists again. Hold the tension for 7 seconds, then relax for 20 seconds. 
2. Next, bend both elbows and flex your biceps. Hold this "Charles Atlas" pose for 7 seconds, then let go of the tension. Flex a second time, then relax. Pay attention to the physical sensations of relaxation.
3. Tense your triceps - the muscles underneath your arms - by locking your elbows and stretching your arms as hard as you can down by your sides. Let go of the tension. Flex and release a second time. Notice the sensations of relaxation.

C. Head

1. Raise your eyebrows as high as you can and feel the tension in your forehead. Hold this, then suddenly let your brow drop and become smooth. Repeat.

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2. Scrunch up your entire face as though you were trying to make every part of it meet on the tip of your nose. Feel where the strain is. Then release the tension and notice the feeling. Repeat.
3. Close your eyes tightly and smile, stretching your mouth as wide open as you can. Hold it, then relax. Repeat.
4. Clench your jaw and push your tongue up to the roof of your mouth. Hold, then release. Repeat. Notice how the sensations change. Open your mouth into a big, wide “O”; hold, then release so that your jaw goes back into a normal position. Feel the relaxation and notice the difference. Repeat.
5. Tilt your head back as far as you can until it presses against the bottom of your neck. Hold, then relax. Repeat. Stretch your head to one side so that it rests near your shoulder; hold, relax, then repeat. Now roll your head over to the other shoulder; hold, relax, then repeat. Lift your head to its natural resting position and feel the tension drain away. Let your mouth fall open slightly. Stretch your head forward until your head is resting on your chest. Release the tension as you return your head to the resting position. Repeat.

D. Midsection

1. Bring your shoulders up as high as you can - as though you are trying to touch your ears with them. Hold, then let them fall back down again. Feel the heaviness in the muscles as they relax. Repeat. Stretch your shoulders back - as though you were trying to touch your shoulder blades together. Hold the position, then let your arms drop by your sides. Repeat.
2. Bring your arms out straight in front of you, lifting from the shoulders, so that your arms are parallel with each other. Then, while keeping them straight, cross one arm over the other at a point as high up on your arms as you can. Feel the stretch in your upper back. Hold the position. Now, let your arms drop down to your sides and notice the sensation of letting go. Repeat.
3. Take a deep breath. Before you exhale, contract all the muscles in your stomach and abdomen. Hold, then exhale and release the contraction. Repeat.
4. Gently arch your back. Hold the tension, then relax so your back is flat against the floor, bed, or back of the chair. Repeat.

E. Legs

1. Tighten your buttocks and thighs. Increase the tension by straightening your legs and pushing down hard through your heels. Hold this position, then let go. Repeat.
2. Tense your inner thigh muscles by pressing your legs together as hard as you can. Release, and feel the sense of ease throughout your legs. Repeat.
3. Tighten your leg muscles while pointing your toes. Hold the position, then release as you return your toes to a neutral position. Repeat.

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4. Flex your toes by drawing them up toward your head as you tighten your shin and calf muscles. Hold and then release by letting your feet hang loosely. Repeat.

X. Shortened PMR

- A. The key in this version is learning to simultaneously relax the muscles in each of the four body areas. Tense and hold each group for 7 seconds, and then relax for 20 seconds. As you become more adept, you may need less time for both.
- B. Make tight fists while flexing your biceps and forearms (Charles Atlas pose). Depending on your surroundings, you may just tighten all the muscles in your arms as they hang straight by your sides. Hold the tension, then relax.
- C. Press your head back as far as you can. Roll it clockwise in a complete circle, then roll it once counterclockwise. As you do this, wrinkle up your face as though you were trying to make every part of it meet at your nose. Relax. Now tense your jaw and your throat muscles and hunch your shoulders up. Hold this position, then relax.
- D. Gently arch your back as you take a deep breath. Hold this position, then relax. Take another deep breath, and this time push your abdomen out as you inhale. Then relax.
- E. Point your toes up towards your face while tightening your calf and shin muscles. Hold the position, then relax. Now, curl your toes while tightening your calf, thigh, and buttock muscles. Hold this position, then relax.

XI. Body Scanning

- A. This is a self-check exercise.
 1. Close your eyes...Starting with your toes and moving up your body, ask yourself, "Where am I tense?"...Whenever you discover a tense area, exaggerate it slightly so you can become aware of it...Be aware of the muscles in your body that are tense...Then, for example, say to yourself, "I am tensing my neck muscles...I am hurting myself...I am creating tension in my body."...Note that all muscular tension is self-produced...At this point, be aware of any life situation that may be causing the tension in your body and what you could do to change it.

XII. Instant Relaxation

- A. Take a deep breath and let it out.
- B. Tell yourself: *Relax*.
- C. If you feel yourself starting to get tense or "nervous," just take another deep breath and relax.
- D. If your mind starts to worry or stray, don't get involved with those thoughts. Just let them go - like a balloon on a string that you let go of - feel them float up...up...and away from you.

XIII. The Bracer

- A. Try this exercise when you feel stiff or low on energy and are having a hard time getting started. It will stimulate your breathing, circulation, and nervous system.
 1. Stand up straight with your hands at your sides.

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2. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath (Remember the correct way to breathe!)
3. Raise your arms out in front of you, using just enough energy to keep them up and relaxed.
4. Gradually bring your hands to your shoulders. As you do, slowly contract your hands into fists so that when they reach your shoulders they are clenched as tightly as you can make them.
5. Keep the fists tense as you push your arms out straight again very slowly.
6. Pull your arms back to your shoulders and straighten them out, fists tense, as fast as you can, several times.
7. Relax your hands to your sides and exhale forcefully through your mouth.
8. Practice a few deep breaths (FAT BREATHING).
9. Repeat this exercise several times until you feel its stimulating effects.

XIV. The Windmill

- A. This exercise is helpful when you have been bent over your work for several hours and are feeling tense.
 1. Stand up straight with your arms out in front of you.
 2. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath.
 3. Swing your arms backward in a circle several times and then reverse directions. For variety, try rotating them alternately like a windmill.
 4. Exhale forcefully through your mouth.
 5. Practice a couple of FAT BREATHS.
 6. Repeat this exercise as often as you like.

XV. Imagery

- A. Imagery uses our imagination and the “feeling” part of our to program (or reprogram) the body. Many top athletes use imagery to improve their performances.
- B. Example-The Garden Of Senses
 1. This exercise requires someone to read aloud or record the following on tape. A classical or instrumental music background is helpful.
 - a. With your eyes closed and while sitting in a comfortable position, imagine that you are walking into a garden that has been sealed off for years. You have been appointed as its caretaker.
 - b. You want to clear it of musty leaves and rotting branches, so you take a rake and all your gardening tools and start to clean. You untangle the overgrowth and cut off dead branches. You look in every corner and set everything right until the garden sparkles. Now you plant new flowers and shrubbery of many unusual textures and vibrant colors.

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- c. You hear beautiful sounds coming into the garden - humming insects, chirping birds, the sound of a distant waterfall, mostly the peacefulness of deep stillness. From this stillness your other senses become more acute.
- d. You smell things sharply - fresh pine, clean air, the scent of rose, jasmine, lilac, and other flowers; the earth, like a rich coffee, gives off a pungent smell. A smoky scent wafts through the air. Someone has started a campfire. Imagine tasting all the delicious foods, topped off by your favorite dessert. Your mouth waters.
- e. While you enjoy this imaginary feast, run your hands over the bark of the log you are sitting on; reach down and touch the cool, moist soil.
- f. You could stay in this garden forever; it gives you so much for so little care. Your sixth sense tells you this garden is perfect, and you can visit it anytime. It blooms inside your creative imagination, giving birth each day to new seeds and plants.
- g. Take a few deep breaths, breathing in the garden's air. Slowly open your eyes.

