



The Workplace Stress Scale™

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What is Stress?

Stress is defined as the nonspecific reaction to demands placed upon the body but of course it is more complex than that. Any situation where a person is subjected to change, and especially big changes in life is deemed stressful. Stress also arises from the feeling that one has little control over life or daily activities. It can result in the breakdown of a person's mental and physical health, and if left unmanaged, to cardiovascular disease and cancer. Stress kills. And it could rob us of the enjoyment we earned from our labors.

Stress is Not a Disease.

Our bodies are programmed to react to change by creating a cascade of physiological changes that enables us to analyze and react to physical threats. This is often referred to as the *fight or flight* reaction. Under normal circumstances this state of arousal subsides within an hour and the body resumes a more relaxed status where it can digest food and repair itself. However, the body cannot function well in a state of prolonged chronic stress. People who remain in that state for hours a day or all the time will be less capable of achieving daily tasks, experience more sickness and are more prone to injury.

Directions for The Workplace Stress Scale™

Thinking about your current job, how often does each of the following statements describe how you feel?

| | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
|---|-------|--------|-----------|-------|------------|
| Conditions at work are unpleasant or sometimes even unsafe | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel that my job is negatively affecting my physical or emotional well-being. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have too much work to do an/or too many unreasonable deadlines. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I find it difficult to express my opinions or feelings about my job conditions to my superiors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel that job pressures interfere with my family or personal life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel that I have inadequate control or input over my work duties. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I receive inadequate recognition or rewards for good performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am unable to fully utilize my skills and talents at work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

To calculate your score, add the numbers you answered to all of the 8 questions and see the interpretation below.

Interpreting Workplace Stress Scale™ Scores

Total score of 15 or lower: *Chilled out and relatively calm.* Stress isn't much of an issue.

Total score 16 to 20: *Fairly low.* Coping should be a breeze, but you probably have a tough day now and then. Still, count your blessings.

Total score 21 - 25: *Moderate stress.* Some things about your job are likely to be pretty stressful, but probably not much more than most people experience and are able to cope with. Concentrate on what can be done to reduce items with the worst scores.

Total score 26 - 30: *Severe.* You may still be able to cope, but life at work can sometimes be miserable. Several of your scores are probably extreme. You could be in the wrong job, or even in the right job but at the wrong time, and might benefit from counseling.

Total score 31 - 40: *Stress level is potentially dangerous.* The more so the higher your score. You should seek professional assistance, especially if you feel your health is affected, or you might need to consider a job change to a different position within the company or to a different company.

Some Useful Tips on Reducing Stress

- Analyze all the items showing high stress levels and figure out how to rein them in, particularly if you feel your health is being significantly affected. But keep in mind that any such scale, along with its categories, is subjective and that some stressors, such as deadlines, can actually have positive consequences.
- Remember that stress differs for all of us. Things like going on a roller coaster that are stressful for some may be pleasurable for others. Similarly, no stress-reduction technique works for everyone. Jogging, meditation, deep breathing or yoga are great for some but can actually prove stressful when arbitrarily imposed on others. Find out what works for you.
- Don't automatically assume that your headaches or other complaints are stress-related just because you have a high job stress score. A health care practitioner should always be consulted if you experience new symptoms, or if past problems seem to be getting worse, because they may be due to something else that is much easier to treat in its early stages.
- Finally, although stress is difficult to define, the feeling of having little control is always stressful. Anything you can do to gain more control over your daily activities will provide powerful stress reduction rewards.

Specific Stress Solutions Offered by The American Institute of Stress



MISMATCHED

1. Everybody likes movies. We recommend starting with watching our 6-episode documentary, [Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress](#) because nothing can be easier than watching a movie and yet this is a great introduction to the basics of stress mechanisms and management techniques. Each of the 6 episodes are approximately 30 minutes so it can be watched daily for a week. Institutional licenses are available that include lesson plans and quizzes to evaluate participation and attention.

2. Ideally everyone concerned about their health, or at least those who became interested in understanding their personal stressors better after watching Mismatched, should take an online, multiple choice assessment of their stress. The Institute offers two scientifically validated stress assessments; [The Rosch Stress Profiler](#) and the [Stress Mastery Questionnaire](#). They are just \$19.95 each and both include a workbook that helps the individual gain a comprehensive understanding of their specific stressors and some stress management techniques for those stressors.
3. Stress is the spice of life. Without it life would be dangerous and dull. But just like when spicing food, too much can hurt. For those who want to learn more about how to effectively manage their stress and keep in balance with scientifically proven methods, AIS offers courses such as [Stress to Joy](#), developed by an award winning psychiatrist, a mentored (by phone) [meditation](#) course and [other courses](#), all designed to be easy and fun.
4. For ongoing reminders to maintain stress awareness and learn fascinating new stress management techniques, we recommend subscribing to our free magazines, [Contentment](#) for everyone, and [Combat Stress](#) for Service Members, Veterans and first responders. And to listen to [Finding Contentment](#), our free podcasts on Spotify.

