

Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale for Youth

In the last 12 months, check the items that you have had to cope with. At the end you will be able to put your past year in perspective to your health.

Event	Value	Event	Value
Death of spouse, parent, boyfriend/girlfriend	100	Gain of new family member (new baby born or parent remarries)	35
Divorce (of yourself or your parents)	65	Change in work responsibilities	35
Puberty	65	Change in financial state	30
Pregnancy (or causing pregnancy)	65	Death of a close friend (not a family member)	30
Marital separation or breakup with boyfriend/ girlfriend	60	Change to a different kind of work	30
Jail term or probation	60	Change in number or arguments with mate, family or friends	30
Death of other family member (other than spouse, parent or boyfriend/girlfriend)	60	Sleep less than 8 hours per night	25
Broken engagement	55	Trouble with in-laws or boyfriend's or girlfriend's family	25
Engagement	50	Outstanding personal achievement (awards, grades, etc.)	25
Serious personal injury or illness	45	Mate or parents start or stop working	20
Marriage	45	Begin or end school	20
Entering college or beginning next level of school (starting junior high or high school)	45	Change in living conditions (visitors in the home, remodeling house, change in roommates)	20
Change in independence or responsibility	45	Change in personal habits (start or stop a habit like smoking or dieting)	20
Any drug and/or alcoholic use	45	Chronic allergies	20
Fired at work or expelled from school	45	Trouble with the boss	20
Change in alcohol or drug use	45	Change in work hours	15
Reconciliation with mate, family or boyfriend/girlfriend (getting back together)	40	Change in residence	15
Trouble at school	40	Change to a new school (other than graduation)	10
Serious health problem of a family member	40	Presently in pre-menstrual period	15
Working while attending school	35	Change in religious activity	15
Working more than 40 hours per week	35	Going in debt (you or your family)	10
Changing course of study	35	Change in frequency of family gatherings	10
Change in frequency of dating	35	Vacation	10
Sexual adjustment problems (confusion of sexual identity)	35	Presently in winter holiday season	10
		Minor violation of the law	5

TOTAL: _____

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SCORING

Each event should be considered if it has taken place in the last 12 months. Add values to the right of each item to obtain the total score. Your susceptibility to illness and mental health problems:

Low < 149 – You are relatively stress free. Your risk of having any health problems due to stress is low

Mild = 150-200 – You have a 33% chance of developing stress related illness.

Moderate = 200-299 – You are having a kind of tough time right now. You have a 50% chance of developing the previous conditions

Major >300 – You are having a major life crisis right now. You have an 80% chance of having a major stress illness within the next two years.

Major effects of stress:

Cognitive

- Increase in forgetfulness or problems with memory
- Increase difficulty in concentration and focus
- Poor judgment and decision-making
- Having a pessimistic and negative outlook on everything
- Increase in anxiety and racing thoughts that won't go away
- Constant worrying

Emotional

- Increased mood swings
- Irritation at small things that normally do not aggravate you
- Shorter tempers and increased agitation
- Inability to relax or enjoy things you usually find pleasure in
- Constant feeling of being overwhelmed
- New sense of loneliness and isolation
- General unhappiness, even depression

Physical

- Development of aches and pains
- Irregular bowel movements, such as diarrhea or constipation
- Increased nausea and/or dizziness
- Development of chest pains and increased blood pressure
- Decrease in libido, or sex drive
- Frequent colds that do not seem to go away
- Unexplained skin inflammation or rashes that can be itchy, similar to an allergic reaction

Behavioral

- Change in eating habits, either eating very little or a lot
- Change in sleeping habits, either too much, too little or not at all (insomnia)
- Isolation from other human interaction
- Procrastinating or neglecting duties and responsibilities
- Need or dependency of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax
- Development of nervous habits, such as excessive pacing, nail biting or scratching

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Overcoming stress

How can you improve your ability to manage stress?

Believe it or not, you've got what it takes to lead a much more stress-free life

- The stress test for teenagers is a powerful reminder of changes happening in your life, and their potential to cause you stress.
- Life-changing events happen, for good and bad, to us all. There's often not much you can do about it. Events like those listed in the stress test for teenagers simply aren't always under your control.
- You've just got to accept and face reality. You can't change what is.
- You *can* however, control how you respond to events. And by doing this, you can influence your future. You can start to take control of your life.
- The changes brought about by major events like those in the stress test for teenagers may be 'good' or 'bad.' From a stress point of view, it doesn't seem to matter.
- Your current equilibrium, for better or worse, is disrupted by change. You have to adapt. *You* have to change. Think differently, act differently, *be different*.

Dealing more successfully with major life changes is how we overcome stress. And it's how we become more healthy, how we grow, and how we achieve more successful lives.

Did you know that one of the best ways to deal with stress is exercise?

Stress produces chemicals in your body that make you feel edgy and tense. Your heart beats faster.

Your muscles get tight. You breathe harder and your blood pressure goes up.

- Exercise moves those chemicals out of your body.
- It reduces muscle tension and takes your mind off of problems.
- Exercise helps you sleep better and improves the quality of sleep, making you feel better rested.

Choose activities you'll enjoy. The type of activity that will relieve your stress best depends on your personality and lifestyle. If you usually do quiet activities, vigorous exercise may be best. If you are active, calming exercise may be better. Remember, one of the stress reducing benefits of exercise is that it's fun. Choose an activity you'll enjoy.

Get Plenty of Rest, Eat Well

Teenagers need lots of sleep because they are growing and developing at a furious pace. Not getting enough sleep can give you bad skin, make you clumsy and emotional, and make it hard to concentrate. Keeping your sleep on a schedule helps, too. Go to sleep and get up at the same time every day.

Eating well means eating a variety of foods, in moderation, that are high in vitamins and minerals, and provide a balance across the food groups. The basic rules are:

- Eat breakfast.
- Do not skip meals.
- Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get enough iron and calcium (especially important for girls).
- Do not eat too much junk food.
- Drink 8 glasses of water each day. (You feel tired when you are dehydrated.)

Discuss Your Problems: Don't feel alone with your problem - chances are good that other people feel the same way, too. Ask for help. If you feel like your stress is just too much, talk with your parents, siblings, a friend or a counselor.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

1. What causes stress in your life? (on test or NOT)
2. Looking at your 5 year time-line from a previous lesson, what stressors will you have in the future?
3. Most importantly what can you do to deal with stress?
How can you improve your stress management?