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| --- | --- |
| **Physical Signs** | **Psychological Signs** |
| Pounding of the heart | Irritability, tension, or depression |
| Rapid, shallow breathing | Impulsive behavior and emotional instability; the overpowering urge to cry or to run and hide |
| Dryness of the throat and mouth | Lowered self-esteem; thoughts related to failure |
| Raised body temperature | Excessive worry; insecurity; concern about other people’s opinions; self-deprecation in conversation |
| Feelings of weakness, light-headedness, dizziness, or faintness | Reduced ability to communicate with others |
| Trembling; nervous tics; twitches; shaking hands and fingers | Increased awkwardness in social situations |
| Tendency to be easily startled (by small sounds and the like) | Excessive boredom; unexplained dissatisfaction with job or other normal conditions |
| High-pitched, nervous laughter | Feelings of isolation |
| Stuttering and other speech difficulties | Avoidance of activities |
| Insomnia – that is, difficulty in getting to sleep, or a tendency to wake up during the night | Irrational fears (phobias) about specific things |
| Grinding of the teeth during sleep | Irrational thoughts; forgetting things more often than usual; mental “blocks”; missing of planned events |
| Restlessness, an inability to keep still | Guilt about neglecting family or friends; inner confusion about duties and roles |
| Sweating (not necessarily noticeably); clammy hands; cold hands and feet; cold chills | Excessive work; omission of play |
| Blushing; hot face | Inability to organize oneself; tendency to get distraught over minor matters |
| The need to urinate frequently | Inability to reach decisions; erratic, unpredictable decisions |
| Diarrhea; indigestion; upset stomach; nausea | Decreased ability to perform tasks |
| Headaches; frequent earaches or toothaches | Inability to concentrate |
| Premenstrual tension or missed menstrual periods | General (“floating”) anxiety; feelings of unreality |
| More body aches and pains than usual, such as pain in the neck or lower back; any localized muscle tension | A tendency to become fatigued; loss of energy; loss of spontaneous joy |
| Loss of appetite; unintended weight loss; excessive appetite; sudden weight gain | Nightmares |
| Increased use of substances (tobacco, legally prescribed drugs such as tranquilizers or amphetamines, alcohol, other drugs) | Feelings of powerlessness; mistrust of others |
| Accident proneness |  |
| Frequent illnesses |  |

**Managing Stress**

*To manage stress:*

1. During ordinary times, maintain a program of strong personal wellness.
2. Be sure to include regular physical activity.
3. Cultivate high self-esteem.
4. Maintain a positive attitude toward stressors – view them as opportunities for growth.
5. Manage time wisely.
6. Take on tasks only within your limits.
7. Practice assertiveness to maintain your limits.
8. Monitor your body for the early warning signs of too much stress.
9. Release tension by crying, laughing, talking with friends, or willing yourself to relax.
10. When stress becomes intense, identify which stressors you can control. Put the others out of your mind. Take action by focusing on the immediate task.
11. If stress becomes unmanageable, seek outside help.

Stress is everywhere in life. To help yourself deal with it, you need to be able to recognize the causes of stress, called stressors. Remember that stress can be positive as well as negative. Often, you can’t tell for sure in advance whether a stressor will produce negative stress, called distress, or positive stress, called eustress.

Read the story below. In it you will recognize some stressors.

1. Circle the stressors that are probable sources of distress.
2. Box those that are likely to produce eustress.
3. Underline those that might cause either sort of stress.

Then choose two of the stressors you have underlined. On the lines below the story, describe how each might produce distress or eustress.

 It is 7:30 on a snowy night. Vince, lead guitar player, and the other members of his band, are setting up for their first paying job. So far, nothing has gone right. Vince had to spend twenty minutes shoveling his car out of the snow. Kenji could not find his drums. There have been two arguments. Sammy is so nervous that he dropped his keyboard. Then, too, Vince is worried about Maria’s playing. She was just accepted to college, and her mind is clearly not on tonight’s gig.

 Still, because Vince is planning a career in music, he is very excited. At the same time, he’s a little scared. “We’ve practiced hard,” he thinks, “but what if I mess up a solo or blow some lyrics?”

 This morning, Vince was worried because he just got a new guitar, but now that he sees how good it feels and sounds, he is pleased. He hears the voices of people coming in. Maria gives him a thumbs up. He starts to grin. It’s time to go to work.

1.

2.

**How Well Do You Resist Stress?**

*To determine how likely you are to be affected by stress, answer the following questions. Beside each question, fill in the number corresponding to how much of the time each statement applies to you. Your answers are personal and private. Share them with others only if you are comfortable doing so.*

4: Always 3: Almost always 2: Most of the time 1: Some of the time 0: Never

**During most of my life, I… Score**

1. Eat at least two full, balanced meals a day.
2. Get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
3. Give and receive affection regularly.
4. Have at least one relative on whom I can rely.
5. Exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.
6. Do not smoke, or smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
7. Do not drink alcohol or abuse drugs.
8. Am at an appropriate weight for my height.
9. Feel that my basic needs are being met.
10. Get strength from my values and beliefs.
11. Regularly attend club or social activities.
12. Have a network of friends and acquaintances.
13. Have one or more friends to talk to about personal matters.
14. Am in good physical health (including eyesight, hearing, and teeth).
15. Am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
16. Have regular conversations with the people I live with about

domestic issues (such as chores or money)

1. Have some fun each day.
2. Organize my time effectively.
3. Drink two or fewer cups of caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, or

cola drinks) a day.

1. Take quiet time for myself each day.

**During my stressful times, I…**

1. Organize my responsibilities and meet the most important ones first.
2. Refuse to take on too many responsibilities.
3. Express my feelings at intervals.
4. Use willed relaxation methods.
5. Seek outside help as needed.

**Overall score:**

Scoring:

81-100: Congratulations! Your defenses against daily stresses are strong.

61-80: You are well-defended against stress, but you could still improve your defenses.

41-60: You are too vulnerable to stress. Try to improve.

0-40: You urgently need strategies for handling stress.

**Coping Skills**

The following are some **positive** or **healthy** ideas for coping:

* Talking to someone who cares
* Exercise (jogging, walking, weightlifting, bicycling, etc.)
* Sports
* Reading a good book
* Listening to music
* Going shopping or buying something for yourself
* Doing something nice for someone else
* Talking to or spending time with pets
* Watching a good movie
* Spending time with a friend or friends
* Going to your special place to think
* Developing a sense of humor
* Finding the humorous side to predicaments

The following are **negative** or **unhealthy** ways people cope:

* Alcohol or other drug abuse
* Driving fast
* Promiscuity (being sexual without regard to whom you are with)
* Self-mutilation (cutting, scratching oneself, scratching until bleeding occurs, pulling out hair, bruising yourself, self-tattoos, etc.)
* Isolation of self from others
* Excessive risk taking