

FIGURE 2.7 Stress Vulnerability Questionnaire

This stress vulnerability questionnaire helps you determine your current vulnerability to stress and helps you identify areas where you can reduce your vulnerability to stress.

Item	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I try to incorporate as much physical activity* as possible in my daily schedule.	1	2	3	4
2. I exercise aerobically 20 minutes or more at least three times per week.	1	2	3	4
3. I regularly sleep 7 to 8 hours per night.	1	2	3	4
4. I take my time eating at least one hot, balanced meal a day.	1	2	3	4
5. I drink fewer than two cups of coffee (or equivalent) per day.	1	2	3	4
6. I am at recommended body weight.	1	2	3	4
7. I enjoy good health.	1	2	3	4
8. I do not use tobacco in any form.	1	2	3	4
9. I limit my alcohol intake to no more than one drink for women or two drinks for men per day.	1	2	3	4
10. I do not use hard drugs.	1	2	3	4
11. I have someone I love, trust, and can rely on for help if I have a problem or need to make an essential decision.	1	2	3	4
12. There is love in my family.	1	2	3	4
13. I routinely give and receive affection.	1	2	3	4
14. I have close personal relationships with other people who provide me with a sense of emotional security.	1	2	3	4
15. There are people close by whom I can turn to for guidance in time of stress.	1	2	3	4
16. I can speak openly about feelings, emotions, and problems with people I trust.	1	2	3	4
17. Other people rely on me for help.	1	2	3	4
18. I am able to keep my feelings of anger and hostility under control.	1	2	3	4
19. I have a network of friends who enjoy the same social activities I do.	1	2	3	4
20. I take time to do something fun at least once a week.	1	2	3	4
21. My religious beliefs provide guidance and strength to my life.	1	2	3	4
22. I often provide service to others.	1	2	3	4
23. I enjoy my job (major or school).	1	2	3	4
24. I am a competent worker.	1	2	3	4
25. I get along well with co-workers (or students).	1	2	3	4
26. My income is sufficient for my needs.	1	2	3	4
27. I manage time adequately.	1	2	3	4
28. I have learned to say "no" to additional commitments when I am already pressed for time.	1	2	3	4
29. I take daily quiet time for myself.	1	2	3	4
30. I practice stress management as needed.	1	2	3	4

*Walk instead of driving, avoid escalators and elevators, or walk to neighboring offices, homes, and stores.

Total points:

Rating:

- 0–30 points..... Excellent (great resistance to stress)
- 31–40 points..... Good (little vulnerability to stress)
- 41–50 points..... Average (somewhat vulnerable to stress)
- 51–60 points..... Fair (vulnerable to stress)
- ≥61 points..... Poor (highly vulnerable to stress)

Source: *Lifetime Physical Fitness & Wellness*, by W. W. K. Hoeger and S. A. Hoeger (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning), pp 395–396, 11th edition, 2011. Used by permission.

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Author Anecdote

A Culture of Stress

Our family spent two years living in Australia in the small ocean community of Torquay. Stepping out of the Midwestern culture I had grown up in was eye-opening. My Norwegian, Protestant work-ethic paradigm for viewing the world was well established. For the first time, I began to examine some of my values, beliefs, and goals.

When the annual 6-week summer holiday rolled around, Australians flocked to the beaches near our small community to relax and have fun. My husband saw this as an opportunity to get a summer job to supplement our meager income during this break from his teaching job. This was a foreign idea to his Australian colleagues.

"What? You want to work during your summer holidays? Why?" they asked in astonishment.

We learned a valuable lesson from our Australian friends: Take time to renew and relax. One of my favorite sayings from our time in Australia is, "She'll be right mate." That translates into something like "Don't worry—things will work out okay."

More recently, I traveled to the Netherlands to attend a class at the University of Amsterdam. Every day as the afternoon went on, I noticed people gathering in the street-side cafes and pubs. The streets of Amsterdam in the late afternoon are alive with the sounds of people laughing, talking, relaxing, socializing, and having fun at the end of the work day.

How much of the stress we experience today is related to our cultural practices? Have we become a society of hard-working, isolated people who have lost sight of the importance of relaxing, socializing, and just having fun? Should we reexamine our culturally induced priorities? How much of our stress is a result of our self-imposed choices?

—MH

factors that affect your vulnerability to stress, providing you with another piece in your stress status puzzle. Throughout this book, you will be learning many new skills to assist you in reducing your stress vulnerability.

Tombstone Test

When all is said and done, one of the most important assessments may be what we call the Tombstone Test. How do you want to be remembered? As being a workaholic? As the one who always won the argument? For making more money than your neighbor? As someone who never forgave anyone who wronged you? Or do you want to be remembered as a good parent, mate, and friend? Do you want to be remembered as someone who was whole and balanced in body, mind, and spirit? Do you want to be remembered for the service you provided to those who needed help?

Take a few minutes to write down how you want to be remembered. What do you want others to say and think about you when your life is over? List the qualities and characteristics you want to be remembered for. Are you living your life in a way that demonstrates the qualities you value?

The choices you make every single day determine your stress to a large extent. Your daily activities, which at times can feel like drudgery, actually can become stress-relieving when you view them all as part of your contribution to bigger priorities. Thinking about today, this minute, the task at hand in a positive manner can bring peace and contentment. As the story goes, two people are laying bricks. A passerby asks, "What are you doing?" The first worker answers, "Laying bricks." The other worker answers, "Building a cathedral."

Assess what is most important in your life. When your choices are guided by the values and goals that are most important to you, your life can be full and active, yet not stressful. Decide how you want to be remembered—and then live your life so that happens.

