

WHAT DOES STRESS DO TO US?

When stressed, a cascade of stress hormones floods our bodies. These hormones prime us to fight, run or freeze, when faced with a threat. This generally worked well when we were still living in the wild and had to deal with large animals with sharp teeth. However, such aggressive and fearful reactions are hardly useful when dealing with modern stressors such as driving in rush hour traffic or not having enough time.

Over long periods of time stress hormones can have disastrous effects on a person's health and ability to heal. The chronic effects of cumulative stress include abnormalities in inflammation and immune responses which can affect allergies, asthma and arteriosclerosis. Coupled with high blood pressure, another effect of stress, this can lead to coronary heart disease, strokes or aneurysms. Blood sugar levels are also adversely affected by stress such that chronic stress increases the odds of becoming diabetic. Immunity compromised by stress can result in increased likelihoods of becoming ill with any number of infections and even cancer. All in all, stress needs to be adequately dealt with so that our health and ability to heal is protected.

LORRAINE McATEER'S BACKGROUND

Lorraine McAteer has 14 years experience as a medical health professional and 12 years post-secondary education in healthcare and psychology. Lorraine graduated with First Class honours with a B.A., Psych. Major, in 1994, and a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology, in 2002, from Simon Fraser University. Her areas of interest lie mostly in the intersections of the medical and psychological sciences; in the mind-body connection and how the mind effects the body and vice versa. As such her research has focused on how stress effects sensory perception, emotions, and depression and anxiety symptoms. She has received many awards for her high academic achievements, including the prestigious CD Nelson Graduate Entrance Scholarship. She is currently working to attain a certificate in Substance Use at the Justice Institute of BC.

Since graduating Lorraine has been in private practice. She has created and directed workshops and conducted individual and group sessions on how to foster and act with emotional intelligence, to reduce stress and become healthier and happier individuals.

FOR EASE OF PAYMENT, LORRAINE'S DUAL DESIGNATION AS A REGISTERED CLINICAL COUNSELLOR AND A CERTIFIED CANADIAN COUNSELLOR, ALLOWS FOR OPTIMUM COVERAGE BY EXTENDED MEDICAL AND OTHER INSURANCE PROVIDERS.

**S. LORRAINE McATEER
BA, MA, CCC, RCC**

**FUSCALDOTOTALHEALTH.CA
434 COLUMBIA ST. EAST, NEW WESTMINSTER
OFFICE 604-515-7018**

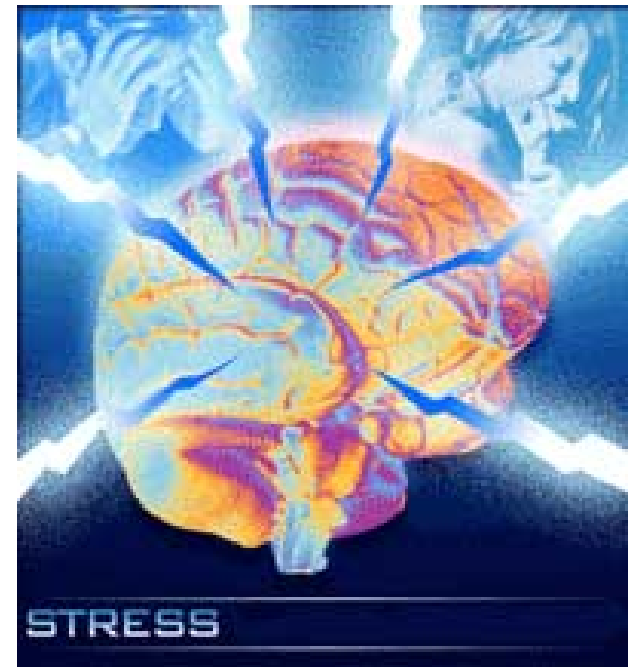


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CLINICAL COUNSELLING



DEALING WITH STRESS

STRESS INVENTORY

Please circle the number beside each life event affecting you over the past year:

Death of a 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 in health of family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sex difficulties	39
Gain of new family member	39
Business readjustment	39
Change in financial state	38
Death of close friend	37
Change to different line of work	36
Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
Mortgage over \$200,000	31
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Change in responsibilities at work	29
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	28
Wife begins or stops work	26
Begin or end school	26
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Change in work hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in schools	20
Change in recreation	19
Change in church activities	19
Change in social activities	18
Large loan	17
Change in sleeping habits	16
Change in number of family gatherings	15
Change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Christmas	12
Minor violations of the law	11

HOW TO INTERPRET YOUR STRESS INVENTORY

Add up the circled numbers to determine your total stress score. If your total is less than 150, you are less likely to be suffering the effects of cumulative stress. If it is between 150 and 300, you may be suffering from chronic stress and have a **1 in 2 chance of a notable health breakdown within 2 years**. If your score is over 300, you have an 80% chance that you shall experience detrimental health effects related to stress. (Please note that individual responses to stress depend much upon how each of us perceives, responds and deals with stress.)



COUNSELLING CAN HELP YOU BY . . .

- Determining your overall stress level,
- Evaluating your coping skills,
- Assessing your life priorities and goals,
- Exploring your personal desires and needs,
- Co-designing a personal action plan,
- Implementing a new, less stressful and more fulfilling lifestyle
- Challenging your to take real steps towards the change you desire.
- Celebrating these life improvements along the way

STRESS RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

Rate yourself as to how you typically react in each of the following situations. There are no right or wrong answers.

4=Always 3=Frequently 2=Sometimes 1=Never

1. You try to do as much as possible in the least amount of time?
2. You become impatient with delays or interruptions?
3. You always have to win at games to enjoy yourself?
4. You find yourself speeding up the car to beat the red light?
5. You are unlikely to ask for or indicate you need help with problems?
6. You constantly seek the respect and admiration of others?
7. Are you overly critical of the way others do their work?
8. You have the habit of looking at your watch or clock often?
9. You constantly strive to better your position and achievements?
10. You spread yourself "too thin" in terms of your time?
11. You have the habit of doing more than one thing at a time?
12. You frequently get angry or irritable?
13. You have little time for hobbies or time by yourself?
14. You have a tendency to talk quickly or hasten conversations?
15. You consider yourself hard-driving?
16. Your friends or relatives consider you hard-driving?
17. You have a tendency to get involved in multiple projects?
18. You have lots of deadlines in your work?
19. You feel vaguely guilty if you relax and do nothing during leisure time?
20. You take on too many responsibilities?

TOTAL ASSESSMENT: _____

20 – 30 Chances are you are nonproductive or your life lacks stimulation.

31 – 50 Designates a good balance in your ability to handle and control stress.

51 – 60 Your stress level is significant and you are bordering on being excessively tense.

61+ You may be a candidate for illness.

Scale and adaptations from R. Forbes. **Life Stress**. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1979.