

Warning Signs of STRESS!

Physical Symptoms:

Headache	Backaches	Indigestion
Tight neck/shoulders	Stomachaches	Racing heart
Sweaty palms	Restlessness	Sleep difficulties
Tiredness	Dizziness	Ringing in the ears

Behavioral Symptoms:

Excess smoking	Grinding teeth at night
Bossiness	Overuse of alcohol
Compulsive gum chewing	Compulsive eating
Criticalness of others	Inability to get things done

Emotional Symptoms:

Loneliness	Edginess/ready to explode
Unhappiness for no reason	Feeling powerless to change things
Easily upset	Anger
Crying	Boredom

Cognitive Symptoms:

Trouble thinking clearly	Inability to make decisions
Forgetfulness	Constant worry
Lack of creativity	Loss of sense of humor

Spiritual Symptoms:

Emptiness	Loss of meaning	Doubt
Unforgiving	Martyrdom	Looking for magic
Loss of direction	Cynicism	Apathy
Needing to “prove” self		

Relational Symptoms:

Isolation	Intolerance	Resentment
Loneliness	Lashing out	Hiding from others
Using people	Clamming up	Lowered sex drive
Nagging	Distrust	Lack of intimacy

How Stressed are YOU?

How well have you been taking care of yourself?

Physically: through healthy exercise, getting enough rest, good nutrition...

Intellectually: feeling challenged, solving problems, thinking about interesting things...

Aesthetically: using all five senses, having outlet for creativity, experiencing beauty...

Emotionally: acknowledging how you are feeling, being able to express or share your emotional experiences with others...

Spiritually: feeling fulfilled, receiving comfort/satisfaction with your beliefs & values...

Socially: feeling supported, being engaged in a network, seeing friends/family...

Romantically: satisfaction with romantic status, accepting of one's sexual orientation...

Financially: having a plan for dealing with your costs, self-discipline with spending...

How well are these areas of
your life **balanced**?

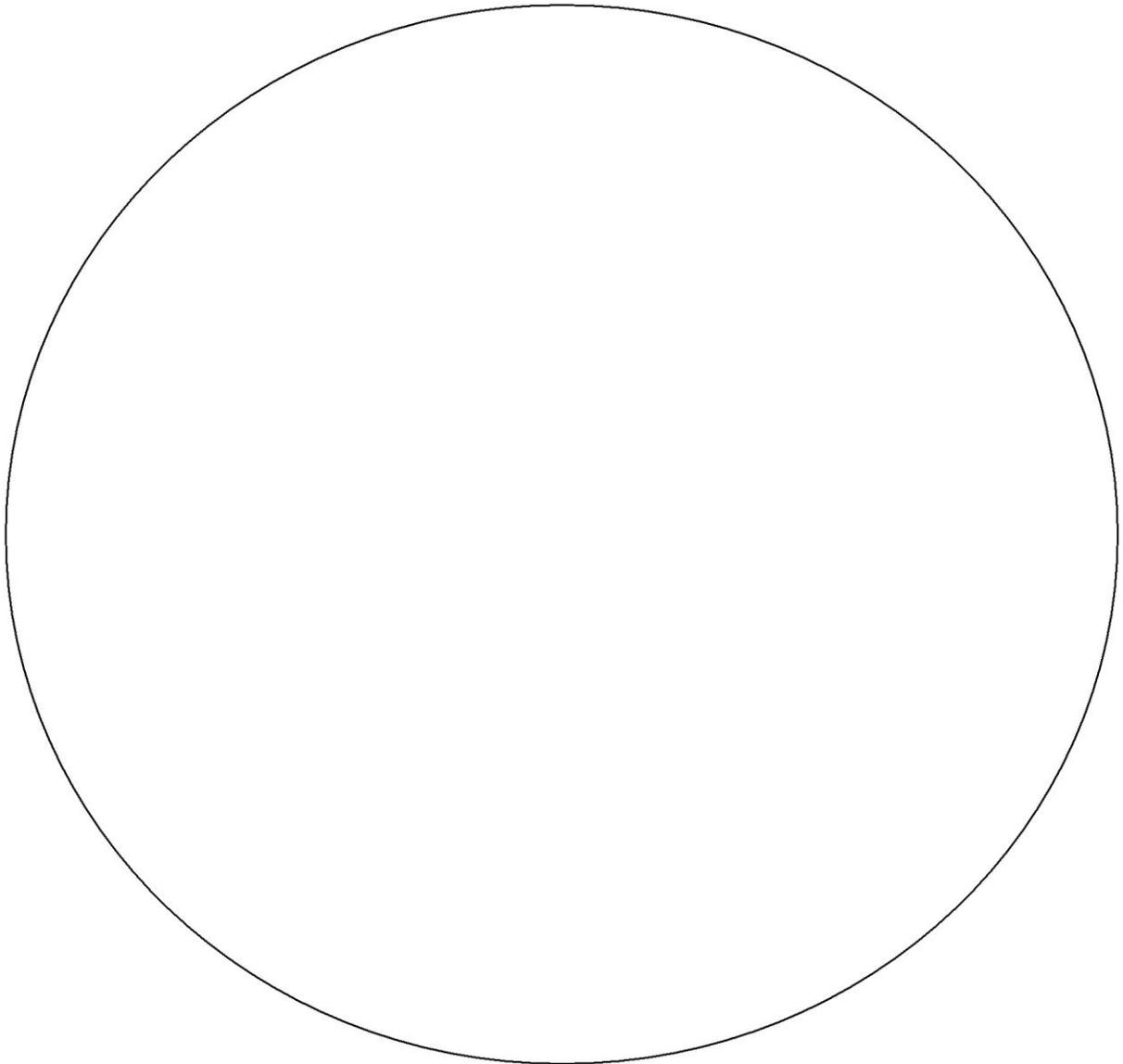
Draw a few lines and make this circle into a pie chart that reflects how much of your resources
you devote to taking care of each of these life areas on average.

