

Quiz: How Much Stress Have You Had Lately?

Evaluating how much stress they had recently experienced helped Mike and Maria see their marriage from a new perspective. Their problems weren't caused by a lack of love, or by a lack of trying. They had simply been overwhelmed by the pressures of a new baby, new jobs, Mike's illness, Maria's sister's death, and more. Once they acknowledged this, they felt motivated to make big changes to reduce stress and to take better care of themselves and their relationship.

The following test is a common one, developed by researchers Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe to help people measure stress in their lives and to determine whether that stress might be putting them at risk for illness. Take this quiz with your partner to see how you score.

Keep in mind that people adapt to stress in different ways. Some have a high tolerance and don't seem to be bothered much physically or mentally by the kinds of events listed in the test. Other people can be very sensitive to stress, and they may experience negative effects at levels even lower than this test would indicate. The test is simply meant to show you how you might compare to the average.

If you have a high score (say, 300 or above) and your marriage is distressed, it may be that your relationship is not the source of your pain and unhappiness. Rather, your troubles could be based on an unfortunate set of circumstances you've been going through. Stress at high levels can erode your sense of perspective and interfere with good communication and emotional communication. If you think that might be the case in your marriage, talk over this list of stresses with your partner and take a critical look at your lives. Consider what you've both been going through, where you are now, and what you might want to do to reduce stress in the future.

Circle those events you have experienced in the past year. Then total the number of points assigned to those items you've circled.

Event	Score
Death of a spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Imprisonment	63
Death of a close family member	63
Major personal injury or illness	53
Getting married	50
Dismissal from work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Major change in health of family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sexual difficulties	39
Gain of new family member (birth, adoption, elderly relative moving in)	39
Major business readjustment (merger, reorganization, bankruptcy)	39
Major change in financial state	38
Death of a close friend	37
Change to a different line of work	36
Change in number of arguments with spouse	35

Event	Score
Major mortgage	32
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Major change in responsibilities at work	29
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	28
Spouse begins or stops work outside home	26
Beginning or ending formal schooling	26
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Major change in work hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in schools	20
Major change in recreational activities	19
Major change in church activities	19
Major change in social activities	18
Minor mortgage or loan	17
Major change in sleeping habits	16
Major change in number of family get-togethers	15
Major change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Christmas season	12

Event	Score
Minor violation of the law (traffic ticket, etc.)	11

SCORING:

Less than 150 points = low risk of developing stress-related illness

150–300 points = medium risk of developing stress-related illness

More than 300 points = high risk of developing stress-related illness