

Identifying your external and internal stressors and the warning signs of stress will help you recognize the stressors in your life and help you explore how you cope with stress. The Stress Plan exercise will help you design an effective strategy to reduce stress and the symptoms of stress.

IDENTIFY EXTERNAL STRESSORS (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Physical Environment

- Noise
- Bright lights
- Heat
- Confined spaces
- Other _____

Workplace

- Workloads
- Meetings
- "Red Tape"
- Deadlines
- Other _____

Daily Hassles

- Commuting
- Misplaced keys
- Family issues
- Other _____

Social Interaction

- Rudeness
- Bossiness
- Aggressiveness by others
- Bullying
- Other _____

Major Life Events

- Birth
- Death
- Lost job
- Promotion
- Marital status change
- Other _____

IDENTIFY INTERNAL STRESSORS (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Lifestyle Choices

- Caffeine
- Lack of sleep
- Poor eating habits
- Overloaded schedule
- Other _____

Negative Self-talk

- Pessimistic thinking
- Self-criticism
- Overanalyzing
- Other _____

Mind Traps

- Unrealistic expectations
- Taking things personally
- All-or-nothing thinking
- Exaggeration
- Rigid thinking
- Fears (phobias, heights, planes, germs)
- Public speaking
- Other _____

Stress Management for Today's Worker

WARNING SIGNS: (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Physical Symptoms

- Sleep pattern changes
- Fatigue
- Digestion changes
- Loss of sex drive
- Headaches
- Infections
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Sweating & trembling
- Tingling hands & feet
- Breathlessness
- Palpitations
- Indigestion
- Other _____

Mental Symptoms

- Lack of concentration
- Memory lapses
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Panic attacks
- Other _____

Behavioral Symptoms

- Appetite changes
- Eating too much or too little
- Eating disorders
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol & drugs
- Withdrawing from relationships
- Restlessness
- Fidgeting
- Nail biting
- Hypochondria
- Bruxism (teeth grinding)
- Other _____

Emotional Symptoms

- Frequent mood swings
- Impatience
- Fits of rage
- Tearfulness
- Inability to concentrate
- Deterioration of personal hygiene and appearance
- Other _____

Stress Plan

Planning ahead can help you manage the stress in your life. Break down your stressors (anything that causes you stress) into four types: those you can't change and must **ACCEPT**; those you can **AVOID**; those you can **ALTER**; and those you can **ADAPT** to. Fill in your Stress Plan by listing a stressor, then checking the appropriate box to indicate whether it's one you can alter, avoid, adapt to, or accept. In the last column, plan how you'll deal with the stressor using our tips or your own ideas. Try making a plan for just one stressor this week. You can tackle more later.

Stressor	Accept	Avoid	Alter	Adapt	How will you deal with it?

To ACCEPT a stressor:

- Join a support group.
- Take care of yourself physically.
- Talk to a trusted friend.
- Remind yourself of how you have coped with difficult situations in your past.

To ALTER a stressor:

- Turn off your email and instant messenger function.
- If your workload feels overwhelming, make a list of the most important tasks and tackle them in order.
- If an upcoming doctor or dentist visit is stressing you, talk to them beforehand and let them know you are nervous. They can often explain procedures to ease your mind, or even prescribe a mild tranquilizer to help you through your appointment.

To AVOID a stressor:

- Avoid traffic by leaving early for work or taking public transportation.
- Try to control the channel of communication with extremely difficult people – stick to email, for instance, where you have time to compose your thoughts instead of being drawn into a verbal battle.
- Learn to say no when you're asked to do more than you can handle.

To ADAPT a stressor:

- Ask yourself if you really want to spend energy being stressed about it.
- Put the stressor into perspective by listing the positive things in your life.
- Will this stressor be important a year from now? If not, try to let it go.
- When you begin to feel stressed, practice your deep breathing exercises or visualize yourself somewhere calm and relaxing.
- Think before you react.