



SECTION ONE **CONTROL**

INSTRUCTIONS

There are ten sections in this Stress Profiler. Each section has ten statements. Briefly evaluate each statement and indicate how you feel about that statement by using a number from 1 to 4.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = moderately agree
- 4 = strongly agree

EXAMPLE:

I feel like my life is out of my control.

If you strongly disagree with this statement, put a 1 in the space afterwards. If you moderately disagree with the statement, put a 2. If you moderately agree, put a 3. If you strongly agree, put a 4.

After you've finished all ten sections, you'll be given instructions for tallying and evaluating your scores.

The Stress Profiler Student Version

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SECTION TWO **SUPPORT**

1. I often blame other people for the bad things that happen to me.

2. I snack when I'm stressed.

3. My desk and/or backpack is disorganized and messy.

4. I forget to write down my assignments or check them online.

5. I feel overwhelmed.

6. I feel like my life is out of my control.

7. I often waste time looking for things like lost books, assignments, keys, etc.

8. I have trouble saying no to people who ask favors of me.

9. My room and/or closet is full of clutter.

10. I am always running late.

TOTAL _____

1. When I'm depressed, it feels like there is no one I can turn to.

2. I can't really talk to my parents about what's going on in my life.

3. I wish I had friends I could rely on for important advice.

4. I don't belong to any clubs, sports teams, or participate in any extra-curricular activities.

5. My family is not really there for me when I need them.

6. There is no one in school I would readily turn to for advice like a guidance counselor, teacher, or advisor.

7. If I suffered from depression or an addiction, I wouldn't want anyone to know about it.

8. I rarely, if ever, attend community events or religious services.

9. I'd be reluctant to seek out counseling or join a support group for a mental health issue.

10. I do not have anyone I consider to be a mentor.

TOTAL _____



SECTION THREE

STRESS RESILIENCE

1. I frequently let little things bother me.

2. I often doubt that things are going to turn out OK.

3. I feel stuck in life.

4. Spirituality does not play a very big role in my life.

5. I have a poor self-image and/or low self-esteem.

6. I am not very flexible; I don't handle change well.

7. When I'm stressed out, I rarely see the big picture.

8. In an argument I feel like I have to be right.

9. I find it really hard to bounce back after a big let down.

10. I have trouble making decisions.

TOTAL _____



SECTION FOUR

MONEY ISSUES

1. Money is a big issue in my family.

2. I occasionally borrow money from friends and am unable to pay them back.

3. I feel badly about missing out on certain activities and opportunities at school because I know my family can't afford them.

4. I have to work part-time (or full-time) to support myself and/or my family.

5. I wish I was able to afford all the things that other students have.

6. I argue with my parents about money.

7. I frequently overhear my parents arguing about money.

8. I'm envious of my friends whose families have money.

9. My siblings get more financial support than I do.

10. I shouldn't have to wait (or save money) for the expensive things I really want or need now.

TOTAL _____



SECTION FIVE

TIME PRESSURE

1. I am often late for school or classes in the morning.

2. I stay up late trying to finish my assignments.

3. I often have more work than I can do in one night.

4. I wish I had more free time in my schedule.

5. I have a part-time (or full-time) job.

6. I am always feeling rushed.

7. I wish my parents weren't always pushing me so hard.

8. I never get a sense of completion at the end of the day.

9. I often participate in more than one extra-curricular activity in the same season (like soccer and band).

10. I often leave things until the last minute.

TOTAL _____



SECTION SIX **WORRY/FEAR**

1. I frequently stay up late worrying.

 2. I often worry about getting bad grades.

 3. I often worry that my friends will not like me.

 4. I worry about my parents dying.

 5. I worry about appearing stupid in class or in front of my friends.

 6. I worry about life changes that lie ahead, such as graduating, getting into college, or finding a job.

 7. I am afraid people are going to find out my fears and make fun of me.

 8. I am afraid of being bullied or harassed at school or on campus.

 9. Certain fears affect what I do on a regular basis.

 10. I am afraid of trying something new (like a new sport or activity) that I really want to try.

- TOTAL _____



SECTION SEVEN **ANGER**

1. Members of my family often make me feel angry.

 2. I get annoyed easily.

 3. I hold a grudge.

 4. I lose my temper easily.

 5. I hit things or throw things when I get upset.

 6. I curse and/or yell when I get angry.

 7. I find myself getting annoyed in the car when I, or the person driving, gets stuck behind a slow driver.

 8. I get angry in public.

 9. Life seems so unfair.

 10. I can't stand losing.

- TOTAL _____



SECTION EIGHT **STRESS SYMPTOMS**

1. After a difficult day, I can feel the muscles in my back, shoulders and neck tighten up.

 2. I get anxious just thinking about taking a test.

 3. I get anxious just thinking about a certain teacher or professor.

 4. I get recurrent colds or my colds seem to last a long time.

 5. I often rely on non-prescription medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen, antacids, etc. to get by.

