

BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGER

Stressful Activities Manager

Instructions:

Rate each of the following statements on a scale from 0-4 according to how much of the time each statement applies to you.

0–Never 1–Rarely 2–Sometimes 3–Most of the Time 4–Almost Always

1.	I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.
2.	I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
3.	I give and receive affection regularly.
4.	I have at least one relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.
5.	I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice weekly.
6.	I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
7.	I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.
8.	I am the appropriate weight for my height.
9.	I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.
10.	I get strength from my spiritual beliefs.
11.	I regularly attend club or social activities.
12.	I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
13.	I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
14.	I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth).
15.	I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
16.	I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems (such as chores, money, and daily issues).
17.	I do something for fun at least once a week.
18.	I am able to organize my time effectively.
19.	I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or tea or cola drinks) a day.
20.	I take quiet time for myself during the day.
TOTAL	

When you total your score, the maximum possible is 80.

The higher your score, the less stress is making an impact on your daily activities.

Look at the questions to which you answered 0, 1, or 2.

What changes can you make that will bring you up to a 3 or 4 in those areas?

STRESS AND BURNOUT

Burnout can be very damaging. It can result from the combination of effects from one's emotional feelings of guilt, lack of recognition, helplessness, family discord, isolation and much more.

Mixed with the demands upon your own strength, resources, time and energy, it is easy to understand why so many people experience this sense of utter depletion. Burnout affects your health, motivation, attitude and mood. It can flow over into your personal life as well, especially if you are not conscious as it happens to you.

CAUSES OF BURNOUT	SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT
The need for approval from others	Insomnia, headaches, lethargy
Inability to say no	Pessimism, anger, resentment
Perfectionism and high expectation of yourself and others	Frustration and easily aroused irritation
Not reaching out for support and help	Lack of motivation
Not having a social life, not living your own life fully	Loss of self-confidence, self-esteem
Not being able to delegate responsibility to others	Gastrointestinal symptoms, skin conditions

PRESCRIPTION FOR BURNOUT PREVENTION

Awareness is key

- Recognize symptoms
- Catch it early – before it gets out of hand – burnout is not an event, it is a process

Are you contributing to your own burnout?

- Acceptance of personal responsibility – don't blame outside factors – take control
- Don't surrender your personal power and fall into victim role
- Avoid assuming burdens that are the responsibility of others

Distinguish between what

CAN and CANNOT be changed

- What CAN you do to create changes that will make your work environment better?
- Evaluate your goals, priorities, expectations – are they realistic? Are they working?

Develop new coping skills and refine old ones

- Learn to ask for what you want (Don't always expect to receive it.)
- Find meaning through play, travel, new experiences
- Take time to evaluate meaningfulness of projects
- Learn your limits – set limits with others
- Form a support group with colleagues
- Reinforce each other's work
- Focus on positive work aspects
- Cultivate some hobbies that bring pleasure
- Make time for spiritual growth
- Seek counseling as an avenue of personal development

Check the symptoms of stress exhaustion you have noticed lately in yourself.

PHYSICAL

- Appetite change
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Fatigue
- Sleep change
- Weight change
- Colds
- Heart disease
- Digestive upsets, ulcers
- Pounding heart
- Accident prone
- Teeth grinding
- Rashes
- Restlessness
- High blood pressure
- Cancer
- Increased alcohol, drug, tobacco use

SPIRITUAL

- Emptiness
- Loss of meaning
- Doubt
- Unforgiving
- Martyrdom
- Looking for magic
- Loss of direction
- Needing to "prove" self
- Cynicism
- Apathy
- Lack of self-love/acceptance

EMOTIONAL

- Anxiety
- Frustration
- The "blues"
- Mood swings
- Bad temper
- Nightmares

- Crying spells
- Irritability
- "No one cares"
- Depression
- Nervous laugh
- Worrying
- Easily discouraged
- Little joy
- Numbness

MENTAL

- Forgetfulness
- Dull senses
- Poor concentration
- Low productivity
- Negative attitude
- Confusion
- Lethargy
- Whirling thoughts
- No new ideas
- Boredom
- Spacing out
- Negative self-talk

RELATIONAL

- Isolation
- Intolerance
- Loneliness
- Lashing out
- Hiding
- Clamming up
- Lowered sex drive
- Nagging
- Distrust
- Fewer contacts with friends
- Lack of intimacy
- Using people
- Judgmental



PLUGGING IN SUGGESTION

PHYSICAL

Exercise regularly – 15-20 minutes of vigorous exercise per day 3x/week is recommended. Jogging, walking, swimming, tennis or any form of exercise can be helpful. Check with your doctor if you have not exercised in some time.

Relaxation techniques – Take 10 minutes to sit quietly and alternate between tensing and relaxing your muscles. There are many others to choose from also.

