

Rate Yourself on the "Life Change Scale"

Research indicates that persons who total 200 points or more on the following scale within a 12-month period are more prone to physical and psychological stress-related illness than those who score less. To see where you stand, simply total the number of stress points you have accumulated in the last year. Note that both pleasant and unpleasant "life events" can cause stress.

THE SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE (Life Change Scale)

LIFE EVENT	MEAN VALUE
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Jail term	63
Death of close family member	63
Personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Fired at work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Change of health in family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sex difficulties	39
Gain of new family member (birth, adoption, older adult moving in)	39
Business readjustment	39
Change in financial state (much worse or much better)	39
Death of close friend	37
Change to different line of work	36
Change in number of arguments with spouse (more or less)	35
Loan of over \$10,000	31
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Change in responsibilities at work (promotion, demotion, transfer)	29
Child leaving home (marriage, attending college)	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	28
Spouse begins or stops work	26
Begin or end of school	26
Change in living conditions (remodeling, deterioration of neighborhood)	25
Revision of habits (dress, manners, associations)	24
Trouble with boss	23
Change in work conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in schools	20
Change in church activities	19
Change in recreation	19
Change in social activities	18
Loan less than \$10,000	17
Change in sleeping habits	16

Change in number of family get-togethers	15
Change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Christmas	12
Minor violations of the law (eg traffic ticket)	11

1. Give yourself time to adjust. If you have experienced a major change, take it easy. Don't take actions that will heap additional changes on top of it. Just concentrate on learning to live with your new situation.
2. Express your feelings. A willingness to express feelings and to reach out for help when you are under pressure will increase your chances of remaining healthy. Don't keep your feelings bottled up.
3. Let your personality be your guide. If you are a highly ambitious, aggressive person, always in a hurry to get things done, try to take life a little more calmly. Be less competitive in sports and outside activities as well as on the job. However, this doesn't mean you should necessarily spend a "do-nothing" weekend after a pressure-filled week or take a long vacation after a major life change or period of stress. The sudden turn off may be worse for you than having something to do.

Or may be you are the type of person who is easy-going and less competitive. You worry less and don't allow the clock to drive you. If so, you might suffer ill effects by doing what comes naturally - withdrawing during periods of heavy stress or intense competition. Actually, you might do better by being more active than usual; keeping somewhat busier to avoid becoming depressed.

Both types of personalities should seek to alter their usual behavior gradually and strive to be a bit more like the other.

4. Consider the impact of life changes when making decisions. For example, let's say that at this moment your life change score is high and you are offered a new job in a different line of work. It would mean moving elsewhere and ongoing on a different schedule with new people around you. One alternative would be to avoid the life change and stay where you are. The other would be to take the position but make a point to avoid additional stressful situations and take particular care of your health during the next two years.

By knowing how much stress you are under - including that from pleasant events - you are better able to make well-timed decisions and to take good care of yourself when you are under a particularly high degree of pressure.