



Perceived Stress Scale, PSS

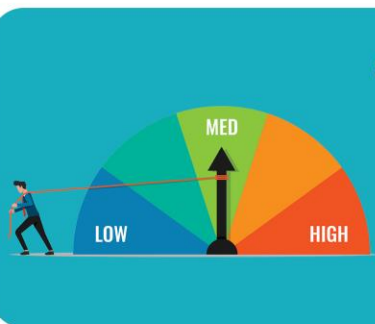
Our feelings and beliefs about a situation can directly impact our ability to move forward and enact change in our lives. This tool may lend insight into how unpredictable, uncontrollable, or overloaded you perceive your life.



Stress is a normal part of life and something we all encounter. Stress in small amounts may be perceived as healthy; however, a higher frequency and duration of stress may begin to affect us in a negative way.

↑ Duration of Stress + ↑ Frequency of Stress = NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Stress is **any change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain**, according to the World Health Organization (2021). Stress can originate from **internal** (i.e., mind or body) and/or **external** (i.e., workplace, individual) **factors**.



Symptoms indicative of an increased stress level may include **fear, worry, inability to relax, increased heart rate, difficulty in breathing, disturbances in sleeping patterns, change in eating patterns, difficulty in concentrating, worsening of pre-existing health conditions (physical and mental) and increased use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, per WHO (2021).**

Authors

Cohen, S., Kamarack, T. and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24, 386-396.

World Health Organization. (2021, October 12). Stress. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/stress#:~:text=What%20is%20Stress%3F,experiences%20stress%20to%20some%20degree>.

**The Perceived Stress Scale is not a diagnostic tool.*



Perceived Stress Scale - 10 Item

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

0= Never 1= Almost Never 2= Sometimes 3=Fairly 4=Very Often

*This self-assessment is for educational purposes only. This is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used as any treatment plan. Permission for use by Sheldon Cohen Department of Psychology, for nonprofit distribution.



Scoring The Perceived Stress Scale

Use the key below to find your score. The Perceived Stress Scale score is determined from the sum of the questions and ranges from 0 to 40.

QUESTIONS	SCORING
1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, & 10	Never = 0 Almost Never = +2 Fairly Often = +3 Very Often = +4
4, 6, 7 & 8	Never = +4 Almost Never = +3 Sometimes = +2 Fairly Often = +1 Very Often = 0

0-13 - Low Stress
14-26 - Moderate Stress
27-40 - High Perceived Stress

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10 Tips To Help Boost Your Mental Health

What is the best medicine? Thomas Edison and others might argue that it is Preventive Medicine. So, whether your PSS score was low, moderate, or high, here are 10 tips to help boost your mental health and overall well-being.

1. Challenge your brain

The human brain continues to develop and evolve as we age. The best brain-boosting activities challenge you to get out of your comfort zone.



Tip: Learn to play a musical instrument, learn a new language, or master a new skill.

2. Exercise

Physical exercise helps deliver more oxygen and blood to our brain and stimulates new neuronal connections.



Tip: Best exercises to help change your mood, improve memory function, and reboot your brain--exercises that use your arms and legs, swimming, running, and power walks.

3. Brain Foods

These foods help lower the risk of dementia and improve memory function: fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, "healthy" fats, and lean protein.



Tips: Omega-3 Fatty acids are full of antioxidants: Salmon, Tuna, Halibut, Trout, Superfoods (colorful fruits and veggies), green tea, nuts, flaxseed oil, and beans.

4. Get Enough Rest

Between 7.5-9 hours of sleep is recommended for adults.



Tip: Maintain a regular sleep schedule, avoid big meals and caffeine 2 hrs before bed. Avoid digital devices 1 hr before bed as they emit blue light that suppresses sleep hormones like melatonin.

5. Mental Health Check-In

You know your body best. Regularly check-in with yourself and seek support and resources when needed.



Tips: Therapy, exercise, meditation, and affirmations are all great ways to help maintain a healthy brain.

6. Annual Health Check-Up

Many things can cause a disturbance in our mental health. Be sure to see your doctor regularly.



Tips: During your annual physical, speak with your doctor about any symptoms you may be experiencing. Also, be sure to ask about side effects of medications.

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7. Support System

What is the best type of therapy? Some researchers believe that it's social interactions. Studies have shown that people with a more active social life have the slowest rate of memory loss and a lack of social life can cause as much damage as smoking or heavy drinking!

 Tip: Make time for those people who mean a lot to you. This symbiotic relationship benefits you as much as those you spend time with.

8. Read More

Reading helps to improve brain function and muscle memory.

 Tip: Do things that spark your imagination; watch less tv and read more. Reading a fiction book gives you time to relax while allowing you to use your imagination to improve brain function.


9. Don't Mistreat Your Brain

Certain activities, such as smoking and drug or alcohol abuse, can negatively affect mental functioning.

 Tip: Struggling with an addiction?
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

10. Take an Internet Break

Scientists believe that becoming more dependent on search engines and the internet decreases our cognitive functioning.

 Tip: Take an internet break for at least a few hours daily. When using the internet, lessen "surf" time and set limits, if needed.

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