Eat sensibly – Avoid high intake of fat, cholesterol, sugar and salt. Choose more high fiber foods, fresh fruit and vegetables.

Follow sensible drinking habits – Avoid self-medication. Alcohol is a sedative and can become habit forming.

Stop smoking – Persons who stop smoking immediately begin to reduce their risk of developing heart disease and cancer.

Think healthy – Take time to develop healthful safety habits that make you feel good and keep you safe.

RELATIONSHIP

Develop friendships – We need relationships for our health. Our fulfillment is giving to our friends and allowing them to give to us. Give compliments. Accept compliments.

Reach out – No one knows our needs unless we let them know. Take the risk and reach out.

Express your emotions – So much energy is used to “bottle up” feelings. Think about how much you “free up” by expressing your feelings to people you care for and trust – write.

Join a group – We all need to belong and groups can provide a feeling of belonging. It’s a place where we can accept ourselves and accept others.

INTELLECTUAL

Work on your fears – Take a course or get more information that may help you overcome your fears. Facing your fears is half the battle.

Develop your sense of humor – Learn to laugh at yourself and with life. Find humor in things. Life is serious enough as it is.

Accept yourself – None of us is perfect. Learn how to love and care for yourself in the same way you do for others around you. You are important.

You are what you think – You will follow your most predominant positive or negative thoughts. Be aware of what those are. You can change these to more positive thoughts. They are, after all, your thoughts.

Develop your creative side – Take a class, read, challenge yourself with a hobby.

SPIRITUAL

Listen to the inner you – Take time to nourish your spiritual needs and replenish yourself. This can be through actions such as prayer, meditation, confession, worship, fellowship, and reflection.

Taking time for you – Taking time makes “me” feel whole.

Spend time in nature – Take walks, go camping, get in touch with something larger than you.

Music – Listen to music which stimulates alpha waves.

Do whatever -- Connect you with your inner self, your spiritual self.



Coping Self-Talk

Preparing For or Anticipating Stress

- What is it I have to do? Focus on dealing with it.
- Just take one step at a time.
- Just think about what you can do about it. That's better than getting anxious.
- No negative or panicky self-statements; just think rationally.
- Don't worry; worry doesn't help anything.

Confronting and Handling Stress

- Don't think about fear; just think about what you have to do.
- Stay relevant.
- Relax; you're in control. Take a slow, deep breath. Ah, good.
- You should expect some anxiety; it's a reminder not to panic and to relax and to cope steadily with the situation.
- Tenseness can be an ally, a friend; it's a cue to cope.

Coping with the Feeling of Being Overwhelmed

- When the fear comes, just pause.
- Keep the focus on the present; what is it you have to do?
- You should expect your fear to rise some.
- Don't try to eliminate fear totally; just keep it manageable.
- You can convince yourself to do it. You can reason your fear away.
- It's not the worst thing that can happen.
- Do something that will prevent you from thinking about fear.
- Describe what is around you. That way you won't think about worrying.

Reinforcing Self-Statements

- It worked! You did it!
- It wasn't as bad as you expected.
- You made more out of the fear than it was worth.
- You're getting better. You're learning to cope smoothly.
- You can be pleased with your progress.
- You like how you handled it. You can be proud of it.



ATTITUDE

- A** – Accept the fact that this is the life you have chosen. This is the job you have chosen. No one forced you into this situation. You are where you are, who you are and doing what you have chosen to do. You are a total summation of all of your choices.

If you can't accept those facts then...

- T** – Take action. Make the changes necessary. What about your job (or your life) do you like? Be honest in that evaluation. Does the bad really outweigh the good?

What changes can you initiate that will help you to...

- T** – Take pride in what you do. You bring a uniqueness, a special gift to this world that only you can provide. Make a list of all your qualities. Focus on the special things that you do that are not required in your job. But you do them anyway.

Then...

- I** – Identify the things that require change. Perhaps your attitude toward life or a particular part of your work is poor because it is boring or repetitive. Make a list of those things and ask yourself, "How can I do this differently?"

Then...

- T** – Talk to others about your concerns. Sit down with your co-workers and ask them to evaluate your work in that area. Be open to suggestions. Talk to family and friends about how they perceive you. Talk about your concerns and desires to change. You may find that the help and support you need is abundant. Just knowing that you have help, will begin a transformation in your attitude toward the challenges you have set for yourself.

But...

- U** – Ultimately the burden is on your shoulders. You choose the attitude you have. No one can do it for you. You can either continue to moan and groan about the things you don't like or do something about it.

To begin...

- D** – Develop a plan. Set goals. Commit yourself to a date when all will be completed. Then work backwards. If in a month you want to reach your goals then break them down to what you will accomplish each week and then each day. At the end of each day, celebrate and reward yourself for whatever you accomplished.

And do it with...

- E** – Enthusiasm. My attitude toward what I do for a living shows. Anything done with enthusiasm draws attention and support.

"Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes"