

Your Preventive Measures Personal Stress Profile

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Mary

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Here is your individualized *Stress Profile*. Your responses to the stress questionnaire that you completed have been compiled, summarized, and compared to many other people's answers to give you an overview of areas of stress and areas of strength in your life.

On the next page is a graph that shows your particular pattern of stresses and strengths. It will help you to determine which areas of your life would benefit most from change. Your *Stress Profile* also includes bar graphs that show your stress levels in specific areas. Remember that no one has strengths in all areas. Everyone experiences excess stress in some areas of their lives at some times. The information in your profile should not be cause for alarm but rather the beginning of positive change.

You will probably find that you generally agree with the way your *Stress Profile* describes you. You may, however, find a few areas where you disagree. Some possible reasons include: (1) You may have given answers for some questions that were not the ones you intended; (2) You may have been feeling very differently than you usually feel about certain aspects of your life on the day you answered the questions; or (3) You may be very different in some ways from the majority of people who have answered the questions in these areas.

If you disagree with parts of the report, it is important that you trust your own feelings. You may also choose to disregard or reinterpret the information you don't agree with. If you want to explore any areas of disagreement further, discuss your concerns with a qualified professional helper.

The book, *Stress? Find Your Balance* describes a number of techniques for coping with stress. As specific areas of stress in your life are discussed, particular chapters in the book that present techniques you can use to make changes in these areas will be recommended.

We suggest you read through your *Stress Profile* more than once. Be careful to focus on your strengths as well as your area of stress. Being aware of your strengths and building on them will assist you tremendously in developing a happier, more relaxed life-style. Remember that you have choice in your life, and you can choose happiness.

Graphic Summary for Mary

Your Overall Stress Level

Work or Primary Activity

Marriage/Primary Relationship

Friends and Social Life

Physical Health

Family Relationships

Self-Esteem

Appearance

Time

Joys (or lack thereof)

Feeling Discontent

Feeling Dissatisfied

Feeling in Charge of Your Life

+ -----> -
Strength Moderate Frequent or
(Minimal Level of High Level
Stress) Stress of Stress

Your Overall Stress Level:

+ -----> -

According to your own assessment, **the overall level of stress in your life is moderate.** Your evaluation of the overall quality of your life indicates that while you are finding some aspects of your life satisfying, you are also feeling some excess stress. This suggests that although you feel you are coping adequately with many of the demands in your life, you also see some need for changing your life-style. As various areas of your life are discussed, you should find some areas where you will want to make changes to make your life more enjoyable. Also, you may discover some symptoms of stress in your life of which you were unaware. Finally, your ways of coping with stress will be discussed and some suggestions will be made for changing your life-style.

You have reported being currently aware of almost no stress in your work or primary activity, and almost no stress in your personal life. According to your assessment, personal stress in your life almost always affects your work, and stress from your work almost always affects your personal life. During the past year you have noticed no change in the amount of stress in your life.

I. Your High Sources of Stress

According to your answers, **the following areas of your life are high sources of stress for you.** To reduce your overall feelings of stress you should seriously consider some changes in your behavior that would reduce your stress in these areas. For each area, specific chapters in *Stress? Find Your Balance* are recommended for you to read.

Physical Appearance:

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According to your responses, you feel dissatisfied with your physical appearance. Feeling this way about your physical attractiveness contributes to the stress in your life. Keeping your weight within accepted limits contributes significantly to a feeling of satisfaction with your physical appearance, as well as to your health. According to your assessment of your weight, you are at your recommended weight.

Time:

+ -----> -

Feeling rushed is a common complaint today, responsible for a lot of pressure and stress in people's lives. Your responses indicate that you feel a lot of time pressure in your life. The way you manage your time appears to be a major source of stress in your life. You should examine and probably revise the priorities you have established in your life. Read chapter 16 in *Stress? Find Your Balance* for specific suggestions.

II. Your Moderate Sources of Stress

According to your answers, **the following areas of your life are moderate sources of stress for you.** To reduce your overall feelings of stress you may want to consider some changes that will reduce your stress in these areas. For each area, specific chapters in *Stress? Find Your Balance* are recommended for you to read.

Your Work or Primary Activity:

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Your answers indicate that your job situation or primary activity, caring for home and family, is sometimes a source of stress in your life. Consider any specific aspects of the job or activity that you find stressful, and look for ways of changing your behavior to eliminate some of this stress. Read chapters 11, 15 and 16 in *Stress? Find Your Balance* for specific suggestions.

Physical Health:

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Experiencing physical problems and/or not feeling healthy can be a source of stress. You have indicated that you have been feeling both satisfied and dissatisfied with your physical health. A physical examination should be the first step in establishing a program to improve your physical health. Next, consider carefully any recommendations your physician has made for improving your health, and ask yourself whether you have been following these recommendations. Also, consider what changes you could make to create a healthier life-style.

Eating Habits:

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People who have good eating habits are generally healthier and better able to cope with stress. Your responses indicate that your eating habits may contribute to the stress in your life. Experiment with changing these habits. You may find changes you can make that will allow you to enjoy your life more. See chapter 8 in *Stress? Find Your Balance* for specific suggestions.

Family Relationships:

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Family conflict is a source of stress in many people's lives. Most of us go through some periods in our lives during which conflict in our relationships with our parents, our in-laws, or our children are a source of stress in our lives. Your responses indicate that at this time in your life, family relationships are sometimes a source of stress for you. Rather than expecting family members to change, consider what changes you can make to improve these relationships. For suggestions of techniques to help you improve your relationship with family members, read chapters

11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 in *Stress? Find Your Balance*.

