



the
STRESS Profiler

Student Version

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



SECTION ONE
CONTROL



SECTION TWO
SUPPORT

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.

The Stress Profiler
Student Version
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1. I often blame other people for the bad things that happen to me.

2. I snack when I'm stressed.

3. My desk and/or backpack is disorganized and messy.

4. I forget to write down my assignments or check them online.

5. I feel overwhelmed.

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

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 room and/or closet is full of clutter.

10. I am always running late.

TOTAL _____

1. When I'm depressed, 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 I would readily turn to for advice like a guidance counselor, teacher, or advisor.

7. If I suffered from depression or an addiction, I wouldn't want anyone to know about it.

8. I rarely, if ever, attend community events or religious services.

9. I'd be reluctant to seek out counseling or join a support group for a mental health issue.

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

TOTAL _____



SECTION THREE

STRESS RESILIENCE

1. I frequently let little things bother me.

 2. I often doubt that things are going to turn out OK.

 3. I feel stuck in life.

 4. Spirituality 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 well.

 7. When I'm stressed out, 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 _____



SECTION FOUR

MONEY ISSUES

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 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.

 5. I wish I was 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 envious 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 _____

DONOTDUPLICATE

1 SECTION ONE **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, always running late, and taking on too many extra-curriculars are all examples. 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 notebooks, your locker, and clean out your backpack. Devote at least one day 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 aim at arriving places on time and you are delayed by just a few minutes, you'll be late. But when you aim at arriving early, chances are, you'll be on time. So get up a bit earlier on school days. **Get things ready the night before.** Put your backpack 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 night construction or loud neighbors 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 talk to your RA if you live in a dorm or email a representative from your local government. **Sometimes taking any action, even if it doesn't immediately change the situation, will still help you feel more in-control.**

Learning how to say no, especially to an adult, can be difficult. Try saying, "let me check my schedule and I will get back to you." That gives you some extra time to decide whether this is something you really should do or something you can avoid doing. ☹

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO FEEL MORE IN **CONTROL**

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



2 SECTION TWO SUPPORT

It's been said that 85% of our satisfaction in life comes from our interpersonal relationships (i.e., social support) and less than 15% comes from material things like cars, technology, 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.

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. But after a while you may spend less and less time interacting and begin to take your relationship for granted. One study showed that the average couple spends less than twenty minutes per day in meaningful conversation.

This is not enough time to maintain a satisfying relationship. Supportive relationships are beneficial to your health.

There are all kinds of relationships that can be meaningful and supportive. You may have a girlfriend, a boyfriend, a best friend, or a parent you feel close to. You may have mentors, coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, roommates, 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 often makes 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 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 keep in touch with an old friend; you'll need a good reason not to. ☺

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BUILD YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT

- 1 Connect with your family.** Find ways to connect with adults in your extended family who you know you can relate to. Maybe it's a favorite uncle, grandparent, or godparent. Maybe it's a family friend who is like an aunt or uncle. Don't forget your parents. Believe it or not, they were teenagers once too.
- 2 Find friends who know how to listen.** Everyone wants to give you advice, but the friend who really listens and relates to what you are going through can be the most helpful in terms of social support.
- 3 Check out the social support resources in your school.** School counselors and social workers are there to help you with a whole variety of problems from academic to personal.
- 4 Keep in touch with friends that share your sense of humor.** Call a friend who makes you laugh.
- 5 Join a support group of like-minded people.** There are support groups for every problem under the sun and if you don't find one that matches your particular need, maybe you can even start one!



3 SECTION THREE 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, teacher, or professor who seems unfazed by anything. Stress just rolls right off his or her back. Besides using the behavior of this 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, or practice yoga, or some other form of relaxation 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 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. 🌞

WAYS TO HELP 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 will 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.



4 SECTION FOUR MONEY ISSUES



Money is a major source of stress. Parents fight about it, siblings squabble 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 commercials 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 device, or the coolest pair of sneakers or shoes. But these desires aren't 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 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 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.

Learn 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 truly important and you'll begin to realize how trivial your other so-called needs are.

Wealthy people know better than anyone that money can't buy happiness. Take a look at the compli-

cated lives of famous actors, reality TV stars, and musicians 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, an advisor, 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. ☹

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO DECREASE PROBLEMS WITH MONEY

- 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 do not 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 these things don't bring lasting happiness.



SUGGESTED
READING

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Money for Teens - Susan Shelley
How to Want What You Have - Timothy Miller, Ph.D.

5 SECTION FIVE 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 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: 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 bands; 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 or planner and mark down due dates for all your assignments for the month or semester ahead.** Once you write down the work you have to do, you need to schedule when you are going to do it. 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 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 or text messages 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. ☺



WAYS TO REDUCE HASSLES AND **TIME PRESSURE**

- 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.



WHAT'S YOUR STRESS PROFILE?

100-139 STRESS GURU

You should be teaching courses in stress management. Either you're divine or in stress denial. Check your answers again.

140-189 EASYGOING

You usually don't let stress bother you and probably have a reliable method for blowing off steam. You may have one or two areas of weakness that you could fine-tune, as indicated by the scores below. Read the corresponding article for these "problem" areas and pick at least one item from each What You Can Do List to work on in the coming weeks.

