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Coping with stress

An assessment of your coping skills

Instructions

Each one of us copes with stress (or potentially stressful events) in very different ways. For example, about one in ten people who are taken hostage come out of captivity a mentally healthier person than before they were taken hostage, while the others face extreme emotional difficulty.

What makes this person different from the others? What are the factors associated with their high level of coping skills for such an extreme event?

The questions below relate to factors more closely associated with the capacity to cope successfully with stress. Have a look at the questions below, and circle the answer that is the best fit for you. Answer each question as honestly as you can.

1. How often do you exercise?
 1. Daily or more
 2. Once or twice a week
 3. Once or twice a month
 4. Hardly ever

2. How often do you get a full, restful night of sleep?
 1. Most nights
 2. 4-5 times a week
 3. 2-3 times a week
 4. Hardly ever

3. To what extent are your energy levels sufficient for the activities you need to do daily and at work?

1. Most of the time I have enough energy
2. Sometimes I have enough energy
3. Occasionally I have enough energy
4. I don't usually have enough energy

4. How closely does your weight approach the ideal level for your height and age range?

1. My weight is at the ideal level
2. My weight is close to the ideal level
3. My weight is not close to the ideal level
4. I am dangerously underweight or overweight

5. To what extent do you eat a nutritious diet?

1. I eat a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet most of the time
2. I eat a healthy diet some of the time
3. I don't eat a healthy diet
4. I eat mostly junk food and packaged/processed food

6. Which of the following best describes your use of tobacco?

1. In no period of my life have I had the habit of smoking or chewing tobacco
2. Early in my life for a short period I smoked or chewed tobacco
3. I stopped smoking or chewing tobacco in the last 2 years
4. I currently smoke or chew tobacco

7. Which of the following best describes your use of alcohol?

1. I don't abuse alcohol, and never have (abuse is defined as drinking more than 2 drinks within a short period such as an evening)
2. Very occasionally I abuse alcohol
3. I have a history of abusing alcohol, but am not presently abusing it
4. I am presently abusing alcohol

8. To what extent do you believe that you have a history of coping well with highly stressful situations?

1. I believe I cope exceptionally well with stressful situations
2. I cope better than the average person with stressful situations
3. I cope ok
4. I don't believe I cope very well in stressful situations

9. How confident are you of being able to control your emotions in stressful situations?

1. I never let my emotions run away with me
2. I rarely let my emotions run away with me
3. I sometimes let my emotions run away with me
4. I often let my emotions run away with me

10. When things aren't going well, how likely are you to see the situation as being temporary rather than permanent?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Unlikely
4. Very unlikely

11. When something bad happens to you, how likely are you to exaggerate its importance?

1. Not likely at all
2. Unlikely
3. Likely
4. Very likely

12. When stressed by a complex situation, how likely are you to focus your attention on those aspects of the situation that you can manage?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Unlikely
4. Very unlikely

13. When highly stressed, how capable are you of changing your thinking to calm down?

1. Very capable
2. Capable
3. Incapable
4. Very incapable

14. When confronted with a stressful situation, how likely are you to wait passively for events to develop rather than take charge?

1. Very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Likely
4. Very likely

15. Which of the following courses of action are you most likely to take when you have become thoroughly frustrated?

1. Figure out a new goal and take the required action
2. Do something relaxing
3. Withdraw and feel sorry for yourself
4. Take out how you feel on someone weaker than you

16. If you'd bought an item of clothing one day and then found a flaw in it, how likely would you be to return it and ask for a refund?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Unlikely
4. Very unlikely

17. When an unexpected, negative event happens in your life, how likely are you to actively seek out information about the event and how to cope with it?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Unlikely
4. Very unlikely

18. How much decision-making power do you have in your family?

1. 1. More power than any other member of my family
2. 2. As much power as any other member of my family
3. 3. Less power than most members of my family
4. 4. Less power than any other member of my family

19. How much decision-making power do you have at work (if not working, use your last job as the basis for answering this question)

1. 1. More power than most members of my work team
2. 2. As much power as any other members of my work team
3. 3. Less power than most members of my work team
4. 4. Less power than any other member of my work team

20. To what extent do you believe that events in your life are merely the result of luck, fate or chance?

1. To very little extent
2. To little extent
3. To some extent
4. To a great extent

21. What is your best guess as to the extent and quality of contact you had with your parent(s) shortly after birth?

1. Was given an above average amount of contact by happy parent(s)
2. Was given an average amount of contact by happy parent(s)
3. Was given an average amount of contact by unhappy (perhaps angry) parent(s)
4. Was given a below average amount of contact by unhappy (perhaps angry) parent(s)

22. During your childhood, to what extent was your mother both calm and generally permissive?

1. To a very great extent
2. To some extent
3. To little extent
4. To very little extent

23. How easily do you make friends in a strange/new situation?

1. Very easily
2. Easily
3. Uneasily
4. Very uneasily

24. When highly stressed, how likely are you to ask friends or relatives for help?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Unlikely
4. Very likely

25. In comparison with other people, how likely are you to see others as threatening, uncooperative or exploitative?

1. Highly unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Likely
4. Highly likely

26. How often are you confused about the intentions of others towards you?

1. 1. Hardly ever
2. 2. Infrequently
3. 3. Frequently
4. 4. Very frequently

27. To what extent are you aware of practical, healthy ways of relaxing?

1. 1. To a very great extent
2. 2. To some extent
3. 3. To little extent
4. 4. To a very little extent

28. How frequently do you pursue some highly relaxing practice?

1. 1. Daily
2. 2. Once or twice a week
3. 3. Once or twice a month
4. 4. Hardly ever

29. How often do you engage in spiritual practice such as prayer, meditation, or inspirational reading?

1. 1. Daily
2. 2. Once or twice a week
3. 3. Once or twice a month
4. 4. Hardly ever

30. How connected do you feel to your conception of a higher power or to a worthy cause?

1. 1. I feel very connected
2. 2. I feel somewhat connected
3. 3. I feel a bit connected
4. 4. I don't feel connected at all

31. To what extent do you believe your life has purpose?

1. 1. To a very great extent
2. 2. To some extent
3. 3. To little extent
4. 4. To very little extent

32. How much contact do you have with what you would consider a spiritual community?

1. 1. Very frequently
2. 2. Sometimes
3. 3. Occasionally
4. 4. Rarely

Scoring legend

The scoring legend has been derived rationally, not empirically. Compute your score for each of the scales below using the following legend: '1' = 4; '2' = 3; '3' = 2; '4' = 1.

Wellness Scale (sum of scores for questions 1-7 divided by 7)

Thought Control Scale (sum of scores for questions 8-13, divided by 6)

Active Coping Scale (sum of scores for questions 14-20, divided by 7)

Social Ease Scale (sum of scores for questions 21-26, divided by 6)

Tension reduction Scale (sum of scores for questions 27-28, divided by 2)

Spiritual Practice Scale (sum of scores for questions 29-32 divided by 4)

Overall Score (sum of the scale scores above, divided by 6)

Interpreting Your Score. A perfect score on each scale would be 4. With this in mind, we might construct the following interpretive key:

An overall score of 3.5+ suggests you may be superior at coping with stress

An overall score of 2.5-3.4 suggests you may be above average at coping with stress

An overall score of 1.5-2.4 suggests you may be average at coping with stress

An overall score of less than 1.5 suggests you may be below average at coping with stress.

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