

# Assessing your Stress

Let's first try to establish how stressed you perceive yourself to be?

## PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

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

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

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? 0 1 2 3 4
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? 0 1 2 3 4
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"? 0 1 2 3 4
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? 0 1 2 3 4
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? 0 1 2 3 4
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 1 2 3 4
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? 0 1 2 3 4
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? 0 1 2 3 4
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control? 0 1 2 3 4
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? 0 1 2 3 4

The questions in this scale ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question.

The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

## Figuring Your PSS Score

You can determine your PSS score by following these directions:

1. First, reverse your scores for questions 4, 5, 7, and 8. On these 4 questions, change the scores like this: 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0.
2. Now add up your scores for each item to get a total.
3. My total score is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.
  - ▶ Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.
  - ▶ Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.
  - ▶ Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), devised by Cohen, is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. It is a measure of the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Items were designed to tap how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. The scale also includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress.. The questions in the PSS ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, respondents are asked how often they felt a certain way.

### Evidence for Validity:

Higher PSS scores were associated with (for example):

- failure to quit smoking
- failure among diabetics to control blood sugar levels
- greater vulnerability to stressful life-event-elicited depressive symptoms

## **Health status relationship to PSS:**

Cohen et al. (1988) show correlations with PSS and: Stress Measures, Self Reported Health and Health Services Measures, Health Behaviour Measures, Smoking Status, Help Seeking Behaviour. Temporal Nature: Because levels of appraised stress should be influenced by daily hassles, major events, and changes in coping resources, predictive validity of the PSS is expected to fall off rapidly after four to eight weeks.

A more precise measure of personal stress can be determined by using a variety of instruments that have been designed to help measure individual stress levels. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a classic stress assessment instrument. The tool, while originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for helping us understand how different situations affect our feelings and our perceived stress.

The Perceived Stress Scale is interesting and important because your perception of what is happening in your life is most important. Consider the idea that two individuals could have the exact same events and experiences in their lives for the past month.

Depending on their perception, total score could put one of those individuals in the low stress category and the total score could put the second person in the high stress category.

## **So what can you start to do about your stress?**

Well, the first action you can take is to explore an option of getting access to a coach to support your stress journey.

Go to [www.innermountaincoach.com](http://www.innermountaincoach.com) for further information.

You can follow trusted advice from <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/tips-to-reduce-stress/>

Some of the very best advice also comes from The Mental Health Foundation. This site explains in detail what stress is and how to begin to reduce it. Along with a top 101 tips generated by the public. You can pick a few and start today.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-manage-and-reduce-stress>

Building a good support network is critical to helping you reduce stress. This can be simply talking to family and friends, or work colleagues. Sadly, sometimes these can be the very environments that can generate our stress. If you think you need someone independent, then you can look to support from therapists or a coach.

Disclaimer: The scores on the following self-assessment do not reflect any diagnosis or course of treatment. They are meant as a tool to help assess your level of stress. If you have any further concerns about your current wellbeing, you should seek further medical advice.

**Visit [www.innermountaincoach](http://www.innermountaincoach) to find out ways we can help you identify your stress triggers through coaching, reduce stress and help you discover a renewed sense of calm and purpose and control.**

**Also follow @inner.mountain.coach on Instagram for more information.**

