



Holmes Rahe Stress Scale

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The Scale Creators

In 1967, psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe studied whether or not stress contributes to illness. They surveyed more than 5,000 medical patients and asked them if they had experienced any of 43 life events in the previous two years.

Each event, a Life Change Unit (LCU), had a different "weight" for stress. The more events a patient added up, the higher the score. The higher the score, and the larger the weight of each event, the more likely the patient was to become ill.

Ultimately the two gentlemen created the Social Readjustment Rating Scale through the University of Washington School of Medicine. The purpose was to provide a standardized measure of impact for a wide range of common stressors.

The Scale

At first publish, the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, now referred to as the Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale, was meant with resistance. Over the next decade many studies have been performed to determine its validity and reliability. After showing to be valid and reliable, it is now the leading diagnostic tool used by professionals when talking about stress.

Using The Scale

Each life event is assigned a value in Life Changing Units chosen to reflect the relative amount of stress the event causes in the population studied. Stress is cumulative; so to estimate the total stress you are experiencing, one needs to add up the values corresponding to the events that have occurred in your life over the past year multiplied by the number of times it has happened.

Take the Stress Scale

Instructions: Read through the events listed. Mark an 'X' next to each Life Change Unit (LCU) that has occurred in the last 12 months. When finished, add up the points for each event and compare it to the Consequence Scale.

* Assign your own points

LCU	POINTS	X	LCU	POINTS	X
Death of Spouse	100		Changes in Responsibility at Work	29	
Divorce	73		Outstanding Personal Achievement	28	
Marital Separation	65		Spouse Starts/Stops Work	26	
Jail Term	63		Begin or End School	26	
Death of a Close Family Member	63		Change in Living Conditions	26	
Personal Injury or Illness	53		Revision of Personal Habits	24	
Marriage	50		Trouble with Boss	23	
Dismissal From Work	47		Change in Working Hours/Conditions	20	
Retirement	45		Change in Schools	20	
Marital Reconciliation	45		Change in Residence	20	
Change in Health of Family Member	44		Change in Recreation	19	
Pregnancy	40		Change in Church Activities	19	
Sexual Difficulties	39		Change in Social Activities	18	
Gain a New Family Member	39		Minor Mortgage or Loan (under \$40,000)	17	
Business Readjustment	39		Change in Sleeping Habits	16	
Change in Financial State	38		Change in Number of Family Reunions	15	
Death of a Close Friend	37		Change in Eating Habits	15	
Change to a Different Line of Work	36		Vacation	13	
Change in Frequency of Arguments	35		Christmas	12	
Major Mortgage (over \$40,000)	32		Minor Violation of Law	11	
Foreclosure of Mortgage or Loan	30		Single Person Living Alone	*	
Trouble with in-laws	29		Other - Describe	*	
Child Leaving Home	29				

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Your Score _____

Interpreting the Scale

A total of 150 or less suggests a low level of stress in your life and a low probability of developing a stress-related disorder or having an accident, around 30%. Totals between 150-299 indicate your chances are about 50%. Higher than 300, statistically you stand an almost 80% chance of getting sick or having an accident in the near future.

What to do with Your Results

If you find that you are at a moderate or high level of risk, then the obvious thing to do is to try to avoid future life crises. While this is clearly easier said than done, you can:

- Be mindful of how closely stacked the LCUs happen. For example, avoid selling your home close to when you retire or when one of your children go to college.
- Learn conflict resolution to minimize conflict with other people. Get my free download- [7 Steps to Preparing for Difficult Conversations](#).
- Avoid taking on new obligations or engaging with new programs of study when other LCUs are in your future.
- Schedule relaxation activities and get more sleep.

How to use this for workplace stress

Instructions for Leaders & Managers

Because the information on the Holmes & Rahe Stress Scale identifies private events in a person's life, employees may be hesitant to complete the form honestly if they know team members are going to see their results. We suggest keeping the details of the scale private and only asking employees to share their numbers with their immediate supervisor. We also provide you with debrief questions to be used in group discussion to unpack more information about team stress and the impact it has on the workplace.

Step 1: Provide each employee with a copy of the JB Partners Holmes & Rahe Stress Scale and ask them to complete it thoroughly and honestly. Remind them they will NOT be asked to share their private details, just the end number.

Step 2: Ask each member to provide their immediate supervisor with their total score. Keep things anonymous to build trust unless specific, written consent is provided by an employee.

Step 3: Once all are completed, take the average of your team's scale number to determine the likelihood of illness and/or injury within the team.

Step 4: Share this overall number with team members so they are aware of the state of health themselves and their co-workers are in currently.

Group Discussion Questions

Consider using some of these questions to debrief your team's results, if they are open to having a group discussion.

Ask:

- "What did you think about the stress scale?"
- "What did you find interesting about your results?"
- "What didn't surprise you?"
- "As a group our total number is X. How do you think it's going to impact us as a team? Our efficiency? Our performance?"
- "What signs and symptoms of stress do we have going on throughout the team, such as [use examples you notice].?" ****Remember not to push hard here but create a safe space for people to share their own. Try going first.**
- "What are some ways we can reduce the stress we have in our lives to avoid the potential consequences?"
- "How can we support one another as a team?"
"What can we do directly in the workplace to reduce stressors?"

Need support on a group debrief or just want us to do it for you?

Reach out at Info@JenButlerPartners.com

For more information on how to reduce your stress:

- Further explore the JB Partners website.
- Join us on social media 
- Subscribe to our podcast.