

the

stress

profiler

The Stress Profiler

Student Version



A
simple,
self-
scoring,
stress test
that will
teach you
as much
about
yourself
as it will
about stress.

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Read each statement and trust your first response.

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James E. Porter

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instructions

There are ten sections in this Stress Profiler. Each section has ten statements. Briefly evaluate each statement and indicate how you feel about that statement by using a number from 1 to 4.

1 = strongly disagree,
2 = moderately disagree,
3 = moderately agree,
4 = strongly agree.

EXAMPLE:

I feel like my life is out of my control. ____

If you **strongly disagree** with this statement, put a 1 in the space afterwards. If you **moderately disagree** with the statement, put a 2. If you **moderately agree**, put a 3. If you **strongly agree**, put a 4.

After you've finished all ten sections, you'll be given instructions for tallying and evaluating your scores.

section one

1. I often blame other



people for the bad things that happen to me. ____

2. I overeat when I'm stressed. ____

3. My desk and/or book bag is disorganized and messy. ____

4. I don't write down my assignments in a notebook or planner where I can easily keep track of them. ____

5. I feel overwhelmed. ____

6. I feel like someone else is in control of my life. ____

7. I often waste time looking for things like lost books, assignments, keys, etc. ____

8. I have trouble saying no to people who ask favors of me. ____

9. My desk, room and/or closets are full of clutter. ____

10. I am always running late. ____

TOTAL ____

section two

support



1. When I'm down, it feels like there is no one I can turn to. ____

2. I can't really talk to my parents about what's going on in my life. ____

3. I wish I had friends I could rely on for important advice. ____

4. I don't belong to any clubs, sports teams or participate in any extra-curricular activities. ____

5. My family is not really there for me when I need them. ____

6. There is no one in school or college I would readily turn to for advice like a guidance counselor or advisor. ____

7. If I suffered from depression or an addiction, I'd be reluctant to join a support group. ____

8. I rarely attend church or religious services. ____

9. I'd be reluctant to seek out counseling for a psychological problem. ____

10. I do not have anyone I consider to be a mentor. ____

TOTAL ____

section four

money issues



section three

stress resilience

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = moderately agree
- 4 = strongly agree

1. I frequently let little things bother me. ____
 2. I often doubt that things are going to turn out OK. ____
 3. I am sometimes paralyzed by indecision. ____
 4. Spirituality, or belief in God, does not play a very big role in my life. ____
 5. I have a poor self-image and/or low self-esteem. ____
 6. I am not very flexible: I don't handle change very well. ____
 7. When I'm under stress, I rarely see the big picture. ____
 8. In an argument I feel like I have to be right. ____
 9. I find it really hard to bounce back after a big let down. ____
 10. I have trouble making decisions. ____
- TOTAL** ____

1. Money is a big issue in my family. ____
2. I occasionally borrow money from friends and am unable to pay them back. ____
3. I feel badly about missing out on certain activities and opportunities at school or college because I know my family can't afford them. ____
4. I have to work part-time (or full time) to support myself and/or my family and this is adversely affecting my studies. ____
5. I should be able to afford all the things that other students have. ____
6. I argue with my parents about money. ____
7. I frequently overhear my parents arguing about money. ____
8. I'm jealous of my friends whose families have money. ____
9. My siblings get more financial support than I do. ____
10. I shouldn't have to wait (or save money) for the expensive things I really want or need now. ____

TOTAL ____



section five

time pressure



1. I am often late for school or classes in the morning. ____
2. I stay up late trying to finish my assignments. ____
3. I often have more work than I can do in one night. ____
4. I wish I had more free time in my schedule. ____
5. I have a part-time (or full-time) job. ____
6. I am always feeling rushed. ____
7. I wish my parents weren't always pushing me so hard. ____
8. I never get a sense of completion at the end of the day. ____
9. I often participate in more than one extra-curricular activity in the same season (like soccer and band). ____
10. I often leave things until the last minute. ____

TOTAL ____

section six

worry/fear

1. I frequently wake up in the night worrying. _____
2. I often worry about getting bad grades. _____
3. I often worry that my friends will not like me. _____
4. I worry about my parents dying. _____
5. I worry about appearing stupid in class or in front of my friends. _____
6. I worry about life changes that lie ahead, such as learning to drive, getting into college, or finding a job. _____
7. I am afraid people are going to find out my fears and ridicule me. _____
8. I am afraid of being bullied or harassed at school or on campus. _____
9. Certain fears affect what I do on a regular basis. _____
10. I am afraid of trying something new (like a new sport or activity) that I really want to try. _____

TOTAL _____



section seven

anger

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = moderately agree
- 4 = strongly agree.