 6. I often get tension headaches.

 7. When life seems hard, I am tempted to take drugs or drink alcohol as a means of escape.

 8. I find myself feeling irritated with people and situations that never irritated me before.

 9. Nothing seems to make me happy anymore.

 10. I have trouble sleeping.

- TOTAL _____



SECTION NINE

STRESS OUTLETS

1. I rarely get any aerobic exercise like running, riding a bike, or working out until I'm winded.

2. I'm so busy, there's never any time for myself.

3. I almost never read or watch TV for pleasure.

4. I don't have friends I can relax and unwind with.

5. I rarely use humor as an outlet for stress.

6. I enjoy listening to music but rarely find time to do it.

7. I rarely take long showers or hot baths just to relax.

8. My weekends are more stressful than relaxing.

9. I rarely participate in relaxing activities like yoga, meditation, or Tai Chi.

10. Hobbies don't interest me.

TOTAL _____



SECTION TEN

STUDENT STRESS

1. I rarely have adequate time to finish my assignments.

2. I wait till the last minute to do my assignments.

3. Peer pressure is a major source of stress in school.

4. Occasionally, I feel like I'm being harassed by other students.

5. I get in trouble with my parents when they're unhappy with my grades.

6. Grading often seems so unfair.

7. I frequently worry about finding a good job after I finish school.

8. I have trouble concentrating in class.

9. Tests are a major source of stress in my life.

10. I'm falling seriously behind in one or more of my courses.

TOTAL _____

the STRESS Profiler

Student Version

WHAT'S YOUR

STRESS PROFILE?

Tally your score for each section and enter the totals below. If you scored 20 or more on any one section, you should read more about that subject. Turn to the corresponding page number for more information.

Section	Score	Page #
1. Control	_____	6
2. Support	_____	7
3. Resilience	_____	8
4. Money	_____	9
5. Time	_____	10
6. Worry	_____	11
7. Anger	_____	12
8. Symptoms	_____	13
9. Outlets	_____	14
10. Student	_____	15
Grand Total	_____	

Determine your stress profile on page 16. If your score falls within 5-10 points of another profile, consider yourself a mix of these two and read up on both.

Transfer the above scores to the graph on page 16 for more tips on handling stress.

1

SECTION ONE **CONTROL**



Do you remember the first time you walked to the corner store alone or drove by yourself to a friend's house? Chances are, these were exhilarating moments because you felt a growing sense of control over your own life. When you feel like you're in the driver's seat of your own life, you feel invigorated and empowered. Stress just rolls right off your back. Conversely, when your life feels out of control, there's a good chance that you'll feel overwhelmed and stressed.

Get organized. Be on time.

Feeling like life is out of your control can be caused by many factors. Disorganization, always running late, and taking on too many extra-curriculars are all examples. When your world is disorganized and messy you forget the one book you need most, you lose track of important due dates, you misplace your assignments, and so forth. This level of disorganization will make you crazy. When this occurs, you need to take control.

Begin by straightening out your desk. Organize your notebooks, your locker, and clean out your backpack. Devote at least one day a month to simply organizing your life.

Always running late is another example of something that will leave you feeling out of control. To remedy this problem, commit yourself to this one simple idea: if you're

not early, you're late. Think about it; when you aim at arriving places on time and you are delayed by just a few minutes, you'll be late. But when you aim at arriving early, chances are, you'll be on time. So get up a bit earlier on school days. **Get things ready the night before.** Put your backpack by the front door. And allow more than enough time to get ready. Aim to arrive at your destination at least 5-10 minutes early and notice how much better you feel when you don't have to rush to get there.

Try to determine what you can control and what you can't.

When a particular situation seems out of control, stand back and look at it objectively. Try to determine what aspects of the situation you can control and what aspects you can't. You may not be able to

change night construction or loud neighbors but you can buy ear plugs or turn on a fan or an air-conditioner to drown out the noise. But even if these options fail, don't give up. That will leave you feeling even more out of control. You must take some action. For example, you could talk to your RA if you live in a dorm or email a representative from your local government. **Sometimes taking any action, even if it doesn't immediately change the situation, will still help you feel more in-control.**

Learning how to say no, especially to an adult, can be difficult. Try saying, "let me check my schedule and I will get back to you." That gives you some extra time to decide whether this is something you really should do or something you can avoid doing. ☺

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO FEEL MORE IN **CONTROL**

- 1 **Develop a comfortable morning routine:** Get up earlier and get things ready the night before such as lunch, attire, etc.
- 2 **Arrive early.** Commit yourself to arriving places 5-10 minutes early.
- 3 **Celebrate "organization day."** Do nothing but organize all day for one day a month.
- 4 **Organize your life.** Clean your desk, organize your backpack, your locker, your notebooks, and your closet.
- 5 **Take any action, no matter how small,** to resolve a situation that feels out of control.



