

## Stress Indicators Quiz

Never \_\_\_\_\_ Always  
0 1 2 3 4 5

### How Often

1. Do you get sick? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you get headaches? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does your neck ache? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you get indigestion? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have trouble sleeping? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you smoke? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you drink? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you overeat? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you feel irritable? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you feel depressed? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you feel insecure? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you feel tired? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you respond in anger to minor problems? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you have difficulty relaxing? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you have difficulty focusing your attention? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Do you have difficulty enjoying your hobbies? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Do you want to cancel appointments with your friends? \_\_\_\_\_

### Results

0-12

You handle the ups and downs of daily life without losing your balance.

13-15

You're doing ok, but there is room for improvement.

36-65

You're experiencing some significant signs of burnout.

66-85

Extreme burnout! Commit to making a big change!

## HOW DO I CONTACT THE CENTER FOR WORK AND FAMILY LIFE (CWFL)?

If you are a USC staff or faculty member and are interested in scheduling an appointment with a counselor or receiving information regarding resources and referrals, phone the CWFL at (213) 821-0800. If you are an immediate family member of a USC employee, you may also phone the Center directly to request services. CWFL services are available at all USC sites by special appointment.

The Center for Work and Family Life Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### STRESS

University of Southern California  
Center for Work and Family Life

#### University Park Campus

University Village  
3375 South Hoover, Suite E206  
Los Angeles, CA 90007-7794  
Phone: (213) 821-0800  
Fax: (213) 747-8304

#### Health Science Campus

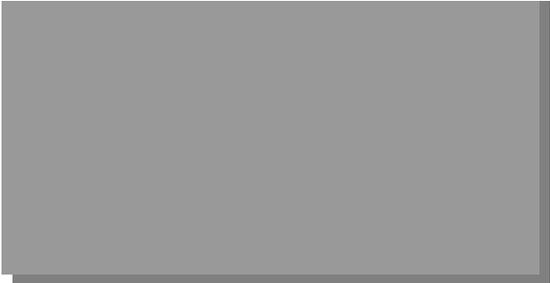
Center for Health Professions  
Room 233 B  
1540 Alcazar  
Los Angeles, CA 90089

Phone: (213) 821-0800  
Fax: (213) 747-8304

# STRESS



center for  
**work & family**  
life



USC  
Employee Assistance Program  
[www.usc.edu/worklife](http://www.usc.edu/worklife)

# S T R E S S

## Stress

Everyone experiences stress. It is a natural reaction that most people experience at one time or another...it's part of being human. Everyday pressures of work and home can leave us feeling mentally and physically exhausted. Not all stress is bad, though. Some stress motivates us to work harder or be more creative. But too much stress can be harmful. Stress is our body's response to danger or a perceived threat. Adrenaline rushes through our body, causing our blood pressure to rise, and our muscles to tighten. Keeping our body at elevated levels of stress puts a toll on our system. But, we can develop ways to cope with stress or make attempts in our lives to manage it.

## What causes stress?

Many things in life can bring us stress. Troubles at work or at home can affect one's life significantly. And people often don't deal with their stress until it gets to an elevated point.

Good and bad things can cause stress. Buying a new home, getting married, having a baby or getting promoted can all cause great stress in a person's life. Though these would generally be considered positive changes, they are still stressful. Negative changes like getting fired, getting divorce, having an accident or falling ill are also stressors.

Many times we feel stress because we do not have control of a situation. Whether it is in a relationship or in a work environment, a lack of control leaves us feeling stressed.

## Am I stressed?

There are many signals the body gives us to let us know we are stressed. You may:

- Feel excessively anxious or tired
- Be able to focus only on the stressful situation (i.e. work or family)
- Feel irritable or annoyed for no reason
- Experience getting sick more often than usual
- Experience differences in sleeping or eating patterns

If you are experiencing any of the symptoms above, you may be suffering from stress.

## What can I do?

**Plan:** When you know that something stressful is going to occur, or if you think it might occur, plan ahead. Try to prepare yourself for how you might deal with it. By being prepared, you are giving yourself control over your stress.

**Prioritize:** Not everything can be done first. Make a list deciding what is important now and what is less important. Prioritize the items in order of importance. Estimate how much time you might need for each item, and how you might go about accomplishing that item. Though you cannot put everything on the backburner, it is important to manage your time efficiently.

**Say "NO":** Oftentimes we are stressed because we put many demands on ourselves. If you do not have time to do something, it is all right for you to say "no" to someone's request. You do not have to feel guilty for not participating in a bake sale or helping throw a friend's party, if you honestly don't have the time to do it. Even at work, you can avoid stress by saying no to unreasonable demands.

Being assertive is difficult, but, with practice, setting limits will help you in the long run.

## Stress Reduction Tips

Having a stress reduction method to practice is vital to dealing with stress. Whatever method you choose, find a way to incorporate it into your daily life.

**Exercise:** Getting the blood pumping and muscles working is a great way to sweat out the stress. Aerobics, walking, team sports, or bicycling are all good ways to get your mind off things.

**Sleep:** Sleep is necessary for our health. Lack of sleep leaves us irritable and less able to face the day efficiently. A good night's sleep helps our ability to cope with stress.

**Eating:** Maintaining a healthy diet rich in nutrients helps our body deal with stress better. Eating right also builds our immune system.

**Support Network:** Whether it is talking with a friend, counselor, or group, having someone to talk to about stress is important in dealing with it. Call a friend or contact a professional counselor if you are having an episode of stress in your life.

**Time-out:** Give yourself times where you don't have to think about what's causing your stress. Prayer, meditation, imagery and deep breathing are all ways to mentally escape your stress. Also, participating in exercises like yoga helps clear your mind and work your body.

**Leave:** If you are in a stressful situation and you can leave, do it. Move yourself away from the problem physically and often you are able to come back with a clear mind, and in a calm way to resolve the issue.