1. Members of my family often make me feel angry. _____
2. I get annoyed easily. _____
3. I hold a grudge. _____
4. I lose my temper easily. _____
5. I hit things or throw things when I get upset. _____
6. I curse and/or yell when I get angry. _____
7. I find myself getting annoyed in the car when I, or the person driving, gets stuck behind a slow driver. _____
8. I get angry in public. _____
9. Life seems so unfair. _____
10. I can't stand losing. _____

TOTAL _____

section eight

stress symptoms

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = moderately agree
- 4 = strongly agree.

1. After a difficult day, I get a stiff neck or shoulder tension. _____
2. I get anxious *just thinking* about taking a test. _____
3. I get anxious *just thinking* about a certain teacher or professor. _____
4. I get recurrent colds or my colds seem to last a long time. _____
5. I often rely on non-prescription medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen antacids, etc. _____
6. I often get tension headaches. _____
7. When life seems hard, I am tempted to take drugs as a means of escape. _____
8. I find myself feeling irritated with people and situations that never irritated me before. _____
9. Nothing seems to make me happy anymore. _____
10. I have trouble sleeping. _____

TOTAL _____

what's your

stress profile?

Tally your score for each section and enter the totals below. If you scored 20 or more on any one section, you should read more about that subject. Turn to the corresponding page number for more information.

section	score	see page#
section one	___	6
section two	___	7
section three	___	8
section four	___	9
section five	___	10
section six	___	11
section seven	___	12
section eight	___	13
section nine	___	14
section ten	___	15
Grand Total	___	

Determine your stress profile on page 16. If your score falls within 5-10 points of another profile, consider yourself a mix of these two and read up on both.

Transfer the above scores to the graph on page 16 for more tips on handling stress.

section nine
stress outlets



- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = moderately agree
- 4 = strongly agree

1. I rarely get any aerobic exercise. ___
2. I'm so busy, there's never any time for myself. ___
3. I almost never read for pleasure. ___
4. I don't have friends I can relax and unwind with. ___
5. I rarely use humor as an outlet for stress. ___
6. I enjoy listening to music but rarely find time to do it. ___
7. I rarely take long showers or hot baths just to relax. ___
8. My weekends are more stressful than relaxing. ___
9. I rarely participate in relaxing activities like yoga, meditation, or Tai Chi. ___
10. Hobbies don't interest me. ___

TOTAL ___



section ten
student stress



- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = moderately agree
- 4 = strongly agree

1. I rarely have adequate time to finish my assignments. ___
2. I wait till the last minute to do my assignments. ___
3. Peer pressure is a major source of stress in school or college. ___
4. Occasionally, I feel like I'm being harassed by other students. ___
5. I get in trouble with my parents when my grade point average falls below a 3.0. ___
6. Grading often seems so unfair. ___
7. I frequently worry about finding a good job after I finish school or college. ___
8. I have trouble concentrating in class. ___
9. Tests are a major source of stress in my life. ___
10. I'm falling seriously behind in one or more of my courses. ___

TOTAL ___

section one

about control



Do you remember the first time you walked to the corner store alone or drove by yourself to a friend's house? Chances are, these were exhilarating moments because you felt a growing sense of control over your own life. When you feel like you're in the driver's seat of your own life, you feel invigorated and empowered. Stress just rolls right off your back. Conversely, when your life feels out of control there's a good chance that you'll feel overwhelmed and stressed.

Get organized. Be on time.

Feeling like life is out of your control can be caused by many factors. Disorganization is one example. When your world is disorganized and messy you forget the one book you need most, you lose track of important due dates, you misplace your assignments and so forth. This level of disorganization will make you crazy. When this occurs you need to take control.

Begin by straightening out your desk. Organize your loose-leaf notebook, your locker and clean out your back-pack. Devote at least one Saturday a month to simply organizing your life.

Always running late is another example of something that will leave you feeling out of control. To remedy this problem, commit yourself to this one simple idea: *if you're not early, you're late*. Think about it, when you

always aim at arriving places *on time*, if you are delayed by just a few minutes, *you'll be late*. But when you always aim at arriving early, chances are, you'll always be on time. So get up a bit earlier on school days. **Get things ready the night before.** Put your back pack by the front door. And allow more than enough time to get ready. Aim to arrive at your destination *at least* 5-10 minutes early and notice how much better you feel when you don't have to rush to get there.

Try to determine what you can control and what you can't.

