

STRESS

Just how stressed are you?

In the following table, look up representative changes in your life and see how much stress value each of these changes adds to it. NOTE ANY ITEM THAT YOU MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS. Total your score at the end.

STRESS	EVENT VALUES
1. DEATH OF PARENT, BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND	100
2. DIVORCE (of yourself or your parents)	65
3. PUBERTY	65
4. PREGNANCY (or causing pregnancy)	65
5. BREAKUP WITH BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND	60
6. JAIL TERM OR PROBATION	60
7. DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER	60
8. BROKEN ENGAGEMENT	55
9. ENGAGEMENT	50
10. SERIOUS PERSONAL INJURY OR ILLNESS	45
11. ENTERING COLLEGE	45
12. CHANGE IN INDEPENDENCE OR RESPONSIBILITY	45
13. ANY DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOLIC USE	45
14. CHANGE IN ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE	45
15. RECONCILIATION WITH MATE, FAMILY OR BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND (getting back together)	40
16. TROUBLE AT SCHOOL	40
17. SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEM OF A FAMILY MEMBER	40
18. CHANGE IN FREQUENCY OF DATING	35
19. SEXUAL ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS (confusion of sexual identity)	35
20. GAIN OF NEW FAMILY MEMBER (new baby born or parent remarries)	35
21. CHANGE IN FINANCIAL STATE	30
22. DEATH OF A CLOSE FRIEND	30
23. SLEEP LESS THAN 8 HOURS PER NIGHT	25
24. TROUBLE WITH BOYFRIEND'S OR GIRLFRIEND'S FAMILY	25
25. OUTSTANDING PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT (awards, grades, etc.)	25
26. PARENTS STOP OR START WORKING	20
27. BEGIN OR END SCHOOL	20
28. CHANGE IN PERSONAL HABITS (start or stop a habit like smoking or dieting)	20
29. CHRONIC ALLERGIES	20
30. CHANGE TO A NEW SCHOOL (other than graduation)	10
31. CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY	15
32. CHANGE IN FREQUENCY OF FAMILY GATHERINGS	10
33. VACATION	10
34. PRESENTLY IN WINTER HOLIDAY SEASON	10
35. MINOR VIOLATION OF THE LAW	5

TOTAL SCORE=_____

[We have asked you to look at the last twelve months of changes in your life because a major change in your life has effects that carry over for long periods of time.]

If you have experienced total stress within the last twelve months of 250 or greater, even with normal stress tolerance, you may be OVERSTRESSED. Persons with Low Stress Tolerance may be OVERSTRESSED at levels as low as 150.

OVERSTRESS will make you sick. Carrying too heavy a stress load is like running your car engine past the red line; or running a nuclear reactor past maximum permissible power. Sooner or later, something will break, burnup, or melt down.

Source: www.teachhealth.com/#stressscale

Beyond the mind: stress's power on the human body

ALISON GOSS

Few people that enter the clinic realize that their ailments may be due to stress. However, up to 75 percent of all visits to doctors' offices are made by people with stress-related problems.

Stress is inevitable because it is caused by a change in environment. Nonetheless, too much stress can cause many diseases.

Stress affects the body most commonly through a weakened immune system. When stress inhibits the immune system, individuals are more prone to infection by cold or flu.

"I prepare myself at the end of every quarter, and especially semesters, for the influx of students who are affected by stress, and are as a result sick," said Nurse Margaret Stewart.

If stress is not reduced, more serious afflictions that can occur. Fifty to eighty percent of all diseases are a result of excess stress. It is the single most important factor in the onset of hypertension, high blood pressure and heart disease. Besides affecting the heart, stress can also lead to asthma, arthritis and multiple sclerosis.

"Not that many people think about what stress can do to your body. The effects of stress are pretty scary," Junior Janet White said.

Although the influence of stress on illnesses may be frightening, some people may not believe that stress is a threat to their physical health. Some people don't even consider stress as a factor when they are feeling ill.

"The only time people think about stress is when they are blaming it for something that they didn't do. I know that I have heard at least ten people say 'It's not my fault...I was just stressed,'" said Junior Chelsea Redeker.

When people endure an excess amount of stress, their bodies undergo sequential stages of response.

This is called General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). The first stage is one of alarm reaction. The person's muscles tighten and the common "knot in the stomach" is formed. Sweaty palms, dry mouths and a racing pulse are all symptoms of this stage as the body prepares for "fight or flight."

"My first day home for Christmas was horrible because I was feeling sick as a result of stress. I started shaking and my teeth were chattering so hard that I chipped a tooth!" said Junior Charles Stopford, relating an example of the first stage of response.

During resistance, the second stage of GAS, all the body's normal functions return to normal. The pulse calms and there is no physical evidence that the person is stressed.

This activity within the body requires much of the body's energy. At this point stress becomes a mental problem instead of just a physical one.

During the third stage, exhaustion, the body cannot keep up its normal functions, and consequently, signs of the first stage reappear. Both effects of physical and mental exhaustion are present. This is when an individual is in danger of a mental breakdown.

"Stress leads to anxiety, and panic attacks are a possibility," Stewart said. GAS is a common problem for adults and teenagers alike.

Every aspect of life can be affected by stress, and in most cases nothing can be done to change the stressful conditions in which people live. However, one's reaction to stress can be changed so that little problems are not seen as major ones and life doesn't become a series of crises.

SLI Kay Chung offered some relieving advice. "You bring on your own stress by not knowing how to deal with it. Just be good to yourself," Chung said.