2 SECTION TWO SUPPORT

It's been said that 85% of our satisfaction in life comes from our interpersonal relationships (i.e., social support) and less than 15% comes from material things like cars, technology, or money. Yet most of us live our lives as though these figures were exactly the opposite.

You may not be aware of the beneficial effects close relationships (or social support) can have on your self-esteem, happiness, and well-being. People sometimes experience this when they grow up in supportive, close-knit families. Others experience this for the first time when falling in love.

In the beginning stages of a romance nothing bothers the love-struck victim. He or she is temporarily immune to stress. To put it simply, falling in love and being in love, make you feel good. And there's not a gadget on earth that can substitute for this powerful emotional lift.

But close relationships take time to foster and build... both new ones and existing ones. You can't expect to create a meaningful relationship with someone without dedicating a significant amount of time to interacting and being together. This is what people falling in love do without even realizing. But after a while you may spend less and less time interacting and begin to take your relationship for granted. One study showed that the average couple spends less than twenty minutes per day in meaningful conversation.

This is not enough time to maintain a satisfying relationship. Supportive relationships are beneficial to your health.

There are all kinds of relationships that can be meaningful and supportive. You may have a girlfriend, a boyfriend, a best friend, or a parent you feel close to. You may have mentors, coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, roommates, and spiritual leaders you can talk to. These are relationships you want to foster. When you get hit with a problem you can't solve, one of these people will undoubtedly help you sort things out. Don't try to be tough and keep your problems to yourself. That often makes your situation worse.

Research shows that people who seek out the help of friends and the advice of counselors feel less stressed, are more at peace with

themselves, and live longer, happier lives.

Seek out those people who have experienced, or are experiencing, the same problems you are. You will be surprised how therapeutic it can be to find someone who shares the same problems, feels the same fears, has the same worries, and experiences the same stresses that you do. Just knowing that even one person feels the exact same way you do makes your problems seem more bearable.

The bottom line is this: **supportive relationships are beneficial to your health.** Once you understand the therapeutic benefit of building and maintaining your network of social support, you won't need a good reason to keep in touch with an old friend; you'll need a good reason not to. ☺

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BUILD YOUR SOCIAL **SUPPORT**

- 1 Connect with your family.** Find ways to connect with adults in your extended family who you know you can relate to. Maybe it's a favorite uncle, grandparent, or godparent. Maybe it's a family friend who is like an aunt or uncle. Don't forget your parents. Believe it or not, they were teenagers once too.
- 2 Find friends who know how to listen.** Everyone wants to give you advice, but the friend who really listens and relates to what you are going through can be the most helpful in terms of social support.
- 3 Check out the social support resources in your school.** School counselors and social workers are there to help you with a whole variety of problems from academic to personal.
- 4 Keep in touch with friends that share your sense of humor.** Call a friend who makes you laugh.
- 5 Join a support group of like-minded people.** There are support groups for every problem under the sun and if you don't find one that matches your particular need, maybe you can even start one!



SUGGESTED
READING

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens - Sean Covey
Chicken Soup for The Teenage Soul - Jack Canfield

3 SECTION THREE RESILIENCE

Webster's Dictionary defines resilience as: The ability to bounce or spring back into shape after being stretched, bent, or compressed.

Resilience in regards to stress is defined as building your coping resources and learning how to be more flexible. This includes: seeing serious problems as temporary setbacks and looking forward instead of backward. It also includes staying positive in the face of adversity and fostering an attitude of gratitude. As one writer put it: When it comes to the ups and downs of life, it's not how far you fall but how high you bounce.

Some people are just naturally more stress resilient. We all know that certain friend, teacher, or professor who seems unfazed by anything. Stress just rolls right off his or her back. Besides using the behavior of this resilient person as a model, here are seven things you can do to boost your own stress resilience:

1. Build your coping resources.

Exercise, meditate, or practice yoga, or some other form of relaxation on a regular basis. These activities not only help you relax after a stressful day, they help you handle stress better in the future.

2. Be flexible. Trees and shrubs that don't bend in the wind will break.

Learn how to go with the flow or you will break too. Begin by learning how to compromise. The sooner you learn that your way isn't

the only way, the sooner you will see how to move through a stressful crisis. It may be inflexible thinking that got you into the difficult situation in the first place.

3. Seek support. Your older siblings, parents, advisors and counselors can help you weather any storm.

These are your pillars of strength. Don't be afraid to lean on them in times of trouble. Tell these supportive people what is going on: *I'm failing in math. I feel really depressed. I am having trouble with people I thought were my friends.* There is an old saying that applies here: *A problem shared is a problem halved.*

4. See setbacks as temporary.

We all have a tendency to "awfulize" and believe that the worst possible scenario is the most likely scenario. Try your best to move through times of crisis knowing that eventually you are going to come out OK on the other side.

