

Personal Stress Warning Signals

Your body is a stress barometer. It is constantly giving you messages to help you maintain health and balance. The messages let you know if something is going on that you need to pay attention to. The more quickly you can become aware of the sensations in your body, feelings, thoughts and behaviors that signal stress and imbalance, the more skillfully you can respond to intervene in the stress cycle. Without awareness, we often react to stress in unhelpful automatic and habitual ways.

Listed below are common symptoms caused by stress. Put a check next to those you experience sometimes and circle those you experience frequently. Add any other stress indicators not listed. This is for your eyes only to help you better recognize your personal warning signals.

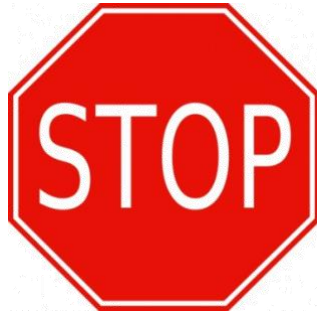
Physical Symptoms	
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Back pain
<input type="checkbox"/> Digestive problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Tight neck and shoulder
<input type="checkbox"/> Stomach aches	<input type="checkbox"/> Racing heart
<input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty palms	<input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness
<input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness	<input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue
Emotional Symptoms	
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Frustration
<input type="checkbox"/> Sadness	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive worry
<input type="checkbox"/> Little joy	<input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings
<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability	<input type="checkbox"/> Edgy/angry/ready to explode
<input type="checkbox"/> Feel lost/hopeless/empty	<input type="checkbox"/> Depression
<input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming sense of pressure	<input type="checkbox"/> Crying
<input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness	<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to upset
Cognitive Symptoms	
<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Negativity
<input type="checkbox"/> Hard to function sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Distracted
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty concentrating	<input type="checkbox"/> Foggy headed
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty making decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> Constant worry and self-judgement
<input type="checkbox"/> Inability to quiet/relax the mind	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of creativity
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of sense of humor	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation
Behaviors/Coping Strategies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Overly critical of others	<input type="checkbox"/> Bossiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Overuse of alcohol or other substances	<input type="checkbox"/> Smoking
<input type="checkbox"/> Compulsive eating	<input type="checkbox"/> Low productivity
<input type="checkbox"/> Under eating	<input type="checkbox"/> Isolating self
<input type="checkbox"/> Racing around on automatic pilot	<input type="checkbox"/> Lashing out

Other Symptoms:

The Stop Practice

(Aka: Pressing the Pause Button)

As soon as you notice that you are having a reaction to something or that some of your personal stress warning signals are present:



- S** **Stop** moving. Stop doing (if possible).
- T** **Take** a moment to get your bearings: What senses are most vivid? Feel your feet on the floor, your hands, your breath, see the vividness of the colors, feel the sensation of the air on your skin, hear the sounds around you. Drop in to what is right here now.
- O** **Observe** and **Open** with interest... what's here? Can you bring some curiosity to what's present in the body, the mind and emotions? Be gentle! If there's resistance—honor that and explore it! If possible, take a few minutes—but it doesn't have to be a big deal.
- P** **Proceed** - Move into the next moments with awareness of what's here... maybe there is a new choice to be made, a new direction to go in—or not. Simply move into the next moment with whatever new information you gleaned from this moment of presence.