III. Your Strengths

According to your answers, **the following areas of your life are strengths**. You can draw on these areas to help you cope with stressful aspects of your life.

Your Marriage or Primary Relationship:

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Research indicates that people whose lives are most satisfying tend to be involved in relationships that are mutually supportive and add pleasure to their lives. You have indicated that you find your relationship supportive and a source of pleasure. Having this source of strength in your life will help you cope with more stressful areas.

Friends and Social Life:

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Friends share our good times and help us through the rough spots. People who report finding their lives very fulfilling also report having more close friends than do other people. You have reported that you are finding your relationships with friends and your social life to be enjoyable and satisfying. Your friendships are a source of strength.

Self Esteem:

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According to your responses, you have primarily positive feelings about yourself and your abilities. You are able to focus on your accomplishments and not dwell on your mistakes. Viewing yourself positively is a source of strength that helps you deal with stress.

Exercise: Regular physical exercise is one of the best and healthiest ways to reduce tension in your life. You report that you do exercise regularly. The benefits you are experiencing from this exercise are an important part of maintaining a relaxed life-style.

IV. Your Symptoms of Stress

Physical Symptoms:

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Stress expresses itself in our lives in a number of unpleasant ways. According to your responses, during the past 6 months you have experienced many discomforts that are frequently symptoms of stress. Specifically, you reported having experienced the following discomforts **often** during the past 6 months: tightness or tingling in scalp, indigestion or stomach trouble, panic, difficulty getting to sleep, fitful, disturbed sleep, and getting tired during the day. Discomforts that you reported having experienced **sometimes**, although less frequently, during the past 6 months include: tension, pains in back of neck, and loss of appetite.

Although these symptoms may have other causes, they are often symptoms of a stress overload. Many people find that when they change their patterns of coping with the stresses in their lives, such symptoms disappear.

Feeling Discontent:

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Another sign that a person's methods of coping with life's demands are not working well is a feeling of overall discontent or unhappiness. This feeling is particularly common among people who feel they have little control over certain important areas of their lives. Your responses indicate that you are feeling some symptoms of such overall discontent.

Feeling Dissatisfied:

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Feeling satisfied with most areas of your life is an indication that your life is generally meeting your needs; feeling dissatisfied with many areas suggests some need for change. Your responses indicate that you feel satisfied with some areas of your life, but dissatisfied with other areas. Specific areas of your life with which you report having been **highly satisfied** over the last few months include: your family relationships; your finances; your house, apartment, or residence; and, your social life and relationships with friends. Specific areas in which you report having been **dissatisfied** over the last few months include: your accomplishments; and, your physical appearance.

Feeling in Charge of Your Life:

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Feeling that you have choice in your life, rather than feeling like a victim of circumstances is a very important component of overall happiness. Your responses indicate that you sometimes do and sometimes don't feel in charge of your life. This suggests that at times you feel capable of dealing with crises in your life and at times feel that life is 'happening' to you. This is an indication that you may not be dealing very well with the stresses of life.

V. The Way You Cope With Stress

The Coping Strategies You Choose: We all develop patterns of coping with the problems or stress in our lives. Some strategies deal more constructively with problems than others. **Useful** coping strategies that you report using **frequently** include: solving the problem on your own, physical exercise, finding out more about the problem, using stress management techniques, engaging in a relaxing activity, taking one day at a time and staying away from the source of stress. **Useful** coping strategies that you report using **sometimes** include: talking with someone close to you and reevaluating priorities. **Less useful** or undesirable coping strategies that you report using **frequently** include: worrying.

Worrying: Worry doesn't change things and it does contribute to our feelings of stress. Although most people worry occasionally, frequent worrying gets in the way of actually living our lives because it immobilizes us.

VI. Changing Your Life-style

It is not easy to change the habits of a lifetime. If such change were easy, stress would not be the tremendous problem it is for people today. However, research has demonstrated that one of the characteristics of people who feel a strong sense of well-being in their lives is their willingness to make changes, even when this seems risky and difficult. There is no magic pill or instant cure for stress, but changing your outlook, values, habits, and/or goals can make a major difference in the way you experience stress in your life. In addition to the suggestions we have already made, some changes you may want to consider include changes in the following areas.

Taking Care of Yourself:

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One very constructive, and not very difficult, way of creating a less stressful life for yourself is by being nice to yourself. This means making sure that you have enough opportunities in your life to do things that make you feel good, happy, or satisfied. We asked you to consider 15 of the most commonly reported joys in life, and indicate how often you experienced each of them in the last 6 months. Of these, you reported that you experienced 11 often or most of the time, 2 sometimes, and 2 seldom, almost never or never. The more of these and similar pleasures you can manage to experience frequently in your life, the happier you will be, and the more resources you will have to deal with any problems that arise.

Pleasures that you reported experiencing **often** or most of the time during the last six months include: feeling healthy; relating well with friends; feeling that you are meeting your responsibilities; spending pleasant time with family; relating well with spouse or lover; sense of accomplishment from completing a task; having fun; pleasure from music, movies, entertainment, etc; enjoying socializing (parties, being with friends, etc.); enjoying your home, apartment, or residence; and, feeling loved. Pleasures that you reported experiencing **sometimes** during the last six months include: enjoying sex; and, improving skills or gaining new skills. Pleasures that you reported experiencing **seldom, almost never, or never** during the last six months include: getting enough sleep; and, feeling that you have enough money.

How You Change:

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Your responses indicate that you are usually enthusiastic about making changes. This suggests that integrating new techniques for managing stress into your life, and changing some of your patterns and habits so that you experience less stress, will probably not be difficult for you. Since you do find change easy, you will probably find that you can make your life more fulfilling by following some suggestions from stress management books or classes.