



Find out if you're 'stress fit' by taking the 5-minute stress test

In a recent stressful situation, how did you react? Answer true (**T**) or false (**F**)

1.	I ignored the fact that something was bothering me and tried to carry on as usual.	T	F
2.	I made sure that I had information on how to manage this stressful situation.	T	F
3.	I refused to admit that anything was bothering me, and I tried not to notice that I was experiencing signs of stress such as an increase in heart rate, muscle tightness, and hurried behaviour.	T	F
4.	I used alcohol, smoking, or other substances as a way of relieving my stress.	T	F
5.	I made a plan and followed it, one step at a time.	T	F
6.	Every so often I took time to relax and forget about my stress. I read, listened to music, watched a film or rested.	T	F
7.	I looked at the humorous side of the situation, or I gave my support and understanding to people around me who were also under stress.	T	F
8.	I took time to remind myself of the important things in life. I received the goals for my personal life and the priorities of my work.	T	F
9.	I took out my anger and frustration on my friends and family.	T	F
10.	I kept thinking that I was helpless to deal with this situation.	T	F
11.	I didn't let anyone know what was really bothering me, even though there were people available who would have been supportive or helpful.	T	F
12.	I started exercising or doing a hobby, so that I could enjoy myself for a while.	T	F

The best coping strategies to keep 'stress fit'

If you've answered in the same manner as below, you're already practicing some 'stress fit' strategies. If not, you may want to review the situations and consider alternative strategies that may help you live a healthier, more enjoyable life.

Remember, there is not single stress coping skill that will effectively help you manage your stress in all situations or all of the time. The best approach to stress management is developing a flexible set of techniques that works for you as an individual.

1.	F	The first step to managing stress is acknowledging the need for change. Take some quiet time to try to identify the source of your stress. Continuing to deny a stressful situation can have serious long term effects on your heart health.
2.	T	Once you've identified what causes stress in your life, it's important to find information on how to develop new skills or improve already existing ones. A certified professional can help.
3.	F	A number of problems – an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, muscle tension, poor concentration, irritability, and sleep problems – can all be symptoms of excessive stress in your life. Don't ignore these signs – they're your body's way of telling you something's wrong. See your doctor or stress management specialist.
4.	F	You may feel that alcohol, smoking or other substances may numb your stress and help you deal with a difficult situation. But any relief is only temporary, and this behaviour can only lead to additional problems for your physical and emotional health.
5.	T	Setting some priorities and being flexible about things that aren't critical can help you adapt to a particularly stressful time. Learn to manage your time and set realistic deadlines. This should be part of your overall stress management plan.
6.	T	Realize that there are equally rewarding sources of satisfaction available to you. You may want to look for inspiration in art, literature, philosophy or religion. Or simply spend time on the activities you enjoy.
7.	T	Stressful situations often present an opportunity for you to grow in your positive emotions and attitudes. These can include the ability to see the humour in your situation, to trust in your convictions, and to develop more confidence in the people close to you.
8.	T	Sometimes it may be necessary to re-examine your life goals to see if they still effectively reflect what you want out of your life or career. If they don't, maybe it's time to re-assess your goals and priorities.

9.	F	When you're under pressure or stress you may be more irritable with the people closest to you. There are more positive ways of letting out the emotional and physical tension contributing to stress. Try to avoid situations that are bound to be stressful, exercise to reduce tension or temporarily remove yourself from a situation.
10.	F	At times stress can lead to feelings of anxiety or helplessness. It's important to break the cycle of negative thoughts by looking for ways to reduce stress or cushion how much it disrupts your life.
11.	F	Talking to others can give you a fresh perspective on a stressful situation. Plus, friends and family can provide valuable moral support when you need to feel good about yourself.
12.	T	Sometimes it's important to get some emotional distance from your daily hassles. Take on an activity that lets you temporarily forget what's going on. Enjoy yourself.

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