

Stress Perspective Tool

Managing your stress, worry or anxiety

Check which responses to stress/worry/anxiety apply to you.

- My stress/worry/anxiety triggers my → taking things too personally → shame → flight, freeze → “shut down and give-up!” → defeat → depression
- My stress/worry/anxiety triggers my → blame → anger or fear → can’t relax → need for control, → fight → “speed-up until blow-up!”
- My stress/worry/anxiety triggers my → mixed emotions → presents opportunity to learn, cope and grow → self-compassion → self-care → support → coping and problem-solving.

Score: If you checked any boxes, your score is human!!!! All 3 responses are human!

Stressful emotions are a human experience. We all have them—even those people on social media who you secretly hate because of their “perfect lives”. Perfection is not real! Everyone faces emotional challenges. Our minds and bodies experience emotional stress, *but when we are able to breathe, pause, and physically calm our bodies enough to think, our brain’s logic and reasoning skills will allow us to put stress into perspective.* **Perspective taking is a coping tool** for stress, worry, anxiety and depression. Use this “perspective tool” to create a more balanced approach to managing emotions. Because mood disorders create distorted thoughts, people diagnosed with mood disorders may benefit from a combination of medication and perspective taking strategies. Discuss your specific needs with your health care provider.

Stress Perspective Worksheet



1. Breathe. Cultivating a balanced perspective to stress begins with breathing deeply. A calm mind is a wise mind. Use any mindful breathing technique or the [breathing meditation located in the Stress Tools section of this site.](#)

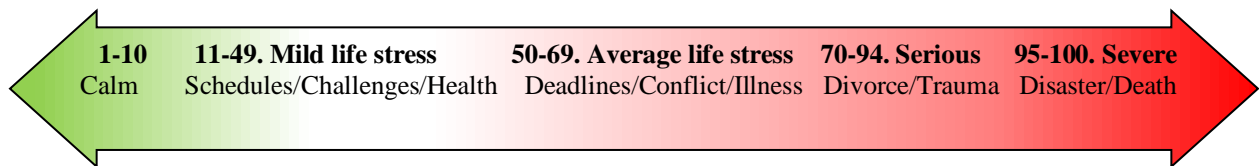
2. Acknowledge your stress. Get it out of your head by using art, writing, or voice recording the detailed situations and events in your life that *currently* cause you to feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious or worried. Some life stress will feel more purposeful—such as relationships, education and employment, which offer opportunities and growth. Other stress feels pointless, physically challenging, mentally exhausting, or emotionally uncomfortable.

As you acknowledge your stress, make sure to inventory only YOUR stress. If a friend is unemployed or getting divorced, how does their stress impact YOU? For example: “My friend owes me money but now I feel awkward asking for it because they lost their job”. “My friend’s divorce means we can’t hang out as couple’s anymore.” Voicing your stress from your own lane is a form of taking responsibility for what belongs to you, and also creating an emotional boundary for what is not your business.

Write your life stress/worry/ anxiety list here:

Once your list is complete, read your list aloud to yourself so that you can hear yourself validate your own worries and stressors.

3. Perspective. Using your stress list, now apply perspective by assigning a number to each item on your list. Rank each issue on a 1 to 100 perspective scale. Feel free to modify your numbers or your rating categories according to your own needs.

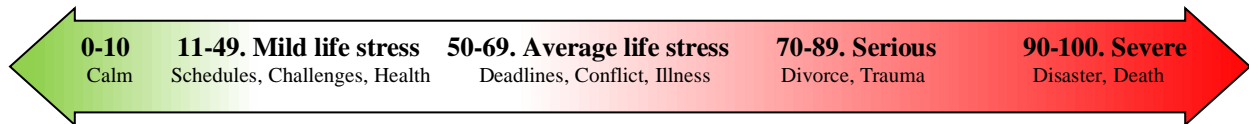


Ranking is designed to help you take a broader, more thoughtful, less reactive approach. Assigning a number to each stress/worry will move your focus from emotion to logic and reasoning. If you are not sure how to apply a specific ranking, consider these questions:

- √ Reality check— make sure the stress is real and not a story you made up in your head.
- √ Danger level—Is this stress potentially life threatening? Does it impact your immediate access to resources: food, shelter, clean water, utilities, medical care, or physical safety?
- √ Expiration Date—Does this stress have a solution or an ending? What is the timeline— Days? Months? Years?
- √ Distortions—Is your stress ranked by facts and measurable data, or did you assume, exaggerate, or catastrophize. Any thought distortions?
- √ Normal/Human—Is this stress something that is statistically normal and human? Expected and reasonably predicted to occur in the lifecycle? (Not sure? Google it!) If yes, what are the strategies for successful coping?
- √ If someone else experienced this exact stress, how would you rank it?

Creating Your Own Perspective Range for Life Stress

Now place each of your numbered worries/stress from the previous page into the correct corresponding rank from **Calm** to **Severe**. This provides a visual perspective of the stress you currently experience. **Mild and average** stress is “adulting”— requiring coping and self-care strategies to deal with the day-to-day grind. **Serious and severe** stress requires immediate attention, professional assistance, and additional resources.



(1-10) Stress Free, Calm: Consider your most calm state of mind. When do you feel the most peaceful and stress-free? List examples of when you are the most relaxed and stress free:

(11-49) Mild: These are the daily stresses everyone has when functioning as an adult in the modern world. This stress does not dramatically alter your life and is forgotten with time. These stressors are related to *schedules, daily choices, logistics, accommodating others, chores, changes, demands, upgrading skills, learning, assimilating new life challenges*. Place your “mild” adult life stress here: _____





(50-69) Average: These are the stresses related to increased adult responsibility, pressure, chaos and hardship. (Examples: *deadlines, competition, performance challenges, birth, parenting, housing, transportation, finances, conflict, illness, retirement*). List your “average” adult life stress here: _____



(70-89) Serious: Reserve this ranking for painful events impacting and altering your life such as *systemic oppression, racism, divorce, job loss, poverty or bankruptcy, victim of crime, life altering incarceration, injury, illness or addiction of self or loved ones, caregiving of disabled or chronically ill.*

List your “serious” life stress here: _____



(90-100) Severe: This rating is reserved for the tragic and traumatic events such as *debilitating, disabling or terminal illness, near death experiences and fear for your life,, violent crime, natural disasters, war and actual death.* List your “disaster” stress:

Follow up application:

Congrats on putting your stressful, worried, and anxious emotions into perspective! The next step is to apply your calming, reframing and coping tools.

1. Curiosity. Perspective taking includes curiosity. Other humans have survived life stress. You are not alone.

- How did they cope? Is there a biography, podcast or movie?
- Notice what is in your control and what is not in your control.
- Ask yourself what you are learning about yourself, your values, needs and priorities as you cope with your stress.

2. Prioritize your self-care of body and mind. Back to the basics: sleep, meditation, relaxation, fun, exercise, healthy food, and plenty of support—to gain your clearest perspective and achieve balance.

3. Notice when you feel your best—what do you absolutely need in your life to maintain your best version of yourself?

4. Notice what takes your perspective away—what triggers you into “give-up” or a “blow-up”?

5. If most of your stress is due to life threatening events and severe trauma, use this perspective tool to validate that seeking help and gaining support is essential to your recovery. Take this and other materials from this website to a healthcare provider of your choice to validate and verify that mental health services are essential.