

# Stress Assessment

## Managing Change Tool

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### Purpose

This tool helps you identify how you typically cope with stress at work. It helps you become aware of your “default” stress reaction, so you can recognize it and react productively.

### Time Commitment

Manager and team time commitment:

1. Individual Self-Assessment (pages 2-4 of this document): 10 minutes
2. Team Discussion (suggested discussion points listed in number 3 below): 20 – 30 minutes

### How to Use This Tool

1. **Complete the Stress Assessment.** This exercise works best if you are honest with yourself. The answers are just for you.
2. **Consider sharing the assessment with your team during a team meeting.** Talking points:
  - Explain that we are predisposed to react to stress in a particular way. Identifying your default stress reaction is helpful, because you can then learn tactics that help you react productively to stress.
  - Decide on a deadline to complete the self-assessment
  - Tell your team to bring their completed self-assessment to your next team meeting, where you’ll discuss your stress responses (but staff will be welcome to share as much—or as little—as they like)
3. **Lead a brief discussion about the stress assessment results at your next team meeting.** Use the following questions to prompt discussion among your team (don’t push staff to share their answers if they’d prefer to keep them private):
  - Was there one particular stress reaction that you read and thought, “Yes, that sounds exactly like me!”? Which one?
  - What was your dominant stress response? Were you surprised to learn this about yourself?
  - As you read through the tactics that correspond to your dominant stress response, is there one you are going to commit to trying? Have you found there are other tactics that effectively help you deal with your stress?

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### Individual Stress Assessment

For each of the five questions, choose the response that sounds **most** like you.

1. When I'm stressed at work, I:
  - a. Sleep more
  - b. Closely manage my team's work
  - c. Spend more time alone in and out of work
  - d. Let problems linger and plan to figure them out later
  
2. When I'm stressed at work, I:
  - a. Push difficult items to the bottom of my to-do list
  - b. Put my personal priorities on hold to get more done at work
  - c. Get distracted by what others are doing to cause me stress
  - d. Doubt my decisions
  
3. When I'm stressed at work, I:
  - a. Let problems linger and plan to figure them out later
  - b. Lose sleep thinking about my stressors
  - c. Vent to colleagues
  - d. Replay situations over and over in my mind
  
4. When I'm stressed at work, I:
  - a. Avoid colleagues who stress me out
  - b. Push through with the task at hand despite feeling overwhelmed
  - c. Wear my emotions on my sleeve
  - d. Tend to blame myself for my stress
  
5. When I'm stressed at work, I:
  - a. Indulge more in food, drinks, television, or internet browsing
  - b. Keep thinking about work once I get home
  - c. May feel impatient towards my co-workers
  - d. Wish I could go back and do things over

See the next page for your dominant stress response.

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### Your Dominant Stress Response

<p>Mostly <b>A</b></p> <p>Your dominant stress response is <b>Avoidance</b>.</p> <p>If you tend to use avoidance, you try to distract yourself from your stressor. But the more you try to avoid your stress, the more it can build.</p>	<p><b>To Overcome Avoidance:</b> Engage more actively with your stressor and negative feelings in order to process them.</p> <p><b>Tactics to Engage with Your Stressors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Break it up.</b> Pick a task you have been putting off and break it into three smaller steps to help you get started. Schedule time to complete each smaller task.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Reward yourself.</b> Take a minute to brainstorm a small way you can reward yourself for making progress against something that is stressful.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Spread the word.</b> When you have identified a goal you want to achieve, share it with the people around you and ask them to keep you accountable to achieve it.</li></ul>
<p>Mostly <b>B</b></p> <p>Your dominant stress response is <b>Obsession</b>.</p> <p>If you tend to use obsession, you spend all of your time, energy, and resources on your stressor. This is not sustainable in the long-term, and puts you at risk of burnout</p>	<p><b>To Overcome Obsession:</b> Try to be more measured about your involvement with your stressor so that you can recharge and refocus.</p> <p><b>Tactics to Disengage from Your Stressors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Give yourself a time limit.</b> To allocate your time and energy more effectively, commit to working on a single task for a specific amount of time. Then move on to something else.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Take a break.</b> Use your cell phone timer or a calendar reminder to schedule quick breaks throughout the day. When you do take a break, actually get up from your workplace and get a change of scenery.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Balance your attention.</b> Identify a fun hobby or activity that requires your full attention. Commit to participating in this activity at least twice a week.</li></ul>
<p>Mostly <b>C</b></p> <p>Your dominant stress response is <b>Complaint</b>.</p> <p>If you tend to use complaint, you externalize stress and often project it onto other people. Continued complaint can result in a negative mindset that also impacts team morale.</p>	<p><b>To Overcome Complaint:</b> Get a more objective view of your situation and the people around you.</p> <p><b>Tactics to Look at Your Stressors Objectively</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Pause first.</b> Institute a five-second rule before you speak or react to a stressful circumstance, pausing to check if your first assumptions are fair, and brainstorming alternatives.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Share the blame.</b> When something goes wrong, identify a small action (a gesture, a delay, a comment) that you contributed to the problem.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Check your language.</b> Be mindful of the language you use. Try to catch yourself using negative or hyperbolic words and replace them with something more objective.</li></ul>

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Mostly **D**

Your dominant stress response is **Self-Doubt**.

If you tend to use self-doubt, you try to rationalize your stress by pinpointing what you did wrong. You likely overthink or replay negative events, which can prevent you from moving forward.

**To Overcome Self-Doubt:** Find more forgiving and compassionate ways to handle your emotions and stress.

### Tactics to Give Yourself the Benefit of the Doubt

- Turn a negative into a positive.** Try not to dwell on mistakes you've made. Instead, make a conscious effort to identify two things you learned from the experience.
- Get a second opinion.** Test your concerns by saying them out loud to someone you trust. Ask if they see any holes in your logic, or if your interpretation makes sense.
- Use positive self-talk.** Challenge the negative thoughts you have about yourself. Think of three positive attributes about yourself to remember whenever you are hard on yourself.