

HOW WE RESPOND TO STRESS

To understand in more detail your particular Stress Response Pattern, think about a situation that was highly stressful to you. If you experienced high levels of stress in that particular situation, how did you know? To help you, here are lists of some of the most common signs for each of the three major reasons of stress symptoms: Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive. Read each list and check the symptoms you experience when you are stressed. Put an **X** beside these signals.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- 1. Tension or other types of headaches
- 2. Muscle spasms in your shoulders, neck, lower back, or chest
- 3. Inability to get to sleep at night, or sleep that is not restful
- 4. A lump in your throat that makes swallowing difficult
- 5. Diarrhea or constipation
- 6. Hives or other types of rash
- 7. An uncontrollably rapid heartbeat
- 8. Increase/decrease in appetite with related weight gain or loss
- 9. Rapid shallow breathing with shortness of breath
- 10. Dizziness or faintness (occasional actual fainting)
- 11. Muscular weakness or a feeling that your legs will collapse
- 12. Flare-ups of any chronic condition (arthritis, colitis, lupus, etc.)
- 13. Lowered resistance to colds, flu's & viruses and difficulty getting rid of them quickly.
- 14. Loss of sexual energy (libido). Exception: About 10 to 15% of men & women experience an increase of libido under stress.
- 15. Grinding your teeth during sleep/clenching teeth during the day
- 16. Painful stomach contractions or a nauseous, queasy feeling
- 17. An increase in nervous mannerisms or unconscious facial tics
- 18. Excessive perspiration including sweaty palms and feet
- 19. Women: Irregular menstrual periods or skipping periods entirely.
- 20. Other: _____

Note that each of these physical symptoms of stress overload may also result from physical conditions that may require medical treatment.

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- 1. Persistent sadness or frequent crying episodes
- 2. A gloomy, pessimistic outlook or strong sense of impending doom
- 3. General irritability or unexpected outbursts of anger
- 4. Emotional withdrawal and wanting to be by yourself
- 5. Strong anxiety with no clear focus or overall tenseness
- 6. Excessive need for emotional support or reassurance from others

- ___ 7. **Lethargy, with significant loss of motivation**
- ___ 8. **Inability to sit still because of nervous energy**
- ___ 9. **Frequent nervous laughter**
- ___ 10. **Pushing others away and rejecting their help**
- ___ 11. **Focusing on vague aches and pains**
- ___ 12. **Rapid and frequent mood swings**
- ___ 13. **Impulsive actions motivated by emotional upset**
- ___ 14. **Feeling overwhelmed or fearing you will lose self-control**
- ___ 15. **Other:** _____

COGNITIVE (INTELLECTUAL) SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- ___ 1. **Frequently forgetting things that are usually remembered**
- ___ 2. **Inability to remember what has been just read or heard**
- ___ 3. **Loss of objectivity (“making mountains out of molehills”)**
- ___ 4. **Racing thoughts, but inability to deal with any of them**
- ___ 5. **Increased distractibility or lowered attention span**
- ___ 6. **A critical attitude toward self and others**
- ___ 7. **Going over and over one thought you can’t get out off your mind**
- ___ 8. **Retreat to fantasies or daydreaming**
- ___ 9. **Over controlling others or becoming very demanding**
- ___ 10. **Disorganization, resulting in lack of effective planning**
- ___ 11. **Feeling that others do not like you or are making your life miserable**
- ___ 12. **Stubbornness or rigidity in your positions**
- ___ 13. **Reduced or absent awareness of personal strengths and assets**
- ___ 14. **Absent humor or sarcastic and cynical humor**
- ___ 15. **Other:** _____

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