How Vulnerable Are You To Stress?

The following test was developed by Psychologists Lyle H. Miller and Alma Dell Smith at the Boston University Medical Center. Score each item from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), according to how much time each statement applies to you.

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 a week.
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 (seriously!).
9. I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.
10. I get strength from my religious beliefs.
11. I regularly attend club or social events.
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 (chores, money, etc.)
17. I do something fun at least once a week.
18. I am able to organize my time effectively.
19. I drink fewer than three cups of caffeinated drinks a day.
20. I take quiet time for myself during the day.

Total

Score

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. Any number over thirty indicates a vulnerability to stress. You are seriously vulnerable if your score is between 50 and 75. You are extremely vulnerable if it is over 75.
BEAT STRESS:
Find the Stress Reliever that Works for You

MASSAGE
A therapist (or your partner) kneads and strokes your muscles. Studies show that because it lowers certain stress hormones, massage has a calming effect on the central nervous system. Massage is an excellent choice for whose stress leads to tight and sore muscles of the neck, shoulder and back.

MEDITATION
There are many ways to meditate. Some involve concentrating on a single word or phrase called a mantra. In others, you focus on your breathing or gaze at a candle. Meditation has been shown to relieve anxiety and to slow breathing and heart rate.

HERBALISM
Using certain herbs or plants to relax is ideal for jumpy nerves or stubborn insomnia. Many people report that drinking tea made from valerian, sage or chamomile, or sniffing lavender reduces stress.

PET THERAPY
Cuddling your cat or romping with the dog or any kind of loving or nurturing interactions with a congenial critter reduces stress.

HYDROTHERAPY
Relax in warm water – a bath or whirlpool. The buoyancy of the water lifts away pressure; the splashing provides a light massage; the heat sends calming messages to the brain. This is very helpful for worrywarts or insomniacs.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION
Consciously contract, then release, each muscle group, starting with the feet and working your way up to the head. Identifying and loosening the muscles you tighten when stressed will help with head and muscle aches.

VISUALIZATION
You imagine a scene that calms you. This is a good option for people who can’t relax during the day or sleep at night because events are racing through their heads.

YOGA
Involves the holding of “poses” or stretches, often combined with breathing exercises. This alleviates mental fatigue, headaches, digestive woes, insomnia, respiratory problems, high blood pressure and possibly asthma.
40 Proven Stress Reducers
Taken from Public Management, May 1991

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.

2. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Put out the clothes you plan to wear, pack your bookbag, etc.

3. Don’t rely on memory. Write down appointments, when library books are due, when to pick up dry cleaning, etc.

4. Do nothing which, after being done, leads you to tell a lie.

5. Practice preventative maintenance. Your appliances, room, and relationships will be less likely to break down or fall apart “at the worst possible moment.”

6. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do now.

7. Plan ahead.

8. Don’t put up with something that doesn’t work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces – whatever – are a constant aggravation, get it fixed or get a new one.

9. Relax your standards. The world will not end if you do not get as much done as you had hoped to.

10. Pollyanna Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings – count ‘em!

11. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc. can save hours.

12. Say “NO!” Saying no to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don’t have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.

13. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long shower, meditate, sleep or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to disconnect temporarily.

14. Turn “needs” into preferences. Our basic needs translate into food, water and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference.

15. Simplify, simplify, simplify.


17. Get up and stretch periodically if you are sitting for extended periods of time.

18. Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.

19. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.

20. Create order out of chaos. Organize your room so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things where they
belong so you won’t have to go through the stress of losing things.

21. Writing your thoughts and feelings down can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.

22. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Take time to go over every part in your mind; visualize the way you would have the experience go over.

23. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting a job done, a voluntary change in activity and/or environment may just be what you need.

24. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help you clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.

25. Select an environment that is in-line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate to talk politics, don’t associate with people who talk politics, etc.

26. Learn to live one day at a time.

27. Every day, do something you really enjoy.

28. Focus on understanding rather than on being understood, on loving rather than being loved.

29. Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back activities; allow time between them for a breathing spell.

30. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are appropriate to compromise upon.

31. Eliminate destructive self-talk: “I’m too inexperienced… I’m too fat to… I’m not smart enough to…, ect.”

32. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your week is fast paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off.

33. “Worry about pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves.” This is another way of saying take care of todays as best you can and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.

34. Do one thing at a time. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.

35. Allow yourself time every day for privacy, quiet and introspection.

36. If an especially “unpleasant” task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then the rest of your day will be free from anxiety.

37. Learn to delegate responsibility.

38. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.

39. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.

40. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.