When a particular situation seems out of control, stand back and look at it objectively. Try to determine what aspects of the situation you *can* control and what aspects you *can't*. You may *not* be able to change the flight path of noisy planes flying over your house at night but you *can* buy

ear plugs or turn on a fan or an air-conditioner to drown out the noise. But even if these options fail, *don't give up*. That will leave you feeling *even more* out of control. You must take some action. For example, you could help organize a neighborhood coalition to negotiate with the airport, or enlist the support of your state or federal representative. **Sometimes taking any action, even if it doesn't immediately change the situation, will still help you feel more in-control.**

And that's the mystery of control: An action doesn't necessarily have to change anything to make you feel more in control. *Control is all in your mind. If you believe you are in control of your life, you are.* So, always take some step, any step - no matter how small - and keep taking these steps, until you *feel* more in control. ♦

section

1

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Things you can do to feel more in

c · o · n · t · r · o · l

- 1. Develop a comfortable morning routine:** get up earlier, get things ready the night before such as lunches, attire, etc.
- 2. Arrive early.** Commit yourself to arriving places 5-10 minutes early.
- 3. Celebrate "organization day"** at least one Saturday a month. Do nothing but organize all day.
- 4. Organize your life.** Clean your desk, organize your back pack, your lockers, your notebooks, and your closet.
- 5. Take any action, no matter how small,** to resolve a situation that feels out of control.

for more information

suggested reading



Organizing from the Inside Out for Teens,* Julie Morgenstern, Henry Holt & Co.

Simple Steps: Ten Weeks to Getting Control of Your Life, Lisa Lelas, et al, New American Library.

*Adult version also available.

section

2



section two

about support

It's been said that 85% of our satisfaction in life comes from our **inter-personal relationships** (i.e., social support) and less than 15% comes from material things like cars, new gadgets or money. Yet most of us live our lives as though these figures were exactly the opposite.

You may not be aware of the beneficial effects close relationships (or social support) can have on your self-esteem, happiness and well-being. People sometimes experience this when they grow up in supportive, close-knit families. Others experience this for the first time when falling in love.

In the beginning stages of a romance nothing bothers the love-struck victim. He or she is temporarily immune to stress. To put it simply, falling in love and being in love, make you feel good. And there's not a gadget on earth that can substitute for this powerful emotional lift.

for more information

suggested reading



The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens,* Sean Covey, Simon & Schuster

Chicken Soup for The Teenage Soul for Teens,* Jack Canfield, HCI

*Adult version also available.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Things you can do to improve your social

S·U·P·P·O·R·T

- 1. Relationships are more important than things.** 85% of your satisfaction in life comes from your relationships with people.
- 2. Connect with your family.** Find ways to connect with family members who matter to you most: at dinner time, over the phone, during the holidays and at informal get-togethers.
- 3. Foster your current friendships.** Devote time every day to getting to know people *even better* than you already know them.
- 4. Join a community group, religious organization or club.**
- 5. Keep in touch.** Call an old friend who makes you laugh.
- 6. Join a support group** for troubling health issues that won't go away.

But close relationships take time to foster and build... both new ones and existing ones. You can't expect to create a meaningful relationship with someone without dedicating a significant amount of time to interacting and being together. This is what people falling in love do without even realizing it. But after a while you may spend less and less time interacting and begin to take your relationship for granted. One study showed the average married couple spends less than five minutes per day in meaningful conversation! This is not enough time to maintain a satisfying relationship.

There are all kinds of relationships that can be meaningful and supportive. You may have a girlfriend or a boyfriend or a best friend, or a parent you feel close to. You may have mentors, coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, ministers and spiritual leaders you can talk to. These are relationships you want to foster. When you get hit with a problem you can't solve, one of these people will undoubtedly help you sort things out. Don't try to be tough and

keep your problems to yourself. That will only make your situation worse.

Research shows that people who seek out the help of friends and the advice of counselors feel less stressed, are more at peace with themselves and actually live longer, happier lives.

Seek out those people who have experienced, or are experiencing, the same problems you are. You will be surprised how therapeutic it can be to find someone who shares the same problems, feels the same fears, has the same worries and experiences the same stresses that you do. Just knowing that even one person feels the exact same way you do, makes your problems seem more bearable.

