



Stress Diary

(www.mindtools.com/stress/ps/StressDiaryTemplate.htm)

Date & Time	Happiness Mood (0 to 10)	Efficiency (0 to 10)	Feeling of Stress (0 to 10)	Most Recent Stressful Event	What Did You Feel?	Fundamental Cause	How Managed?

Your Stress Diary

Stress Diaries are useful for understanding the causes of short-term stress in your life. They also give you an insight into how you react to stress.

The idea behind Stress Diaries is that on a regular basis you write down how stressed you're feeling, so that you can understand these stresses and then manage them. This is important because often these stresses flit in and out of our minds without getting the attention and focus that they deserve.

As well as helping you capture and understand the most common sources of stress in your life, Stress Diaries help you to understand:

- The causes of stress in more detail; and
- How you react to stress, and whether your reactions are appropriate and useful.

Using the Tool:

Stress Diaries are useful in that they gather information regularly and routinely, over a period of time. This helps you to separate the common, routine stresses from those that only occur occasionally. This helps you understand the pattern of stress in your life.

Make regular entries in your Stress Diary (for example, every hour). If you have any difficulty remembering to do this, set an alarm to remind you to make your next diary entry. Also make an entry in your diary after each incident that is stressful enough for you to feel that it is important.

Every time you make an entry, record the following information:

- The date and time of the entry.
- How happy you feel now, on a scale of -10 (the most unhappy you have ever been) to +10 (the happiest you have been). As well as this, write down the mood you are feeling.
- How stressed you feel now, again on a subjective scale of 0 to 10. As before, 0 here would be the most relaxed you have ever been, while 10 would show the greatest stress you have ever experienced.
- The most recent stressful event you have experienced
- The symptom you feel (e.g. "butterflies in your stomach", anger, headache, raised pulse rate, sweaty palms, etc.)
- The fundamental cause of the stress (being as honest and objective as possible)
- If you're recording an event, how well did you handle it: Did your reaction help solve the problem, or did it inflame it?

You will reap the real benefits of having a stress diary in the first few weeks. After this, the benefit you get will reduce each additional day.

If, however, your lifestyle changes, or you begin to suffer from stress again in the future, then it may be worth using the diary approach again. You will probably find that the stresses you face have changed. If this is the case, then keeping a diary again will help you to develop a different approach to deal with them.

For analyzing your stress diary go to www.mindtools.com/stress/ps/StressDiaries.htm