190-239 A LITTLE ON EDGE

You sometimes let stress get under your skin but are in complete control at other times. You probably have several areas of weakness as indicated by your scores. Read the corresponding article from these "problem" areas and pick at least two things from each What You Can Do List to work on. Introduce one of these changes per month. Practice them until they become a habit.

240-279 ANXIOUS

You are either not adept at handling stress or have just too much stress to handle. Read this profiler from cover to cover. Pick three areas with the highest scores and focus on making one change from each area right now. If control is an issue, work on this first and spend time getting yourself organized. You might want to talk about your stress with a counselor or trusted friend.

280-329 TOO TENSE

For you, stress has become a habit. You will need to work hard to replace your ineffective old behaviors with effective new ones. Read this profiler from cover to cover and pick the one area (let your scores be your guide) you need to work on most. Make as many changes as you can in just this one area. Learn as much as you can about it. (Check out the books listed under suggested reading.) Take the test again in three months. If your score is at least 5 points lower, repeat the above steps for your next area of greatest concern. Seek additional advice from a mentor, coach or counselor.

330-369 OVER THE EDGE

You may already be suffering from health problems related to stress. (See stress symptoms on page 13.) Your stressful habits are so ingrained that you almost certainly will need help overcoming them. Think seriously about going to your parents or getting help from an advisor, counselor, or social worker. Everyone goes through times that are more stressful than others. This is one of those times for you, so reaching out for advice will definitely help.

370-400 GET HELP NOW

If your health isn't already affected in a major way by stress, it probably will be soon. Don't wait another second. Get help, preferably professional counseling, immediately.



ADDITIONAL ADVICE

1. Try taking the test again in six months. Compare your scores.
2. Give the test to a friend. Encourage him or her to take it too and talk it over.
3. Show your answers to a trusted friend. See if he or she agrees with your assessment.
4. Look for any statement you responded to with a number 4. These are mini-areas of concern.
5. This assessment is designed to provide you with a snapshot of your day to day stress levels and is not meant to be a predictor of your future health. It is not a substitute for professional counseling or a doctor's advice. If you feel your problems are serious, seek professional help.

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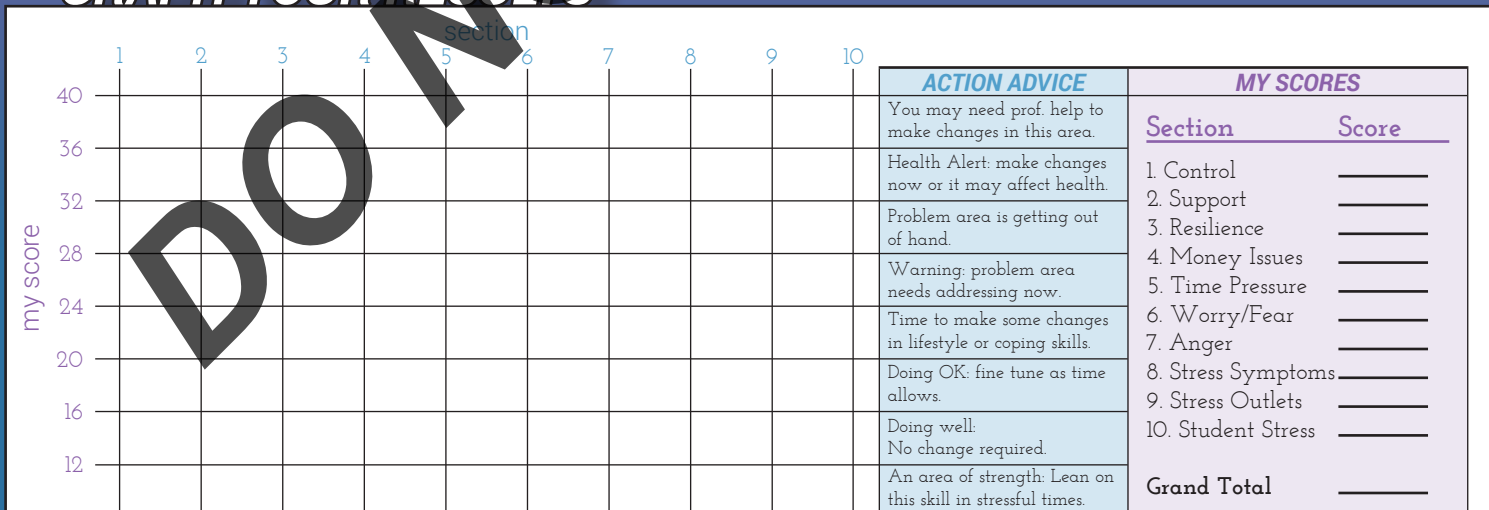
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Medical Advisor:

Paul Rosch, M.D., is Clinical Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at New York Medical College and President of the American Institute of Stress.

GRAPH YOUR RESULTS



TO GRAPH YOUR RESULTS: Put a dot on the vertical line under each section number that corresponds with your score for that section. (See page 5 for your scores.) Connect all the dots for a graphic representation of your overall levels of stress. Follow the lines to the right for your **action advice** on each section.