The bottom line is this: **supportive relationships are beneficial to your health.** Once you understand the therapeutic benefit of building and maintaining your network of social support, you won't need a good reason to call an old friend; you'll need a good reason *not to*. ♦

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ways to help you increase your

resilience

- 1. Build your coping resources.** Meditate and/or exercise on a regular basis.
- 2. Be flexible.** Inflexible thinking can lock you into old unproductive patterns of behavior.
- 3. See setbacks as temporary.** Trust that you'll come out OK on the other side of a crisis.
- 4. Nurture an attitude of gratitude.** Make a mental list of everything you have to be thankful for before you fall asleep at night.
- 5. Take action.** Don't let your problems cripple you to the point of inertia or *inaction*.



for more information

suggested reading



Bouncing Off and Bouncing Back, Robert Wandberg, Capstone Press.
The Resilience Factor, Karen Reivich, Ph.D., Broadway Books.

section three

stress resilience

Webster's dictionary defines **resilience** as: *The ability to bounce or spring back into shape after being stretched, bent or compressed.*

Resilience in regards to stress is defined as building your coping resources and learning how to be more flexible. This includes: seeing serious problems as temporary setbacks and looking forward instead of backward. It also includes staying positive in the face of adversity and fostering an attitude of gratitude. As one writer put it: *When it comes to the ups and downs of life, it's not how far you fall but how high you bounce.*

Some people are just naturally more stress resilient. We all know that certain friend or teacher who seems unfazed by anything. Stress just rolls right off his or her back. Besides using the behavior of this stress resilient person as a model, here are seven things you can do to boost your own stress resilience:

1. Build your coping resources. Exercise, meditate, practice yoga or some other form of relax-

ation on a regular basis. These activities not only help you relax after a stressful day, they help you handle stress better in the future.

2. Be flexible. Trees and shrubs that don't bend in the wind will break. Learn how to go with the flow or you will break too. Begin by learning how to compromise. The sooner you learn that your way isn't the only way, the sooner you will see how to move through a stressful crisis. It may be inflexible thinking that got you into the difficult situation in the first place.

3. Seek support. Your older siblings, parents, advisors and counselors can help you weather any storm. These are your pillars of strength. Don't be afraid to lean on them in times of trouble. Tell these supportive people exactly what is going on: *I'm failing in math. I feel really depressed. I am having trouble with people I thought were my friends.* There is an old saying that applies here: *A problem shared is a problem halved.*

4. See setbacks as temporary. We all have a tendency to "awfulize" and believe that the worst possible scenario is the most likely scenario. Try your best to move through times of crisis knowing that eventually you are going to come out OK on the other side.

5. Nurture an attitude of gratitude. Before going to bed at night make a mental list of everything you have to be grateful for. Gratitude is one of the basic underpinnings of happiness and stress resilience.

6. Develop your spiritual resources. Strong spiritual beliefs are a great antidote for stress. When you truly believe that everything happens for a reason, your stress resilience is going to go sky high.

7. Take action. Don't let your problems cripple you to the point of inertia, or *inaction*. Take any action that moves you forward even if it is only a "baby step."

Stress resilience is about facing stress head on and looking at stressful situations as opportunities for growth. Begin to see your stress like a professional athlete sees a workout or practice: *It's how you get better at what you do.* Your stress is like a workout for your mind. It builds character and exercises your problem-solving ability. It's part of being human. When you see stress in this way - and learn to take it in stride - you will begin to appreciate life more, enjoy challenges and overcome obstacles that only *temporarily* block your way. ♦



money issues

Money is a major source of stress. Parents fight about it, siblings quibble over it, kids get into arguments with their parents about it, and young people who don't have it, envy those who do.

Advertising directs our wants and needs.

One way to overcome the stress associated with money (and not having enough of it) is to understand the differences between what you *want* and what you *need*. Most of us already have what we truly need but TV and magazine advertisements try to convince us otherwise. These clever ads make us feel as though we *need* things like *fashionable* clothes, the latest electronic gadget, or the coolest pair of sneakers or shoes. But these desires aren't actually needs. They're *wants*.

The next time you watch TV, notice how advertisers try to lead you into believing that you'll be happier, more popular, or better off, if you just buy their product. (This is what transforms a *want* into a *need*.) If the ad works, you buy the item because you think you *need* it. This makes you feel happier for a while - but these feelings seldom last. If you can't

afford to buy the item, you wind up thinking: *if only I had enough money to buy it, then I would be happy.*

But having money is not the key to happiness either. It does buy things we *truly* need like *adequate* shelter, food, clothing and transportation, but it doesn't buy love, friendship, health, or inner peace which are also essential needs. By focusing more on what you really need in life (and in fact, may already have) you can learn to turn off the sense of longing you feel for things you *want* but don't actually *need*.

Learning how to be happy with what you already have.

