

*The Vitality Connection* , Michael Grossman, M.D. and Jodi Jones, Ph.D.,( Excerpt on stress management and using the positive assertive (mastery) and yielding/accepting) modes of control.

**Scoring Key.** Circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.

- 1 = agree strongly
- 2 = agree
- 3 = not sure
- 4 = disagree
- 5 = disagree strongly

Some questions have an "A" next to them. We are suggesting here that a score of 3 or more on these questions requires some letting go or acceptance. Questions with an "M" next to them suggest that mastery or new skills are required. Questions with an "A,M" may require both letting go and mastery of a skill.

**SOURCES OF STRESS**

**Financial**

I usually do not worry about finances.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I have a budget plan that works for me.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I can usually save money every month.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I am envious of people with more money than I have.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

**Job/Career**

I like my job/career.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
When I give my best effort at work, it makes a difference.	M	1	2	3	4	5
When I have nothing to do at work, I am uncomfortable.	M	1	2	3	4	5

My job has meaning and I am committed to it.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I get along well with others at work.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I rarely feel overwhelmed by the demands of my job.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

### Relationships

I am in a happy marriage or satisfying long-term commitment. (If under twenty-five years old: I love and respect my parents.)	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I do not hold grudges or resentments against others.	A	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy my family.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I can hear out another person's point of view without interrupting.	A	1	2	3	4	5
I make and keep close friends.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

### Daily Routines

I have a regular daily routine.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I have a regular work routine.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I generally do not feel rushed during the day.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I complete the tasks that need to get done.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I fall asleep easily and sleep enough hours.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

### Spiritual

I feel that I am a part of a religious/spiritual community.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I read something spiritually uplifting on a regular basis.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
My spiritual beliefs are a source of encouragement.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

**Physiological/Health**

I am rarely tired during the day.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to relax my mind and body without medication or alcohol.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I wake up refreshed in the morning.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I rarely get colds.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I exercise at least three times per week.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

**Beliefs and Attitudes**

I don't get upset with people in order to control them.	A	1	2	3	4	5
I have forgiven anyone who has ever hurt me.	A	1	2	3	4	5
Upon awakening, I am eager to start the day.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
Luck is not important to my success.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I vote in almost every election.	M	1	2	3	4	5
When I get close to people, I can still say no to requests.	M	1	2	3	4	5
The quality of my relationships seems rarely to be determined by fate.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I would be willing to work for 30 percent less money if I found the job really fulfilling.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I think of myself as free to choose what I do in life.	M	1	2	3	4	5
I would rather be happy than be right.	A	1	2	3	4	5
Finding new challenges in life is important to me.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

**Emotions and Feelings**

I am not made nervous by being with nervous people.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5
I am a happy person.	A,M	1	2	3	4	5

I rarely get upset.	A	1	2	3	4	5
If I get upset, it goes away quickly.	A	1	2	3	4	5
I rarely think of past events that continue to make me unhappy.	A	1	2	3	4	5
I am able to give and receive love easily and comfortably.	A	1	2	3	4	5

Scores of 3 suggest that you need to think about that area closely as it may be a source of stress. Scores of 4 or 5 suggest that you have work to do to change things that build stress in your life.

#### 4. Carefully examine the results of the stress assessment tests you completed thus far to determine areas in which you could improve your skills of mastery and acceptance.

Now that you have identified your areas of stress, you can consider possible solutions. The first step is to determine whether your stress is caused by issues that are within your control, or situations beyond your control.

If the stress is coming from negative or faulty attitudes and beliefs, learn how to change your attitudes and beliefs. If the stress is from factors outside your control, you need to learn to let go and accept what is. If the stress is due to lack of skills, this may be the time to gain mastery in that area.

A sense of control is a very important part of psychological and physical health. Healthy control can be achieved in one of two ways: by letting go and gaining acceptance of life situations, or by acting with mastery to solve problems and create good results.

By trying to take charge of situations that are out of your control, you can create stress that leads to heart disease, high blood pressure, or stomach ulcers. Feeling the aggressive emotions of anger, indignation, resentment, irritation, and impatience are signs of overcontrol. If you find that you would rather be right than be happy, your style probably can be characterized as overcontrolling.

In contrast, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness are associated with low-functioning immune system diseases, such as cancer and arthritis. People who feel helpless or hopeless do not act on problems that are within their control; they are overly submissive, do not express themselves freely, and choose not to say and do things that could improve their situation. This style can be characterized by passiveness and undercontrol.<sup>20</sup>

External sources of stress (for example, the death of a spouse or loss of a job) are most likely beyond your control. To resolve stresses of this type, the best approach is to learn acceptance, coping, and self-management techniques. If your challenges are largely under your control, (problems such as poor parent-child relationships, spousal relationship, and financial difficulties), the best strategies would focus on learning mastery skills.

Put more simply, if a situation is within your control, you need to find new ways of dealing with it. If a situation is not within your control you need to learn acceptance and letting go.

Most people could benefit greatly from enhancing their skills in both mastery and acceptance, and every individual over the course of his or her adult life will require a continuous learning program that is personalized for his or her

specific needs. Closely examining your results from the stress assessments in this chapter will suggest a curriculum of personal development that can make a very significant difference in your life and your future success.

### *Finding Solutions to Stress through Personal Growth*

Personal growth—cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual—is a highly effective way to reduce stress arising from many different sources. Personal growth can be gained through classes, groups, and psychotherapy. A class in parenting skills, for example, can enhance order and harmony in your home and help you manage the demands of family life. Forgiving yourself and others who may contribute to your stress is an important part of stress reduction. You may find that once you have forgiven someone who has hurt you, you will need to learn to define clearer boundaries with that person or with other people in your life. This can involve learning new assertion skills.

### **5. Transform your thinking, your attitudes, and your interpretation of daily events to help you reduce your level of stress.**

More than two thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus proclaimed that perception is a matter of choice. The way you respond to a situation, and the attitude you have toward it, directly affects the physiological impact of a stressful event. To reduce the negative effects on your mind and body, it is critical to understand that you have control over how you think and respond. Belief systems can create peace and harmony and reduce stress, or the opposite.

One principle you can choose to believe is that every upset contains a valuable learning experience that is central to your growth and maturity. You can also choose to believe that the person who created this upset has willingly sacrificed his own well-being to teach you this lesson.

For instance, it might be a parent or nemesis at work that is creating one upset after another for you. You can appreciate this person as someone willing to ruin his life, his relationships, and his happiness just to demonstrate to you how not to be. You can choose to see this person as teaching you this lesson: "Do not be angry, vindictive, resentful, and critical or you too will ruin your life like me."

"Health is inner peace" is a principle of attitudinal healing taught by Jerry Jampolsky, M.D., author of *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*. To achieve inner peace, it is necessary to let go of all resentments toward people in your life, including yourself. Forgiveness is a key to happiness. Letting go of resentments is a gradual process that can be emotionally difficult, as we receive many apparent but detrimental payoffs from holding resentments. An excuse for poor performance is one such payoff, and a sense of victimhood; a way of commiserating with others about why life does not work. "Perhaps they will change if I suffer enough," is the hope of this kind of martyrdom. Although there are many payoffs to holding onto resentments, payoffs rob us of our well-being. Inner peace, health, and vitality await those who systematically resolve their resentments and critical judgments and find forgiveness as an ongoing way of being in the world.