Is My Body Living in Constant Stress?

Recognizing the signs in everyday life • Client reflection and awareness worksheet

Chronic stress can keep the brain and body prepared for demands or possible threats. It does not always look like anxiety: it may look like overworking, irritability, withdrawal, or difficulty resting. Check what you have noticed recently.

1 Physical signs

☐ Tight shoulders, jaw clenching, headaches, or muscle aches

☐ Feeling exhausted even after resting; feeling “tired but wired”

☐ Difficulty falling or staying asleep

☐ Upset stomach, appetite changes, or digestive discomfort

☐ Racing heart, shallow breathing, or restlessness

☐ Greater sensitivity to noise, lights, crowds, or touch

2 Emotional signs

☐ Small problems feel unusually frustrating or overwhelming

☐ Feeling anxious, on edge, tearful, or easily startled

☐ Feeling emotionally numb, disconnected, or less interested in enjoyable things

☐ Guilt when resting, setting limits, or saying no

☐ Difficulty recovering emotionally after stressful interactions

3 Thinking and attention

☐ Looping thoughts or replaying conversations

☐ Trouble concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions

☐ Frequently imagining what could go wrong

☐ Feeling mentally overloaded by ordinary tasks

4 Behaviors and relationships

☐ Keeping busy to avoid slowing down

☐ Monitoring other people’s moods or expecting conflict

☐ Saying yes when already overwhelmed; taking on too much responsibility

☐ Withdrawing, avoiding messages, or canceling plans

☐ Procrastinating or feeling frozen when tasks pile up

Notice: These experiences can have many causes and are not, by themselves, a diagnosis of chronic stress. New, persistent, or concerning physical symptoms deserve medical evaluation.

How Stress Shows Up in My Daily Life

Connecting the patterns to your experiences

5 Everyday situations: what feels familiar?

☐ I feel guilty when sitting down or taking a break.

☐ I see a message and immediately worry something is wrong.

☐ A change in plans feels harder to handle than I expect.

☐ I finish the day exhausted but cannot switch off my thoughts.

☐ I become defensive, shut down, or try to fix everything during conflict.

☐ I feel restless on weekends or vacations, even when I want to relax.

6 My personal stress signals

The first signs I notice in my body are:

_____

The thoughts or feelings that show up most often are:

_____

Stress affects my relationships, work, or daily routines by:

_____

7 Gentle ways to support regulation

Choose one or two small steps to practice, rather than trying to change everything at once.

☐ Take a short walk or stretch gently.

☐ Pause and notice my feet on the floor or my surroundings.

☐ Try a slow, comfortable exhale without forcing my breath.

☐ Create a realistic boundary or ask for support.

☐ Protect a consistent sleep and wake routine.

☐ Connect with a supportive person or spend a little time outdoors.

8 Reflection and next step

What is one situation where I could respond to my stress signals with more care?

_____

What is one manageable action I will try this week?

_____

Remember: Stress responses are understandable adaptations, not personal failures. With support and repeated experiences of safety, many people can build greater flexibility in how they respond to stress.

If stress is interfering with your life, consider speaking with a qualified mental health professional.