

Mindful Leadership Resource 2: Stress level diagnostic tool

Discovering your stress levels

In order to reduce your stress levels, its useful identify your starting point.

This self-diagnosis tool does not provide a clinical diagnosis, its intended as an indicator only. If you are concerned, please consult your doctor

Instructions

Read the statements below, and answer them yes or no. Be as honest as possible.

In the last two weeks....

1. My sleep has been:
 - broken
 - AND OR I have been getting less than 5 hours sleep a night
2. I have been feeling:
 - Overwhelmed
 - AND OR drained by everyday activities
3. Emotionally I have been
 - Finding myself quickly getting angry or upset with people at work or at home
 - AND OR I have experienced mood swings.
4. My attention is not as it used to be:
 - I have been more forgetful than usual,
 - AND OR I have found it difficult to concentrate at work.
 - AND OR Family and work demands have been really distracting me.
5. My body feels more stiff or achy than it used to:
 - I often have headaches
 - AND OR I feel tension in the shoulders, or neck
 - AND OR I have noticed that my body seems to ache most of the time,
6. My eating habits have changed:
 - I have noticed that I frequently snack on the wrong foods or overeat, eating on the go or in a rush.
 - OR I have felt too busy to eat, and may be starving myself, or not nourishing myself appropriately
7. How I use my leisure time has changed:
 - I have no time to exercise or socialize like I used to
 - AND OR I feel as if I can't be bothered about much these days.

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8. I am not feeling as resilient as I used to be:
 - I seem to catch all the viruses and bugs doing the rounds.
 - AND OR I seem to be experiencing more digestive issues (stomach ache, indigestion, diarrhoea) than usual.
9. I don't enjoy my life as much as I used to:
 - At times I feel that I just want to run away from it all and hide.
 - AND OR I don't want to face each day. I find myself fantasizing about escaping my job, my home, etc.
10. My days are demanding and stressful:
 - I find myself feeling tired and exhausted when only part way through the day
 - AND OR I feel like I fall asleep at any opportunity but can't stay asleep for long

Interpretation

How many of the statements did you answer 'yes' to? This simple test was designed to give you an indication of your stress levels, rather than a clinical diagnosis – if you are concerned please seek appropriate medical advice.

If you answer yes to 3 or more of these indicators, then you may be experiencing moderate stress. Practicing mindfulness could reduce this, or at least stop your stress from escalating further.

If you responded yes to 5 statements you may be experiencing stress at an unhealthy level, and need to find ways to reduce this. Practicing mindfulness could be a good start

If you have answered yes to six or more statements you may be experiencing a high level of stress, and need to take immediate steps to reduce this. Consider seeking medical advice. If you are experiencing very high stress levels, practicing mindfulness for the first time could prove difficult, as your mind may be too agitated to focus. Give it a try, and if this is the case, try taking some practical steps to reduce the pressure you place on yourself. Take a break if you can, or at least try a little self-kindness by taking time out to eat at your favourite restaurant, laugh at your favourite comedy movie, meet up with friends, or spend quality time with loved ones.

<Tip>

If your level of stress is high:

- Try to punctuate your day with mini mindfulness techniques such as the three step body check, Three step breathing space or Mindfulness break + action (see Mindful Leadership for Dummies for details).
- Enhance your metacognition by practicing mindfulness in a quiet place at home or work where you will not be disturbed for 10 minutes each day.
- Talk to your friends and family, gain support and or medical help as appropriate.