Physical
Spiritual

Intellectual
Social

Aesthetic
Romantic

Emotional
Financial



What one thing could you promise to do (or to NOT do) to
balance your pie?

Why do we stay SO BUSY?

Here are SIX common culprits that keep us stuck in stress:

#1. MULTITASKING:

If you are doing 400 things at once, you feel like you're being SUPER efficient...

- But how well are you really doing any one of those things? And at what point do you start to feel frazzled by having so many ongoing, uncompleted projects?
- How many things are you doing RIGHT NOW?
- What are you willing to do to UNPLUG? Why or why not?
- Why is it SO hard to SLOW DOWN and to focus on one thing at a time?

Try these Belly Breathing Exercise Variations:

Breath Counting

Listening to your Breath

Focus on Internal v. External Sensations

#2. CONTROL FREAK:

Maybe we've scheduled every last waking moment because it feels powerful to be everything to everybody, to prove that we're capable of doing "more".

- This is a natural response to a general feeling of being out of control in our lives. But if we rigidly adhere to an unrealistic structure as if we're clinging to it for dear life, there will be negative side effects.
- A lack of flexibility and spontaneity (as well sleep!) takes a real toll on the human spirit. At some point we need to decide if our worth really is determined ONLY by the obligations we take on or if there is more to us than that.
- What pressures do we experience to be perfect? What self-statements keep us there?

Try THESE healthier self-statements on instead!

Everything is exactly the way it should be.

The conditions for things or people to be otherwise don't exist.

Believing that things SHOULD be some other way is like believing in magic. They are what they are because of a long series of causal events!

All humans are fallible creatures.

This is inescapable. If we don't set REASONABLE quotas of failure for ourselves and for others, then we're setting ourselves up for chronic disappointment.

There's NO shame in aiming for "good enough" so that you can better manage what's really important to you.

Don't forget your FUNNY BONE! Sometimes you just have to laugh...