5. Nurture an attitude of gratitude.

Before going to bed at night make a mental list of everything you have to be grateful for. Gratitude is one of the basic underpinnings of happiness and stress resilience.

6. Develop your spiritual resources.

Strong spiritual beliefs are a great antidote for stress. When you truly believe that everything happens for a reason, your stress resilience is going to go sky high.

7. Take action.

Don't let your problems cripple you to the point of inertia, or inaction. Take any action that moves you forward even if it is only a "baby step."

Stress resilience is about facing stress head on and looking at stressful situations as opportunities for growth. Begin to see your stress like a professional athlete sees a workout or practice: *It's how you get better at what you do.* Your stress is like a workout for your mind. It builds character and exercises your problem-solving ability. It's part of being human. When you see stress in this way - and learn to take it in stride - you will begin to appreciate life more, enjoy challenges, and overcome obstacles that only temporarily block your way. ☺

WAYS TO HELP INCREASE YOUR RESILIENCE

- 1 **Build your coping resources.** Meditate and/or exercise on a regular basis.
- 2 **Be flexible.** Inflexible thinking can lock you into old unproductive patterns of behavior.
- 3 **See setbacks as temporary.** Trust that you will come out OK on the other side of a crisis.
- 4 **Nurture an attitude of gratitude.** Make a mental list of everything you have to be thankful for before you fall asleep at night.
- 5 **Take action.** Don't let your problems cripple you to the point of inertia or inaction.



4

SECTION FOUR

MONEY ISSUES

Money is a major source of stress. Parents fight about it, siblings squabble over it, kids get into arguments with their parents about it, and young people who don't have it envy those who do.

Advertising directs our wants and needs.

One way to overcome the stress associated with money (and not having enough of it) is to understand the differences between what you want and what you need. Most of us already have what we truly need but TV commercials and magazine advertisements try to convince us otherwise. These clever ads make us feel as though we need things like fashionable clothes, the latest electronic device, or the coolest pair of sneakers or shoes. But these desires aren't needs. They're wants.

The next time you watch TV, notice how advertisers try to lead you into believing that you'll be happier, more popular, or better off, if you buy their product. (This is what transforms a want into a need.) If the ad works, you buy the item because you think you need it. This makes you feel happier for a while, but these feelings seldom last. If you can't afford to buy the item, you wind up thinking: *if only I had enough money to buy it, then I would be happy.*

But having money is not the key to happiness either. It does buy things we truly need like shelter,

food, clothing, and transportation, but it doesn't buy love, friendship, health, or inner peace, which are also essential needs. By focusing more on what you really need in life (and in fact, may already have) you can learn to turn off the sense of longing you feel for things you want but don't actually need.

Learn how to be happy with what you already have.

To start this process, ask yourself: *What do I have right now that I am grateful for?* Whether it's loving parents, a good group of friends, a comfortable home, plenty of food to eat, a hobby that you really enjoy, a sport that you're good at, an academic subject you excel in, or an extra-curricular activity that interests you, these are all things that bring lasting happiness. Be thankful for these things that are truly important and you'll begin to realize how trivial your other so-called needs are.

Wealthy people know better than anyone that money can't buy happiness. Take a look at the compli-

cated lives of famous actors, reality TV stars, and musicians and you'll see that money and happiness are not necessarily linked. These wealthy celebrities often have (or come from) dysfunctional families and suffer from drug addiction, anxiety, depression, anorexia, and other serious mental health problems. Even studies of lottery winners show that these newly-made millionaires are often no happier (or even less happy) a year after winning a big pay-out than they were before.

Our society idolizes wealth.

Unfortunately, we live in a society that idolizes wealth. And many people may say they agree with the opinions expressed here, but act in ways that don't. So if you are still confused, ask a mentor, an advisor, or a spiritual counselor. They'll tell you that the things you can't buy like health, friendship, contentment, self-esteem, being loved, and giving love are all priceless and the things you can buy like cars, clothes, and electronics will eventually all become worthless. ☺

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO DECREASE PROBLEMS WITH **MONEY**

- 1 **Wants and needs.** Don't confuse what you want with what you need.
- 2 **Be grateful for what you already have,** like friends, family, and enough food to eat.
- 3 **Advertising elevates a want into a need** by promising you status and happiness that do not last long.
- 4 **Focus on your real needs** for love, health, happiness, adequate shelter, food, clothing, and transportation.
- 5 **Our society idolizes wealth and fame.** Be aware that these things don't bring lasting happiness.



**SUGGESTED
READING**

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Money for Teens - Susan Shelley
How to Want What You Have - Timothy Miller, Ph.D.