To start this process, ask yourself: *What do I have right now that I am grateful for?* Whether it's loving parents, a good group of friends, a comfortable home, plenty of food to eat, a hobby that you really enjoy, a sport that you're good at, an academic subject you excel in, or an extra-curricular activity that interests you, these are all things that bring *lasting* happiness. Be thankful for these things that are really important and you'll begin to realize how trivial your other so-called needs are.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Things you can do to decrease problems with

m·o·n·e·y

- 1. Wants and needs.** Don't confuse what you *want* with what you *need*.
- 2. Be grateful for what you already have** like friends, family and enough food to eat.
- 3. Advertising elevates a want into a need** by promising you status and happiness that doesn't last long.
- 4. Focus on your real needs** for love, health, happiness, *adequate* shelter, food, clothing, and transportation.
- 5. Our society idolizes wealth and fame.** Be aware that you will stand out in a crowd if you take a different path.



Wealthy people know better than anyone that money can't buy happiness. Take a look at the complicated lives of famous actors and rock stars and you'll see that money and happiness are not necessarily linked. These wealthy celebrities often have (or come from) dysfunctional families and suffer from drug addiction, anxiety, depression, anorexia, and other serious mental health problems. Even studies of lottery winners show that these newly-made millionaires are often no happier (or even less happy) a year *after* winning a big pay-out than they were before.

Our society idolizes wealth.

Unfortunately, we live in a society that idolizes wealth. And many people may say they agree with the opinions expressed here, but *act* in ways that don't. So if you are still confused, ask a mentor, a wise grandparent or a spiritual counselor. They'll tell you that the things you *can't* buy like health, friendship, contentment, self-esteem, being loved and giving love are all priceless and the things you *can* buy like cars, clothes and electronics will eventually all become worthless. ♦

for more information

suggested reading



thy Miller, Ph.D., Avon Books.

*Adult version also available.

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section five

about time pressure

If you scored high in this section, look for the statements you *strongly agreed* with and examine these areas first. These statements (and your responses) are like red flags, begging for your attention. For example, if you strongly agreed with the statement: *I wish I had more free time in my schedule*; You need to ask yourself, “How can I solve this problem?”

In this case, you might realize that: There is an extra curricular activity you can drop; An honors course you can opt out of; A way of getting credit for something you enjoy, like photography or band; Or, a lab course that doesn't have as much homework as a normal class. Let the statements you strongly agreed with, shine a spotlight on your areas of greatest need.

Second, you need to learn how to organize and prioritize your time. **Keep a calendar in the front of your notebook with due dates for all your assignments for the month ahead.** Next to the calendar keep a running list of all the things you have to do in the week ahead. Be sure to include regular chores as well as smaller sections of larger assignments that are due later in the month.

Go through your list and number each item in order of importance or categorize your tasks into A-priority (most important) B-priority (important) and C-priority (least important). A term paper due in two days is an A-priority task and cleaning your room may be a C. But if you can't find the notes you took for the paper because your room is such a mess, your C-priority task may move up to an A.

Once you prioritize the work you have to do, you need to schedule when you are going to do it. Write the tasks back down on the calendar if you have room or get a day planner

with slots for each hour of every day. Don't try to schedule more than one or two hours of work without a short break in between. As you get better at organizing your time, you'll begin to notice the times of the day when you are the most productive, (where you can really concentrate) and the times when you are the least productive. Schedule your hardest A-priority tasks for those times when you can really focus and work without a lot of distractions.

Big tasks must be broken down into smaller tasks that you can tackle in steps. A research paper might be broken down into: 1. Selecting a topic. 2. Choosing reference materials. 3. Studying and taking notes. 4. Reviewing the notes. 5. Writing the first draft. 6. Editing the first draft. 7. Writing the next draft and so on. Now write each step into your calendar on different days so the work doesn't all pile up at the end.



Save easy tasks that require little or no concentration, like tidying your room or organizing your notebook, for times in the day when your focus is not as good. And when phone calls interrupt your concentration, politely ask friends if you can get back to them later.

There's a lot more to learn about organizing and prioritizing your time but this is a good start. When you begin to manage your time in this way, you'll feel more productive, less stressed and more in control. ♦

for more information



suggested reading

First Things First, Stephen Covey, Ph.D., Free Press.

Daily Life Strategies for Teens, Jay McGraw, Simon & Schuster.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ways to reduce hassles and time

p · r · e · s · s · u · r · e

- 1. Review the statements you *strongly agreed* with.** These are areas where you probably need to make changes.
- 2. Make a weekly to-do list** from your calendar for the month ahead.
- 3. Prioritize your list** in order of importance.
- 4. Break down big jobs** into smaller more doable tasks and write them into your calendar on different days.
- 5. Schedule the tasks** in one or two hour blocks of time leaving short breaks in between.

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