

STRESS RESILIENCY PROFILE

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Questionnaire Instructions

This questionnaire measures some of the ways you think about the tasks you are performing. Those tasks could be in your work or personal life.

On the following pages are 18 items containing statements about different ways you might think. For each statement, circle the number, from 1 to 7, that best describes how strongly you disagree or agree with that statement.

Please do not skip any of the items. Although some of the statements appear to be similar, your answer to each is important.

Interpreting Your Scores

THE NATURE OF STRESS

Stress is a complex condition that involves three different kinds of events: (1) stressful events in your environment, (2) events in your mind as you try to interpret and cope with those stressors, and (3) physiological events in your body (including tension, fatigue, and other symptoms of strain).

A comprehensive approach to managing stress should involve strategies aimed at each of these three types of events: (1) controlling stressors in your environment, (2) developing effective mental habits for coping with stressors, and (3) caring for your body (through adequate exercise, diet, and sleep).

WHAT YOUR PROFILE MEASURES

Most people are familiar with the importance of controlling stressors and caring for their body. This instrument focuses on the remaining strategy—developing effective mental habits for coping with stressors. Our objective is to give you new insights into some of the ways you may be unintentionally contributing to your own stress levels, and to suggest some alternative ways of thinking that can help you become more stress resilient.

We emphasize that our research has been conducted on people who are performing adequately in their work role. In addition, note that we are not talking about fixed styles or “types” of people. Everyone is subject to these thought patterns at some times, although some people engage in them more frequently than others.

Deficiency Focusing

Deficiency focusing is the habit of focusing on the negatives at the expense of the positives. Shortcomings and dangers become the center of our attention, at the expense of strengths and opportunities. This bias in perspective creates an unbalanced, exaggerated sense of how much is wrong and is likely to go wrong. The result is an unnecessary degree of distress or discouragement.

Myth

When focusing on deficiencies, it is as though we have somehow assumed that it is most useful to be aware of the negatives—that being continually vigilant for dangers and deficiencies is the best path to survival, goal attainment, or happiness. As we become more aware of this habit, it is important to realize that this assumption is simply not true.

Reality

It is important to be aware of dangers and deficiencies, but it is not useful to dwell on them. Deficiency focusing leads to the recognition of imperfections and problems but does not provide solutions. It does not allow us to recognize opportunities or enjoy our accomplishments. Instead, it tends to produce an exaggerated sense of threat and a diminished sense of optimism. In contrast, solving problems and taking advantage of opportunities requires that we also concentrate on the positive.

Deficiency Focusing

Stress-Inducing Questions

If you scored high on deficiency focusing, you **tend to** ask yourself these types of questions.

What is wrong?

You ask yourself this question when you are evaluating how well you are performing on a task or in an area of your life. Here the question “How are things going?” gets translated into “What is wrong?”

When asking this question, the best possible answer is that nothing is wrong on a particular task at that particular time. The best possible feeling is temporary relief—even if you are achieving perfection. However, achieving perfection is not realistic in most things. People are usually forced to make trade-offs—achieving some things at the cost of others. Even when you try your best, some mistakes are inevitable as part of the learning process. It is very likely that you will find performance deficiencies if you look for them.

Focusing on these performance deficiencies makes you feel disappointed or embarrassed. You punish yourself because deficiencies, rather than accomplishments, become the center of your attention.

Balancing Questions

If you scored high on deficiency focusing, you **should also** ask yourself these questions.

What is going well?

This question allows you to recognize and enjoy the things you are accomplishing and helps you regain a balanced evaluation of your performance.

Recognizing your accomplishments moves you away from detection and punishment to include more recognition and reward as a way of motivating yourself. Feel the emotional difference between these two statements: “My performance is 20% wrong and I want to stop those mistakes,” versus “My performance is 80% correct and I want to make it even better.”

Simply punishing yourself for your deficiencies does not improve them. Improving your performance requires taking positive steps. It also requires that you recognize and reinforce those steps that are working well. Recognizing what is working not only makes you feel better, it plays a vital role in strengthening and improving your performance.

As you track your performance on any complex task, it is also important to realize that it occurs in steps and often requires experimentation, or trial-and-error learning. In this process, making mistakes is a necessary part of progress. Staying with the task and learning from the mistakes are positive accomplishments that deserve your recognition.