5 SECTION FIVE TIME PRESSURE

If you scored high in this section, look for the statements you strongly agreed with and examine these areas first. These statements (and your responses) are red flags, begging for your attention. For example, if you strongly agreed with the statement: *I wish I had more free time in my schedule*; You need to ask yourself, "How can I solve this problem?"

In this case, you might realize: There is an extra curricular activity you can drop; An honors course you can opt out of; A way of getting credit for something you enjoy, like photography or band; Or, a lab course that doesn't have as much homework as a normal class. Let the statements you strongly agreed with shine a spotlight on your areas of greatest need.

Second, you need to learn how to organize and prioritize your time. **Keep a calendar or planner and mark down due dates for all your assignments for the month or semester ahead.** Once you write down the work you have to do, you need to schedule when you are going to do it. Don't try to schedule more than one or two hours of work without a short break in between. As you get better at organizing your time, you'll begin to notice the times of the day when you are the most productive (where you can really concentrate), and the times when you are the least productive. Schedule your priority tasks for those times

when you can really focus and work without a lot of distractions.

Big tasks must be broken down into smaller tasks that you can tackle in steps. A research paper might be broken down into:

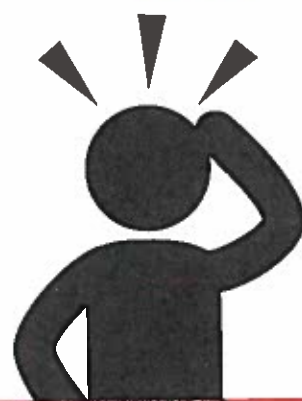
1. Selecting a topic.
2. Choosing reference materials.
3. Studying and taking notes.
4. Reviewing the notes.
5. Writing the first draft.
6. Editing the first draft.
7. Writing the next draft and so on.

Now write each step into your calendar on different days so the work doesn't all pile up at the end.

Save easy tasks that require little or no concentration, like tidying your room or organizing your notebook, for times in the day when your focus is not as good. And when phone calls or text messages interrupt your concentration, politely ask friends if you can get back to them later.



There's a lot more to learn about organizing and prioritizing your time but this is a good start. When you begin to manage your time in this way, you'll feel more productive, less stressed, and more in control. ⌚



WAYS TO REDUCE HASSLES AND TIME PRESSURE

- 1 **Review the statements you strongly agreed with.** These are areas where you probably need to make changes.
- 2 **Make a weekly to-do list** from your calendar for the month ahead.
- 3 **Prioritize your list in order of importance.**
- 4 **Break down big jobs into smaller more doable tasks** and write them into your calendar on different days.
- 5 **Schedule the tasks in one or two hour blocks of time** leaving short breaks in between.



6 SECTION SIX WORRY/FEAR

People who worry excessively are in the habit of worrying. They worry when their problems are big and they worry when their problems are small. But negative habits like worrying can be replaced with positive habits. So get in the habit of substituting one of the following three strategies whenever you find yourself feeling anxious or worried.

1. Only worry about the things you can control.

You can't control the weather, the mean things people say, or how much homework your teacher or professor is going to give you, so don't waste your time worrying about it. Look for what you can control in a situation and don't worry about what you can't.

2. Always worry with a writing instrument.

Idle worrying is not constructive. Limit your worrying to those times when you can sit down and write out a list of what's troubling you. Once you commit your concerns to paper, your mind is now cleared of the problem and can go to work on a solution. You'll be amazed at the ideas you'll come up with if you simply take the time to write your worries down.

3. Most worries never come to pass.

And really dire problems, in other words, situations worth worrying about, often hit you by surprise. Take comfort in the simple

logic of these two universal truths. If you doubt the first one, keep a list of everything you worry about for one week. Save the list for six months to see how few of these worries ever come to pass.

Fear is one of the most potent stressful emotions you will ever encounter.

It can paralyze and incapacitate you. And the only way to overcome a fear is to face it. When trying to decide what fears to face you first have to decide whether your fear is rational (healthy) or irrational (holding you back). If a fear of heights is keeping you from getting too close to a dangerous cliff, that's a healthy fear. But if it prevents you from going into tall buildings, then it's holding you back. It's these irrational fears that must be faced.

One way to overcome fear is to simply familiarize yourself with every aspect of the frightening activity.

Learn as much as you can about it. Read a book or watch a video on the subject. Learn from people who have overcome this same fear. Find a friend who has done it. See if you can try it out under controlled circumstances, where mistakes won't be so costly.

For example, think about learning to drive. Most young people are more than a little intimidated the first time they get behind the wheel of a car. And why not? One

mistake could cost you thousands of dollars in damages or even worse. Yet you learn how to overcome this fear. How? By talking to friends who have already learned how to drive, taking a driving course, watching a driver's education program, and practicing under controlled circumstances on a vacant street, in an empty parking lot, or with a driving instructor.

