

Roadmap to Resilience

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Understanding Stress

ACTIVITY SHEET



Successful people learn to effectively manage their stress. Rather than being overwhelmed or underwhelmed, they learn how to harness the power of stress as an effective motivator, contributor and instigator of success, by keeping stress levels well balanced.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you understand:

- (a)** the different ways you will likely encounter stress
- (b)** you can harness stress and use it to your advantage
- (c)** how to read the signposts of stress in your life

Stress vs Distress

Everyone from time to time will experience stress, pressure and frustration. Depending on the type, nature and volume of stress we experience, stress can either be helpful or hurtful. It can be constructive or destructive. It can either enhance or hinder your performance.

critical

OCCURS AS A NATURAL RESPONSE TO SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES THAT YOU FIND STRESSFUL. CRITICAL STRESS MAY BE HELPFUL. HOWEVER, IF THE INCIDENT AND STRESS RESPONSE IS SEVERE, IT MAY BECOME HURTFUL.

compounded

OCCURS WHEN YOU ARE IN CRISIS. YOUR CRITICAL STRESS RESPONSE HAS BEEN TRIGGERED TOO FREQUENTLY OR IN RAPID SUCCESSION, AND NOW YOUR EMOTIONS ARE GOING INTO MELTDOWN. INTERVENTION IS REQUIRED.

chronic

OCCURS WHEN A CRITICAL INCIDENT IS NOT RESOLVED. THIS PERVASIVE LEVEL OF STRESS CAN LEAD TO NEGATIVE PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, BEHAVIOURAL, RELATIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES.



In the following list of common experiences, identify the type of stress being described:

1. My performance improved Critical / Compounded / Chronic	4. Makes me sick to remember Critical / Compounded / Chronic	7. In the end, I finished the job Critical / Compounded / Chronic
2. My heart was racing Critical / Compounded / Chronic	5. Was one thing after another Critical / Compounded / Chronic	8. Couldn't keep going. I quit!!! Critical / Compounded / Chronic
3. Can't think straight anymore Critical / Compounded / Chronic	6. It was too close for comfort Critical / Compounded / Chronic	9. I totally freaked out Critical / Compounded / Chronic

Answer Key: Critical = 1, 6, 7 Compounded = 2, 3, 5, Chronic = 3, 4, 8

SELF-EVALUATION

Q: Describe a situation in recent weeks where critical stress served to help you:
How do you know?

Q: Describe a situation in recent months where your stress became compounded:
How do you know?

Q: Describe a situation in recent years where you encountered chronic stress:
How do you know?



if stress is too much,

**TOO SEVERE OR OCCURS
TOO OFTEN, YOUR BODY'S
MOTOR AND IMMUNE SYSTEM
WILL BECOME COMPROMISED.
IF NOT DEALT WITH OUR
ENTIRE SYSTEM WILL BREAK
DOWN. WHICH SYSTEM? THE
NERVOUS SYSTEM... THAT'S
WHY IT'S CALLED A 'NERVOUS
BREAKDOWN'.**

Biology of Stress

Feeling stressed is more than just a state of mind; it's also a state of body. The autonomic nervous system that helps regulate stress in your body is made up of two sub-systems. These are called the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. One revs you up ready for action, the other calms you down helping you relax and recover. The sympathetic nervous system is like the accelerator on your engine of life, and the parasympathetic acts like the brake pedal.

TIMELINE OF STRESS

When you think about the most common reasons why you get stressed, they can be clustered into three broad categories. The catalyst for any stress we might experience is located on a timeline:

HISTORICAL	CURRENT	FUTURE
Events encountered in the past that still have a residual effect on our life	Events that we may be going through or enduring right now	Anticipating events that have not yet happened, but that may be imminent

EMOTION	SCENARIO	STRESS-STATE
FRUSTRATION	FUTURE STRESS I have an extremely important presentation to give in the morning. I don't know what I'll do if I mess this up. The stakes are high and the consequences great!	CHRONIC
GRIEF	HISTORICAL STRESS It doesn't take much to trigger my memories. A movie scene, song lyrics or even a dream. There is a large part of my heart that still aches... it's unrelenting.	COMPOUNDED
NERVOUS	CURRENT STRESS I've been working night and day to get these reports done. The first was due yesterday, the next today. Just when I thought I was done, I saw the mistake I'd made.	CRITICAL



SELF-EVALUATION

Q: Describe a historical, current or future stressful circumstance relevant to you:

What's the key emotion you feel in response? _____

Is this stress critical, compounded or chronic? _____



BY LEARNING TO IDENTIFY THE TYPE AND NATURE OF STRESS YOU'RE EXPERIENCING, YOU CAN BETTER RECOGNISE WHEN STRESS IS WORKING FOR YOU OR AGAINST YOU. KNOWING WHEN STRESS IS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A CHANGE.