#3. AVOIDANCE OF INTIMACY:

Maybe a part of the need to stay busy is that you've gotten used to keeping some emotional distance in your relationships...

- If you're stressed out and have so much to do, it makes sense that you wouldn't have the energy to devote to nurturing your relationships with others.
- AND if you can't spare the time, it's a lot easier to pretty much ignore what you're unsatisfied with in your relationships. In a way, being busy can keep you avoiding the conflict that inevitably comes along with any close relationship.
- BUT research shows that people with mutually supportive social networks are less vulnerable to stress, and tend to cope better with stress when they do experience it.

Try these Relationship Maintaining Behaviors

Remind yourself often of the qualities that you like and admire in your relationships AS WELL AS pay attention to the things that are upsetting; these may be your cue to try something different.

Remember, any party to a conflict is providing at least 30% of the fuel keeping it going so assigning all the blame to the other person

Make time to share with others the reasons why they are important to you. Attend to your urge to always be away, what do you think it is trying to tell you?

Take the time you need for yourself so that you can make time to be with others without resenting them.

Make the time you have together count, put forth the effort to really "be present" when you are interacting with others.

#4. LACK OF BOUNDARIES:

If you don't decide ahead of time what your priorities are, then EVERYTHING probably feels like it is desperately important to do RIGHT AWAY.

- If you don't say "no" to some things, you AUTOMATICALLY put yourself last.

The Basics of Assertiveness as an Attitude:

Assertive Rights that You May Not Know You Have

1. *The right to act in ways that promote your dignity and self-respect as long as others' rights are not violated in the process*
2. *The right to be treated with respect*
3. *The right to say no and not feel guilty*
4. *The right to experience and express your feelings*
5. *The right to take time to slow down and think*
6. *The right to change your mind*
7. *The right to ask for what you want*
8. *The right to do less than you are humanly capable of doing*
9. *The right to ask for information*
10. *The right to make mistakes*
11. *The right to feel good about yourself*

Which ones do you agree with but CAN'T SEEM to enforce? And why is it sometimes so hard to act assertively?

Fear of Displeasing Others, or of Eliciting Rejection or Retaliation Mistaken Sense of Responsibility: The Hurt Feeling Issue & The Guilt Issue

#5. REACTIVE INSTEAD OF PROACTIVE STANCE:

Inaction is a response, and tends to cause things to snowball! This allows you to be a victim of circumstance instead of an advocate for your own needs, wants, and values.

- Defining yourself based on others expectations or just “going with the flow” often results in feelings of helplessness when, in reality, you CAN do a lot to improve your stress levels if you are willing to LOOK ahead and deal with issues before they get too big.

Try to Make More Intentional Decisions:

We all have a sense of our REASONABLE MIND:

This is where our facts, thoughts, rule-following behaviors and cognitive problem solver resides

We all also have a sense of our EMOTIONAL MIND:

This is where our passions live, when our feelings guide our actions and often limit our capacity for rational thought

Do you ever use one to the exclusion of the other?

A more balanced approach would be to use your WISE MIND:

This is where our reason and our emotions are used to inform each other (NOT to cancel each other out), it's being realistic about the WHOLE picture, not just the part that's easier to look at!

#6. TIME CRUNCHES:

You may just be inefficient with the time that you do have

- Indecision, procrastination and/or a poor system for time management may be making you feel busier than you need to be.
- Sometimes this is related to #4 and #5, since we need to be both proactive and assertive in setting up (and sticking to) a schedule that will really work for our needs.

Try these Time Management Tips:

- 1. You need to be REALISTIC and decide what you NEED to do versus what you WANT to do versus what you CAN do...*
- 2. You need to plot out what your unavoidable time commitments are; leftovers determine when your free times are; plan to fill this time in with what you prioritized needs doing before it needs to be done.*
- 3. REWARD YOURSELF and PLAN FUN STUFF TOO or you'll never follow through with it!*
- 4. You need to use a system that works for you, KEEP it with you and get in the HABIT of checking it often.*