You overcame (or will overcome) this fear, despite the fact that driving is probably the most dangerous thing that you will ever do. And it's most likely more dangerous than anything you are currently afraid to try.

So remember, when it comes to fear, it's simply your lack of familiarity with an activity that determines your level of anxiety, not necessarily the inherent danger of the activity itself. ☺

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE YOUR FEARS & WORRIES

- 1 **Worry only about the things you can control**, not the things you can't, like the weather.
- 2 **Worry with a writing instrument.** Write down your worries, and solutions will appear.
- 3 **Most worries never come to pass.** Take comfort in this knowledge and use it to force needless worries out of your mind.
- 4 **Familiarize yourself with the thing you fear.** Read a book, watch a video, or talk to friends.
- 5 **Try out what you fear under controlled circumstances** where mistakes won't cost you.



SUGGESTED
READING

My Anxious Mind: A Teen's Guide to Managing Anxiety and Panic - Michael A Tompkins
Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway - Susan Jeffers

7

SECTION SEVEN

ANGER



Some psychologists suggest that **expressing anger is the best way of dealing with it**, but there is a difference between expressing anger *rationally*, by calmly letting someone know how you feel, and expressing anger *irrationally*, by raising your voice and/or losing your temper. When you express anger irrationally, your anger overwhelms you, and you may have trouble communicating, or you may find it hard to resist telling the person you are angry with what a “big jerk” he or she is.

This style of expressing anger almost always makes the situation worse; both for you and the person on the receiving end. Let’s start with you. When you lose your temper, you may feel awkward, embarrassed, or perhaps even angrier than you were before. In fact, getting angry has the odd effect of helping you *justify* being angry. Thus, losing your temper can often intensify anger and prolong it.

When you think about it, getting angry rarely gets you what you want. You think your anger is going to change another person’s behavior and thus improve your situation but it rarely does. Most people you get angry with walk away mad. So instead of solving the problem that made you angry, it makes the situation worse.

And to further complicate matters, the person you were angry with may hold a grudge, or tell your friends what a big jerk you are, and

this radiated anger may come back to haunt you. Now you have two problems to fix instead of one.

So the next time you feel like expressing anger irrationally, think twice. Venting your emotions in this way may:

1. **Make you feel worse.**
2. **Make your situation worse.**
3. **Cause additional problems you’ll have to fix later.**

There are other ways of dealing with anger that don’t involve a confrontation of any sort. First, when you’re in a tense situation, try walking away. Don’t let it escalate. Give yourself some time to breathe and cool down. Remind yourself that (for the three reasons just mentioned) it might be better not to get angry.

Another thing you can do is try talking the situation over with someone who can be objective about it. Remember the expression, *it takes two to tango*. To put it another way, you may have done something you are unaware of, that contributed to

the situation. A neutral third party (like a parent, mentor, or trusted friend) can help you sort this out.

But even if you didn’t do anything to provoke the situation, ask yourself the following question: **Is there any situation in the past where I might have done the same thing to someone else?** (Let’s say you were teased in a mean way. Ask yourself: *Have I ever teased someone else in a mean way?*) Think hard, and if the answer is yes, try to remember the circumstances (*I wasn’t trying to be mean*) and perhaps this bit of insight will help you better understand your current situation.

And finally, avoid blame. Blaming others makes you feel helpless and hostile. Taking responsibility for contributing, even in some small way, to the cause of a tense situation helps you feel more in control and less angry. By honestly admitting your own role in the conflict you will immediately get a handle on what you need to do to correct the situation, should it happen again. ☺

WAYS TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH YOUR **ANGER**

- 1 **Think twice before losing your temper.** Angry outbursts usually leave you feeling worse.
- 2 **Ask objective friends if your anger is justified.** If they don’t agree with you 100%, let it go.
- 3 **Is it worth getting angry over?** Before expressing anger, ask yourself: Am I truly inconvenienced by this situation? If not, it isn’t worth getting angry over.
- 4 **Try putting yourself in the other person’s shoes.** Assume they had a good reason for doing what they did and talk it out on that basis.
- 5 **Avoid blame.** Blame only makes you feel helpless and more upset. Instead take responsibility for any role you might have had in creating the situation.



8 SECTION EIGHT

STRESS SYMPTOMS



Physical symptoms of stress include a pounding heart, an upset stomach, rapid pulse, cold hands, dry mouth, unexpected perspiration, skin rashes, diarrhea, insomnia, recurrent colds, headaches, fatigue, and muscle tension. Emotional symptoms of stress include anger, frustration, worry, fear, panic, anxiety, and depression.