FYI

Paid Vacation Around the World

The average number of paid vacation days per year employees receive in:

- Italy: 42
- France: 37
- Brazil: 34
- Canada: 26
- Japan: 25
- United States: 13

Source: World Tourism Organization, <http://www.infoplease.com>, retrieved November 19, 2010

Daily Stress Diary

Chances are that many of you have completed a food diary at some time. Its purpose is to record everything you eat to increase your awareness of what you are eating. The information you enter can be analyzed for its caloric level and nutritional content and thereby help you evaluate your diet. The Daily Stress Diary serves the same monitoring purpose, but it relates to your stress. You will find it worth your time to complete the Stress Diary Lab Activity found at the end of the chapter.

The Stress Diary can be a real eye-opener as you become aware of stress triggers throughout your day. Watch for patterns that develop. Does your stress level go through the roof every time your roommate's boyfriend comes over and plops himself down in your favorite chair? Do you invariably feel stressed after you and your friend consume an entire family-sized pizza? Do you find that the days that seem filled with stress and the days you seem more vulnerable to stress are the days after you stay up late for the all-you-can-drink specials at the bar?

Conclusion

In this chapter you have had the opportunity to use several different measures to assess your stress. Look back over each of the assessment activities, surveys, and tools. You will see that these tools measure stress from a variety of perspectives, including:

- physiological indicators of stress
- your perception of what is happening in your life
- sources of stress and the frequency of hassles
- your level of satisfaction with the events in your life
- life events you have experienced
- your vulnerability to stress

The real impact of this chapter will come from what you do with the information you learned about yourself. Each of the assessments is like a piece of a puzzle: When you put all the pieces together, you have a complete picture. You can translate this picture into a plan to help reduce stress and enhance the quality of your life.



Culture is a major influence on our choices for relaxation

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LAB

2.1 Daily Stress Diary

ACTIVITY Each stress assessment in this chapter provides you with information you can use to better understand the impact of stress on your life. The Daily Stress Diary provides an additional opportunity to assess your personal routine and the situations you encounter on a daily basis. For one day, keep a diary.

- I. Throughout the day, list situations or events that initiate the stress response (sources of stress). For each event include:
 1. Source of stress
 2. Time and place
 3. Level of perceived stress (1 = Slight, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Strong, 4 = Intense)
 4. Thoughts and feelings about the stressor
 5. Coping strategies you used to deal with the stressor
- II. At the end of the day, reflect on:
 1. What was your major source of stress for the day?
 2. What is your personal assessment of how you managed stress today?

2.2 Stress Profile

You have completed a variety of stress assessments aimed at providing you with a comprehensive evaluation of your current stress status. Compile your results for each assessment by completing a paper that includes the following information.

I. Assessment Results

1. Assess Your Stress

Resting Heart Rate _____ Beats per minute

Breathing Pattern _____ Abdomen _____ Chest _____ Both

Respiration Rate _____ Breaths per minute

Stress-o-Meter 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Symptoms of Stress

What are the three symptoms of stress I experience most frequently?

3. Perceived Stress Scale

My total score is _____. This puts me in the _____ (low, moderate, high) perceived stress range.

4. Inventory of College Students' Recent Life Experiences

My total score is _____.

List the hassles that I rated "3."

5. Ardell Wellness Stress Test

My score is _____.

What does the interpretation of my score indicate?

6. Student Stress Scale

My total score is _____.

Based on my score, my chances of experiencing a stress-related health change in the near future is _____ %.

7. Vulnerability Questionnaire

My total score is _____.

What are the top three behaviors I would like to change to decrease my vulnerability to stress?

8. Tombstone Test

What are the top three qualities or characteristics for which I want to be remembered?

II. Analysis of Results

1. For each of the 8 assessments listed previously, briefly explain the following:
 - a. What aspect(s) of stress did the assessment measure, in other words, what is the specific purpose of this assessment as compared to others? What unique information does it provide?
 - b. What did you learn from each assessment? Did the results surprise you? Do you agree or disagree with the results?
2. Which three assessments were most relevant and valuable to you? Why?
3. Reflect on the overall picture of your current stress status. Give this some careful thought as you reflect on what you learned about yourself from this comprehensive assessment of many dimensions of stress. This information is critical for you to understand if you are to move toward a more balanced, less stressed life. What three important insights or ideas did you gain from completing this assignment?

Additional activities to enhance what you have learned in this chapter can be found at the CourseMate website by logging in to www.cengagebrain.com.

Resources and Activities that relate to this chapter include:

- Critical thinking/discussion questions
- Stress assessment tools

Key Points

- The first step in developing a plan to reduce and manage stress is assessment.
- Stress can trigger physiological changes such as increased pulse and increased respiration rate.
- Physical symptoms of stress can be headache, muscle tension, insomnia, and a host of other stress-related symptoms.
- When assessing stress, perception is key. The same situation can elicit very different stress responses in different individuals because of each individual's *perception* of the experience.
- Another way to measure stress is to evaluate the frequency of exposure to different stressors and hassles.
- Several factors affect your vulnerability to stressors. Successfully managing these factors can help you become less susceptible to the harmful effects of stress.
- A Daily Stress Diary can be a valuable tool for increasing your awareness of stressors in your life.
- Because no single survey or tool can provide the whole picture when it comes to assessing stress, the results from several assessments are needed to give you a better understanding of your personal stress level.

Key Terms

radial pulse
carotid pulse

respiration rate
rapid eye movement (REM) sleep

Notes

1. "The Social Readjustment Rating Scale," by T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11 (1967): 213-218.
2. "The Relationship between Life Events and Indices of Classroom Performance," by K. DeMeuse, *Teaching of Psychology*, 12 (1985): 146-149.
3. "Understanding Stress and Vulnerability," by S. Sorenson, *Mental Health Sanctuary* 2002, Retrieved November 9, 2010 from <http://www.mhsanctuary.com/articles/ustress.htm>.