Dealing with Stress

You need stress in your life! Does that surprise you? Perhaps so, but it is quite true. Without stress, life would be dull and unexciting. Stress adds flavor, challenge, and opportunity to life. Too much stress, however, can seriously affect your physical and mental well-being. A major challenge in this stress-filled world today is to make the stress in your life work for you instead of against you.

Stress can be caused by:

* The death of someone you love
* Your parents’ divorce
* Changing schools
* Not having the money to do what you need or want to do

Whether you are in school or working, you will face many changes. These changes can cause stress. Every situation has advantages and disadvantages. When you are in a stressful situation, consider the following questions:

* What are the advantages and disadvantages of my situation?
* Is there something I can do to change my situation?
* What might happen if I do nothing?
* Is my attitude toward the situation likely to change?
* Does this situation affect my long-term career and life plans?

Often, a situation appears hopeless until you step back and reevaluate it. Talk with people whose opinions you value and trust. Many resources are available to help you identify and deal with stress. The following assessment will help you see how vulnerable you are to stress. Evaluate yourself on each of the items listed below.

**When you have completed the assessment, write up a 1 page reflection paper on what you have learned about yourself and stress management. Include both the assessment and the reflection paper in your portfolio.**

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| ***How I Deal with Stress*** | | | | | | | |
| 1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = slightly disagree | 4 = slightly agree  5 = agree  6 = strongly agree | | | | | | |
| I eat at least two balanced meals a day. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I give and receive affection regularly. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I am close to my family. We rely on each other. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I exercise to the point of perspiration at least three times per week. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I do not smoke. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I am the appropriate weight for my height. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My basic physical needs are taken care of. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I get strength from my religious beliefs. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I regularly attend club or social activities. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I do not drink or use drugs. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I have a lot of friends and I know a lot of people. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I have several close friends I can talk to about personal things. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I am in good health, including my eyes, ears, and teeth. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I am able to speak openly about my feelings when I’m angry or worried. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I have regular conversations with my family members about problems, chores, money, and other daily living issues. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I do something for fun at least once per week. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I am able to I organize my time effectively. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I drink less than three cups of caffeinated beverages per day. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I take quiet time for myself during the day. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| **Total Stress-Vulnerability Score =** | | | | | | | |

If you have a score of **70 or more**, you can probably handle stress well. However, if you are facing several changes in your life, you may be more stressed than you usually are. Take care of yourself.

If you have a score from **41 through 69**, you can probably handle stress, but you need to have a stress-management plan. Design a plan and stick with it.

If you have a score of **40 or less**, you probably cannot handle stress well. Review the assessment you just completed. List the items that you received the lowest scores. Make some changes to bring those scores up. Take your physical and emotional health seriously.