Becoming aware of your stress symptoms is the first step toward overcoming them. **One way to heighten this awareness is to keep a log of the times you experience these stress symptoms.** Who were you with? What were you doing? On a scale of one to ten, how strong were the symptoms? Once you begin to track your symptoms, you may uncover a particular person, place or thing that is causing them.

There are certain situations where it's normal for you to feel stressed: going out on a first date, the first time you try driving, or your first few days in a new school. These are all examples of situations where it's quite normal to feel stress symptoms. As the newness of these activities fades, your stress symptoms usually will too.

There are also situations where your stress symptoms will always be present. When you perform on stage, put on a presentation, take a final exam, or compete in a championship game, chances are, you're going to feel stressed. This is OK too, since these events don't happen every day.

But if just thinking about one of the above examples causes you stress, and you think about it often enough, your stress symptoms can become a problem. This is how acute (or occasional) stress becomes chronic (or ongoing) stress.

Chronic stress can eventually lead to stress-related illness. When acute stress becomes chronic: An occasional episode of diarrhea can become a chronic case of diarrhea (also known as irritable bowel syndrome). An occasional case of indigestion can become a chronic digestive disorder. An occasional headache can become a chronic problem with headaches and/or migraines. An occasional episode of shoulder tension can become a chronic problem with upper back pain. An occasional problem with temper can become a chronic problem with

hostility.

There are many things you can do right now to avoid these chronic problems. Try to keep track of your stress symptoms and notice what causes them. As you begin to establish a link between the causes and effects of stress, you can begin to make changes that will lower your stress in these situations.

You may consider cutting back on your course load or getting to lunch a little earlier so you can beat the line. You may want to see a guidance counselor or an advisor about a particular student or teacher that is causing you stress. And sometimes it's simply a matter of reminding yourself to not sweat the small stuff. And while it isn't all small stuff, a lot more of it is than you may realize. ☺

THINGS YOU CAN DO ABOUT YOUR STRESS SYMPTOMS

- 1 **Make a list of stress symptoms** mentioned in the first paragraph of this section. Notice when and where you experience any of these symptoms over the next week.
- 2 **Try to establish a link** between your symptoms and a particular person, place, or thing. Look for repeating patterns.
- 3 **Breathe deeply** several times whenever you feel any stress symptoms.
- 4 **Stress often starts in your mind and it can end there too.** Don't let yourself dwell on stressful thoughts. Consciously substitute a more pleasant thought.
- 5 **Don't sweat the small stuff.**



SUGGESTED
READING

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers - Robert Sapolsky, Ph.D.
Fighting Invisible Tigers; Stress Management for Teens - Karl Hipp

9 SECTION NINE STRESS OUTLETS



Under stress, our bodies react with a flood of changes that include increased heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, as well as rising levels of blood sugar and cholesterol. Our body's immune system and digestive system are also adversely affected. This reaction to stressful events is commonly known as *the fight or flight response*.

Yoga, meditation, deep breathing, and point by point relaxation have the opposite effect on the body. They decrease heart rate, lower blood pressure, diminish muscle tension, and reduce blood sugar and cholesterol levels. These activities restore balance to the body and produce what is known as *the relaxation response*. A study of medical students at Ohio State University College of Medicine, conducted by Drs. Ron and Janice Glaser, showed that students' immune systems were suppressed during final exams. But when a group of these students were taught how to elicit *the relaxation response*, their immune system functioning improved.

One way to bring about the relaxation response is by practicing **deep breathing**. To do this, place one hand over your belly, take a deep breath in as you count silently to five. Hold your breath in to another count of five. Then breathe out to a count of five, noticing your hand rising and falling with each in-breath and out-breath. Now close your eyes, and repeat the process for a minute or two until you feel more relaxed.

Meditation is another way to bring about the relaxation response. Harvard professor Dr. Herbert Benson recommends that you find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, sit or lie down in a comfortable position, and silently repeat a calming word or short phrase until you feel relaxed. Benson recommends words like *one, peace*, or anything you find meaningful. Remember, meditation requires patience and practice. When distracting thoughts pop up, as they often do, just return to your word or phrase. Practice every day for 15 to 20 minutes until you get the hang of it.

Yoga is a great way to relieve stress. The word yoga means union, which refers to the union of mind and body. It's a very light form of exercise that combines breathing, stretching, and meditation all into one. It does a fabulous job of relaxing tense muscles and taking your mind off of distracting thoughts. You can find yoga classes at health clubs, on the internet, and at your local yoga studio. There are books and DVDs on yoga as well.

Point by point relaxation (also known as progressive muscle relaxation) is a simple technique for tensing and relaxing muscles, one muscle group at a time. You can start at the top and work down: Tense all the muscles in your forehead, scalp and face, and clench your jaw, while you count to ten. Now release, and focus on the relaxation that naturally follows. Concen-

trating on one area at a time, tense and relax your neck and shoulders, your lower back and belly, your arms and chest, and finally your legs and feet.

