

Stress Management

Taken by: **Boyang Yan**

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YOUR RESULTS:

Stress Management

Your Score: 99

If you scored between 25 and 45, take action now to avoid serious problems.

You are probably suffering from stress and it is likely to be having a damaging effect on your health and your wellbeing.

There seems to be an urgent need to make some changes to identify what is causing you stress and to take rapid action to improve how you cope. There are some basic steps that you can take to cope better:

- Make sure that you are getting enough quality sleep, avoiding too much caffeine or alcohol, eating well and getting some regular exercise (that gets you out of breath or raises a sweat). Being inactive, eating and drinking too much and sleeping too little all reduce your ability to cope with pressure.
- Build in some activities that help you become calm and that you enjoy every day. These can be as simple as going for a walk, listening to your favourite music, cooking your favourite meal or doing some meditative breathing.
- Find a friend, relative, colleague or counsellor that you can talk to about the things that you find stressful.
- If you find it difficult to say 'No', learn how to be more assertive to manage your workload.
- Keep a list of tasks, work through them in priority order and create spare time slots in your schedule to cope with unexpected or unplanned tasks - simply writing down what needs to get done, rather than trying to remember usually helps.

If you scored between 46 and 65, you are in the Danger Zone! Practise the basics and learn to spot stress.

You are probably dealing fairly calmly with some situations, but not so well with others. Symptoms of stress are created by adrenaline. Whilst the extreme responses were helpful at the start of human history as a survival mechanism in response to real or perceived danger, in today's workplace the flight or fight response is generally not helpful (except in the highly unusual event of true life-threatening danger).

These three steps will help you reduce stress, spot it as it arises and deal with it in the moment:

- Firstly make sure that you are getting the basics right every day: get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, do something relaxing and avoid too many stimulants, as they put your body under physical stress and raise blood pressure.
- Next learn to spot the signs of stress quickly, so you can nip them in the bud. Common ones are 'butterflies in the stomach', sweating, racing heart, dry mouth, clenched jaw, angry outbursts and rapid breathing.
- Then try to distance yourself from the source of stress (if possible), breathe deeply, and count slowly to ten before asking yourself how important this issue really is.

If scored between 66 and 85, you are coping quite well most of the time.

You are probably coping fairly well the majority of the time, but may find that there are still a few situations which make you feel stressed. The symptoms of stress are caused by hormones (such as adrenalin) that are released in our bodies for 'fight or flight'.

When facing a challenging situation - the way you think about the situation, and subsequently feel about it - is a major factor in whether you find it stressful or not: it is often not the situation itself, but your perception that is important. Try the following:

- Look more closely at how you perceive a certain challenging situation and ask yourself this question: "Is this something that I can change or not?"
- If you can't change it, don't waste time trying to change it, rather find out how to deal with it better or avoid it.
- If you can change it, take action.
- Try viewing the change as an opportunity rather than a threat in order to transform it into something motivating rather than stressful.

Of course there will always be situations that may demand more of us than we can cope with in the short term, such as major life events. In these situations recognise and accept that you may just need time, space and support to adjust. Talk to your manager and agree a recovery plan rather than continuing until you break down. Remind yourself that no one's gravestone says 'I wish I had spent more time at work'.

If you scored between 86 and 100, you are coping well, now learn how to avoid stress in the first place.

You probably cope pretty well with most challenging situations and stay calm most of the time. There may be one or two situations that you often find stressful and it is worth looking at these in detail to unpick them and find a solution. In the workplace, these situations are often the result of a clash of personalities, so finding out more about your own personality and how to cope with other personalities can be very helpful.

Stress can sometimes be the result of ambiguity and uncertainty. When this occurs we tend to 'fill in the gaps' or make assumptions about what is happening. For example, there may be rumours of a re-structure and potential job losses. Some people may become stressed whilst others don't. The difference is often the degree to which a person feels in control of their destiny, rather than a victim of fate. To feel more in control and less stressed, find out more, ask questions, verify situations, and qualify your understanding. Try talking to your manager or mentor about your concerns.

If you scored between 101 and 125, calmness prevails!

You seem to cope very well with the pressures of life, are probably very resilient and able to stay calm in most situations, which is a large contribution to your well-being and health. You can probably take further steps to ensure that things stay this way, regardless of what life throws at you, as well as help others around you do the same. You could, for example, develop plans or coping strategies to deal with serious problems that may occur in the future. Even if the plans need to change, the very act of thinking about these situations in advance has been shown to help people to cope better with them.

Make sure that you keep up with the basics (get enough sleep, eat well, exercise) even when your workload is very high. See if you can add more ingredients to your coping strategies, for example some people find mindfulness, meditation or yoga very helpful, so why not give them a try yourself?

ABOUT THIS ASSESSMENT:

Stress happens when the demands, or pressures, on a person are greater than their resources or their ability to cope effectively. Stress at work can be a serious problem impacting health, attendance, staff retention and productivity, and many people feel that stress levels generally are increasing in the workplace.

Stress and pressure are words often substituted for each other, but pressure in itself is not a bad thing, it can motivate individuals and teams and create a buzz in the workplace. Many people, in fact, thrive on it. Generally speaking it is not the pressure itself that is the problem, rather how the individual manages to cope with it (or not) and how they feel about the situation.