

Lifestyle & Work habits review

What are 'thinking habits'?

Our lives are made up largely of habits, good and bad ones. Habits are physical and mental. An individual's attitude towards something is simply the way they habitually think about it. Many of us have bad thinking habits that cause us unnecessary stress. If, for example, you always automatically blame yourself when things go wrong, you have a negative habit which will probably increase your stress. Alternatively, if you have a habit of staying calm and asking pertinent questions when things go wrong, then this will help to reduce the stress in your life.

Good preventative habits

The key point about adopting good stress management habits is that they have to become part of your daily routine. It is the regular practice of good habits during the easy times that ensure their full benefit during the difficult times. This is really no different in principle to any other form of preventative maintenance. Most of us have the good habit of brushing our teeth. We know that it is the regular cleaning that keeps our teeth healthy. No one would think of only brushing their teeth when they get toothache, and neglecting them the rest of the time. It would be too late.

Habits and attitudes can be changed

This final exercise is designed to increase your awareness of various habits and attitudes that can influence your vulnerability to stress. Many of us create stress in our lives through having habits and attitudes we picked up some time in the past when our lives were not as complicated as they are now. The trouble is, unless we have good reason to change, we carry on with the same habits and attitudes without being aware of them. Changing habits is not easy but you can do it if you are sufficiently motivated and, if you are aware of what you want to change.

LIFESTYLE AND WORK HABITS REVIEW

Please circle the number that best represents your reaction to each of the statements below.

Ability to relax

1. I frequently visualise soothing scenes in order to relax _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
2. I find it easy to control my breathing _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
3. I exercise regularly _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
4. I'm good at making time for myself _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
5. I frequently use progressive muscle relaxation techniques _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree

TOTAL _____

To work out the average divide the TOTAL by 5 AVERAGE _____

Managing thoughts

6. I'm aware that some of my beliefs are probably irrational ___ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
7. I regularly use my imagination to improve my mood _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
8. I find it easy to switch-off after work _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
9. I never ruminate about negative experiences _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
10. I never worry about my work _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree

TOTAL _____

To work out the average divide the TOTAL by 5 AVERAGE _____

Thinking ahead to reduce stress

11. I keep an up to date list of things I need to do _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
12. I keep an up to date list of things I love to do _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
13. I am aware of how my diet can affect my mood _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
14. I frequently post reminder notes to keep myself on track ___ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
15. I am aware of the major stressors in my life _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree

TOTAL _____

To work out the average divide the TOTAL by 5 AVERAGE _____

Organisation and preparation

16. I always spend some time planning my day each morning ___ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
17. I find prioritising easy _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
18. I'm comfortable asking other people for help _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
19. I find delegating easy _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
20. I never waste time looking for misplaced documents _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree

TOTAL _____

To work out the average divide the TOTAL by 5 AVERAGE _____

Social Support

21. After a hard day I like to relax with friends _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
22. I discuss problems with a close relative or friend _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
23. I am happy to ask for support if I need it _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
24. I help others without being asked _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree
25. I don't feel isolated at work _____ agree 1 2 3 4 5 disagree

TOTAL _____

To work out the average divide the TOTAL by 5 AVERAGE _____

The purpose of this exercise is to make you aware of habits and attitudes **many of which are under your control** that can influence the management of stress in your life.

Pay attention to where your score is highest and where your average score is 3 or above. All of our lives are made up of accumulations of good and bad habits we have acquired over the years. It takes the average person 3 weeks to discard an unwanted habit or to develop a desired habit.