Other outlets for reducing stress include **journaling**, **guided imagery**, **living in the moment** (*mindfulness*), **reading a good book**, **listening to music**, **getting a massage**, **taking a hot bath**, **talking to a trusted friend**, **laughing**, and **exercise**. (See Benson's *The Wellness Book* for more information on these techniques.) Remember, most people just ignore their stress symptoms *but you don't have to*. Don't put up with aching muscles, tension headaches, recurrent colds, and certain stomach pains. Choose one or more of the above outlets and practice it for 20 minutes every day. ✨

IDEAS FOR DEVELOPING BETTER STRESS OUTLETS

- 1 **Save for stress.** Think of stressful events like money spent and relaxing events like money saved. Consciously save for unexpectedly stressful times in your life.
- 2 **Make big deposits** (that require 20-30 minutes): exercise, meditate, or do yoga.
- 3 **Make little deposits:** laugh, read, listen to music, or imagine yourself in a relaxing place.
- 4 **Try them all.** Try every technique mentioned on this page at least once. Then choose the ones that work best for you.
- 5 **Practice mindfulness.** Think about what it is you're doing now. For example, when taking a shower, think about how good the water feels running down your back, instead of what you are going to be doing later.



10 SECTION TEN STUDENT STRESS



As a student, there are many factors that affect your ability to handle stress. You may be more sensitive to stress than someone else. You may have a more stressful workload than others do. You may be going through a particularly stressful time in your life. Or, conversely, you may have more outlets for reducing stress. So the right amount of stress for you is not necessarily the right amount for someone else.

You are the only person who can determine what the right amount of stress is. To find out, try asking yourself the following questions:

1. How adept am I at handling stress?

To answer this question, check your scores for sections 6, 7 and/or 8 in The Profiler. If you scored high, you probably aren't as adept as you could be at handling stress. Follow the advice given for these three sections.

2. Do I have any outlets for reducing stress?

If you scored high in section 9, you may need to build more time into your schedule for reducing stress. Exercise, yoga, meditation, and deep breathing are all great ways of blowing off steam and will help you handle stress better.

3. Is my workload too heavy?

Are you taking more courses than necessary? Are you responsible for a heavy burden of chores around the house? Are you involved in extra-curricular activities that take up a lot of your free time? Are you holding down a part-time job?

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions and are experiencing stress symptoms on a daily basis, you may want to cut back on your

workload. On the other hand, if you look forward to going to school, are keeping up with your assignments and your household chores, and get satisfaction out of the extra-curricular activities (or a part-time job) you engage in, then don't change a thing. (Remember: only you can determine how much stress is right for you.)

4. Am I going through a particularly stressful time in my life right now?

To answer this question, look at how many life changes you are currently experiencing. Change can add an extra layer of challenge that can mean the difference between being able to cope and not being able to cope with the everyday stress in your life. If you've just moved to a new town, or a close family member is seriously ill, or your parents are going through a divorce, or you've changed schools, you may be experiencing an extra measure of stress this year than you have in past years.

In order to cope with changes like these, recognize the change for what it is - a temporary source of increased stress that should eventually decrease or go away. In addition, you can try simplifying your life, reducing your workload, and getting regular exercise.

Other conditions that can contribute to your stress as a student include: deadlines, time pressure, bullies, safety issues, peer pressure, conflicts with classmates, and test anxiety. To tackle these problems, get organized, learn time management, talk with friends who have faced similar problems, and seek out the advice of a mentor.

Remember, without a certain amount of stress, life would be boring and dull. Deadlines and time pressure can be stressful, but they help us stay focused too. So you probably wouldn't want to eliminate all stress, even if you could. The key to managing stress is to:

1. Eliminate unnecessary stress (like an extra-curricular activity you don't enjoy).
2. Reduce hassles (by getting organized, planning ahead and building in extra time to complete assignments).
3. Increase your outlets for coping with stress by meditating, exercising, and practicing deep breathing.

These three suggestions will help you stay balanced and better able to handle the inevitable ups and downs of daily life while you are in school. T

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO RELIEVE **STUDENT STRESS**

- 1 **Know what's expected of you.** Keep all your assignments and due dates in one notebook so you always know where to find them.
- 2 **Avoid procrastination.** If you've been putting off an important assignment, just spend ten minutes on it today. This may break the logjam.
- 3 **Prioritize your time.** Concentrate on assignments that have the most impact on your grades without forgetting smaller assignments.
- 4 **Eliminate unnecessary stress** by dropping extra-curricular activities you don't enjoy.
- 5 **Some stress is good.** Deadlines and time pressure keep us focused.



SUGGESTED
READING

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff for Teens - Richard Carlson, Ph.D.
The Naked Roommate - Harlen Cohen