XVI. Stop Negative Thoughts

A. "Awesomizing"

- 1. Become aware of how you speak to yourself when you are "*awfulizing*."
- 2. Catch yourself saying "I can't," "I won't," or "I don't" statements.
- 3. Reframe these into "I can," "I will," or "I do" statements.
- 4. One way to do this right now is to write down four "*awfulizing*" sentences and then change them to "*awesomizing*" sentences.
- 5. Examples:
 - a. "I won't get more than a 'B' on my English test because the professor doesn't like me."
 - b. "I will work very hard to do my best."

XVII. Tips

- A. Make a special time to practice relaxation that fits into your schedule.
- B. Find a quiet, comfortable place, free from distraction.
- C. If possible, practice in the same spot each time.
- D. Use music or a taped sequence to enhance relaxation.
- E. Don't worry about how you are doing.
- F. Spend at least ten minutes on your relaxation exercises.
- G. Don't make too many changes at once.
- H. Don't expect change to happen quickly.

XVIII. Backsliding!

- A. Sometimes stress will "win out," and you'll feel like giving in to your past responses, falling back into old bad habits. You may find yourself eating sweets and drinking too much coffee

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and lazing in front of the television over-react, rather than doing exercises and practicing relaxation. Remember not to relax and get back on track.

RESOURCES

Web Sites:

Internet Mental Health, Stress Management for Patient and Physician:

<http://www.mentalhealth.com/mag1/p51-str.html>

Assess Your Stress Level:

www.stressless.com

Stress Journal:

www.stress.jrn.columbia.edu/site/index.html

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Stress Time Line

- 1956 - Publication of The Stress of Life puts STRESS in American vocabulary
- 1957 - Bufferin and Anacin coin “tension headache”
- 1959 - Maharishi Mahesh Yogi introduces Transcendental Meditation to U.S.
- 1962 - First spa opens in Big Sur, CA
- 1963 - Valium introduced to treat anxiety
- 1966 - Rolling Stones release “Mother’s Little Helper”
- 1968 - Aerobic craze begins
- 1973 - Xanax, antianxiety drug, appears on market
- 1974 - Dr. Freidman and Dr. Rosenman introduce Type A & Type B personality types
- 1974 - BioDot is invented; changes color with skin temperature; mood rings become the rage
- 1975 - “The Relaxation Response” by Dr. Benson
- 1978 - Prozac introduced
- 1980 - “Letting Go of Stress” relaxation tape
- 1983 - Time magazine has STRESS cover
- 1985 - “Calgon take me away” is used in commercials
- 1986 - “Going Postal” - postal worker kills himself and 14 coworkers
- 1990 - Dept. of Labor’s Occupational Safety & Health Admin. creates Office of Ergonomics Support
- 1991 - Nightline reports on workplace stress
- 1993 - Harvard study finds that 12.6 million Americans used massage therapy in 1990
- 1997 - St. John’s Wort, an herbal remedy, receives attention
- 1997 - The Ten-Minute Stress Manager audio cassette is released
- 1997 - Complete Idiot’s Guide to Managing Stress hits book stores
- 1999 - Stress industry in U.S. hits \$9.4 billion

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PERSONAL STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Using the space provided, write down your stressors. Writing them down helps clarify them, increases your awareness, and will make it easier to begin to make changes.

Work:

Personal:

Relationships/Family:

Habits (eating, sleeping, exercise):

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STEPS TO TAKE FOR EACH

Work:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Personal:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Relationships/Family:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Habits:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Stress Reducers-What Am I Doing?

A certain amount of stress makes life interesting and challenging. When there is too much stress, or a person is not managing stress well, illness can result. Below is a list of stress reducers. Check the items below that describe you.

