

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH STRESS?

Directions: There are many ways to cope with the stress in your life. Some coping techniques are more effective than others. The purpose of this checklist is to help you assess how effectively you cope with the stress. Upon completing this checklist, you will have identified many of the ways you choose to cope with stress, while at the same time, through a point system, ascertain the relative desirability of the coping techniques that you now employ. This is a health education survey, not a clinical assessment instrument. Its sole purpose is to inform you of how you cope with the stress in your life.

In order to complete the checklist, simply follow the instructions given for each of the 14 items listed below. When you have completed all of the 14 items, place your total score in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Give yourself 10 points if you feel that you have a supportive family.
- _____ 2. Give yourself 10 points if you actively pursue a hobby.
- _____ 3. Give yourself 10 points if you belong to some social or activity group that meets at least once a month (other than your family).
- _____ 4. Give yourself 15 points if you are within five pounds of your "ideal" bodyweight, considering your height and bone structure.
- _____ 5. Give yourself 15 points if you practice some form of " deep relaxation" at least three times a week. Deep relaxation exercises include meditation, imagery, yoga, etc.
- _____ 6. Give yourself 5 points for each time you exercise 30 minutes or longer during the course of an average week.
- _____ 7. Give yourself 5 points for each nutritionally balanced and wholesome meal you consume during the course of an average day.
- _____ 8. Give yourself 10 points for each time you do something that you really enjoy, "just for yourself," during the course of an average week.
- _____ 9. Give yourself 10 points if you have some place in your home that you can go to in order to relax and/or be by yourself.
- _____ 10. Give yourself 10 points if you practice time management techniques in your daily life.
- _____ 11. Subtract 10 points for each pack of cigarettes you smoke during the course of an average day.
- _____ 12. Subtract 5 points for each evening during the course of an average week that you take any form of medication or chemical substance (including alcohol) to help you sleep.
- _____ 13. Subtract 10 points for each day during the course of an average week that you consume any form of medication or chemical substance (including alcohol) to reduce your anxiety or just calm you down.
- _____ 14. Subtract 5 points for each evening during the course of an average week that you bring work home; work that was meant to be done at your place of employment.

_____ **TOTAL SCORE**

Now that you've calculated your score, consider that the higher your score, the greater your health-promoting coping practices. A "perfect" score would be around 115. Scores in the 50-60 range are probably adequate to cope with most common sources of stress.

Also keep in mind that items 1-10 represent adaptive health-promoting coping strategies, and items 11-14 represent maladaptive, health-deteriorating coping strategies. These maladaptive strategies are self-sustaining because they do provide at least some temporary relief from stress. In the long run, however, their utilization serves to erode one's health. Ideally, health-promoting coping strategies (items 1-10) are the best to integrate into your lifestyle and will ultimately prove to be an effective preventive program against excessive stress.

This exercise was developed by Dr. George S. Everly, Jr. through a grant provided by the U.S.H.E.W.

