

Tim Lowenstein, Ph.D., can help you handle your stress.

Lowenstein created The Life Stress Test, which presents a scale that will help determine the level of pressure you are facing from major life stress events in the past year.

Take the test, add up the points and see what you might expect.

In the past 12 months, which of the following major life events have taken place in your life?

- ___ Death of spouse: 100 points
- ___ Divorce: 73
- ___ Marital separation: 65
- ___ Jail term: 63
- ___ Death of close family member: 63
- ___ Personal injury or illness: 53
- ___ Marriage: 50
- ___ Fired from work: 47
- ___ Marital reconciliation: 45
- ___ Retirement: 45
- ___ Change in family member's health: 44
- ___ Pregnancy: 40
- ___ Sex difficulties: 39
- ___ Addition to family: 39
- ___ Business readjustment: 39
- ___ Change in financial status: 38
- ___ Death of close friend: 37
- ___ Change to a different line of work: 36
- ___ Change in number of marital arguments: 35
- ___ Mortgage or loan over \$10,000: 31
- ___ Foreclosure of mortgage or loan: 30
- ___ Change in work responsibilities: 29
- ___ Trouble with in-laws: 29
- ___ Outstanding personal achievement: 28
- ___ Spouse begins or stops work: 26
- ___ Starting or finishing school: 26
- ___ Change in living conditions: 25
- ___ Revision of personal habits: 24
- ___ Trouble with boss: 23
- ___ Change in work hours, conditions: 20
- ___ Change in residence: 20
- ___ Change in schools: 20
- ___ Change in recreational habits: 19
- ___ Change in church activities: 19
- ___ Change in social activities: 18
- ___ Mortgage or loan under \$10,000: 17
- ___ Change in sleeping habits: 16
- ___ Change in number of family gatherings: 15
- ___ Change in eating habits: 15
- ___ Vacation: 13
- ___ Christmas season: 12
- ___ Minor violations of the law: 11
- ___ Your Total Score

See how you did. This scale shows the kind of life pressure that you are facing. Depending on your coping skills -- or the lack thereof -- this scale can predict the likelihood that you will fall victim to a stress-related illness. The illness could range from mild, but frequent tension headaches, acid indigestion or loss of sleep to very serious illness like ulcers, cancer and migraines.

If you scored 0-149, you have low susceptibility to stress-related illness.

If you scored 150-299, you have medium susceptibility to stress-related illness.

And if you scored 300 and over, there is the indication that you have high susceptibility to stress-related illness.

The way people react to the stresses in Lowenstein's test is different for each individual. How often do we see people who are able to go on with life coping with traumas that are unimaginable to most? On the other hand, we might see someone with a perceived "easy" life that finds difficulty with the mundane tasks of daily living.

Certainly if one's health is jeopardized, professional help is recommended. Therapy will help with support and provide directives to assist you through troubled times.

Most people with disordered eating tend to be in control with the major stresses in life, but succumb to the food with the "small stuff." At the time of crisis, they are the people who hold everything together. This person will [stay clear of mind and establish order](#) in the midst of chaos. Only when the crisis settles and everything is in order can she take time for reflection.

The same person who holds everything together for everyone else will binge like crazy if she doesn't get the deserved recognition at home or work. When the demands of home, aging parents or children seem overwhelming, she will eat until she falls asleep from physical and emotional exhaustion.

Everyone copes with stress differently, but there are [simple, concrete tools](#) that benefit everyone with "the small stuff."

Breathing. We underestimate the value of breathing. Taking deep, slow breaths is guaranteed to bring you down a few notches. You can use this tool anywhere, anytime with quick results.

Exercise. Even if you can only escape for 10 minutes, go for it. Get the endorphins going and the anxiety will decrease.

Journal. Putting the issues in writing brings clarity and provides the format to develop a plan. It tells your unique story and tracks your growth.

Talk. Pick up the phone and call someone who likes you! There's nothing like a voice on the other end of the line that is glad you are part of their life!

While using these tools, don't forget to **pray**. Prayer is beneficial to many who struggle. Allow your higher power to embrace you and, when necessary, carry you.