1. _____ I sleep seven to eight hours at least four nights a week.
 2. _____ I have at least one relative or friend nearby on whom I can rely.
 3. _____ I drink fewer than five alcoholic beverages per week.
 4. _____ I give and receive affection regularly.
 5. _____ I exercise at least three times per week.
 6. _____ My income is adequate to meet my basic expenses.
 7. _____ I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
 8. _____ I am in good health (including vision, hearing, dental).
 9. _____ I am able to speak about my feelings when angry or worried.
 10. _____ I have regular conversations with people I live with about domestic problems (chores, money, and daily living issues).
 11. _____ I regularly participate in social or other activities.
 12. _____ I do something fun at least once a week.
 13. _____ I am able to manage my time well.
 14. _____ I eat a well-balanced diet, including adequate amounts of protein, fruits, and vegetables.
 15. _____ I am close to the appropriate weight for my height.
 16. _____ I get strength from my beliefs.
 17. _____ I drink less than four caffeinated beverages per day.
 18. _____ I get an adequate amount of quiet time for myself during the day.
 19. _____ I have one or more people to confide in about personal matters.
 20. _____ I have a plan to better manage the stresses in my life.
- _____ **Total number of checks.**

Add up the number of checks above. If there are seven or less, you may not be doing all you can to reduce or manage the stress in your life. Review the items above and identify one or two that you can do. For example, taking a long vigorous walk three times a week could improve your health at a stressful time in your life.

Penn State University

Center for Academic Achievement

200 University Drive; Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972 (570) 385-6140

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Stress Signs

- General irritability, excessive excitation
- Pounding of the heart
- Dryness of the mouth and throat
- Impulsive behavior
- Emotional extremes
- Inability to concentrate
- Feelings of weakness or dizziness
- Feeling tired
- Anxiety; feeling fearful
- Feeling “keyed up”
- Trembling
- Tendency to be easily startled
- Nervous laughter
- Stuttering and other speech difficulties
- Grinding teeth
- Insomnia
- Hyperactivity
- Sweating
- Frequent urination
- Diarrhea, indigestion, vomiting
- Migraine headaches
- Premenstrual tension/missed menstrual cycles
- Neck and lower back pain
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Increased smoking
- Increased use of mood-altering drugs
- Alcohol and drug addiction
- Nightmares
- Accident-prone
- Inappropriate or unusual behavior



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**Could Your Greatest Source of
Stress Be YOU?
(Take this test to find out)**

It's becoming increasingly clear to scientists that the amount of stress in our lives is not as important as how we react to that stress. A coolheaded company president can feel less stressed than a hotheaded janitor - and, hence, be at lower risk of such stress-related illnesses as heart disease, ulcers, and cancer.

To find out where you stand in your own vulnerability to stress, give some honest thought to the following questions and circle the appropriate answers.

| | | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely |
|-----|--|---------|-----------|--------|
| 1. | You are easily annoyed or frustrated. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. | You hate to lose. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. | You get angry but don't show your feelings if someone crosses or criticizes you. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. | You get very impatient if made to wait in a line. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. | You have a way of taking on more responsibility than you feel comfortable with. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. | You have trouble asking for help when you think you need it. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. | You resort to alcohol, tranquilizers, or other drugs to help you cope. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. | You discuss problems with other people you feel you can trust. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. | You have trouble apologizing when you make a mistake. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. | You blame yourself and worry when you make a mistake. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. | You let people know if they've hurt your feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. | You feel you give more to family and friends than you receive. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. | You take time to relax or enjoy recreational activities and entertainment. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. | You find time for daily or almost daily exercise. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. | You smile and laugh a lot. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Scoring

15-25: Low Risk. Congratulations on being a cucumber. The cool way in which you handle life's daily hassles should help you live happily and long.

26-35: Moderate Risk. You're a cucumber with splashes of Tabasco sauce. Your personality and methods of handling stress put you in moderate danger of developing a stress-related illness.

36-45: High Risk. You're a Mexican red pepper. Your coping strategies put you at high risk of a stress-related illness, and you should make efforts to chill out. Try being easier on yourself and less critical of others. Get better at sharing problems rather than keeping them bottled up. Try, too, to release tension through enjoyable exercise, recreational activities, and relaxation.

Adapted from a more extensive questionnaire developed by Elliott J. Howard, M.D. for Health Risks (Los Angeles, CA: The Body Press, 1986).

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