

STRESSMASTER™

Stress
Management
Questionnaire

Participant
Form

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The SMQ™ is divided into the following sections:

- **The SMQ™:**
The Stress Management Questionnaire.
- **Scoring The SMQ™:**
The process by which you score your SMQ™ and your Companion's SMQ™.
- **Your Stress Profiles:**
A way to graphically see and measure your "risk" level for each scale.
- **The Interpretive Guide:**
How to interpret the results of your SMQ™ and Profile.
- **Contract For Change**
A tool to motivate yourself to a change process.
- **Resources:**
When you need more assistance in mastering your stress.

The **Stress Management Questionnaire (SMQ™)** is a general index of the stress you are experiencing and how well you are managing your personal stressors. Over the past 20 years, through research and use by trainers, consultants and mental health professionals throughout the world, the **SMQ™** has become one of the most effective stress self-assessment and educational tools available. To date over 150,000 people have completed the **SMQ™**. The **SMQ™** is designed to help you better understand the nature of stress and the role you play in mastering your personal stress levels. The **SMQ™** provides an insightful guide and information to help you understand yourself and how to master your unique stress situation. Given the information provided by this tool, perhaps facilitated by good coaching from trainers or other mental health professionals, you can become better equipped to improve the way you respond to life's stressors. With practice you can move closer to the ideal of becoming a **Stressmaster™**.



Please answer the following questions about yourself in terms of **the last few months**.

How frequently do you (Circle the Number)...

	VERY RARELY			VERY FREQUENTLY		
1. Become impatient when performing repetitious acts (e.g., filling out bank deposit slips, writing checks, washing dishes, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Dwell on the incompetencies of others who stand in the way of your progress?	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Notice that you have a fast pulse?	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Not accomplish what you set out to do?	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Have asthma or hay fever flare-ups?	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Insist upon no mistakes from your subordinates or those around you?	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Rarely take time to do something that you really enjoy?	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Have indigestion?	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Feel impatient at the rate at which events take place?	1	2	3	4	5	
10. Feel sad?	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Take quick, short, or no breaks during the day?	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Have shortness of breath?	1	2	3	4	5	
13. Think about getting out of your job or life situation?	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Have headaches?	1	2	3	4	5	
15. Take more time than usual to do things?	1	2	3	4	5	
16. Have constipation/diarrhea?	1	2	3	4	5	
17. Become irritated with the mistakes of others?	1	2	3	4	5	
18. In a competitive situation tend to become upset or angry if you are not the best?	1	2	3	4	5	
19. Avoid tasks and responsibilities?	1	2	3	4	5	
20. Think that what you do is rather pointless?	1	2	3	4	5	



SCORING YOUR SMQ™ - Participant Form

For each scale below, enter your responses (1,2,3,4 or 5) from questions 1-41 (pp. 2-3) on the line provided. Add the numbers and put the total in the **Score Box** to the right. This is your score for each scale.

SMQ™ SCALE							YOUR SCORE
HO	QUESTION #	1	2	9	18	41	<input type="text"/>
PE	QUESTION #	6	17	25	28	33	<input type="text"/>
TI	QUESTION #	21	32	40			<input type="text"/>
DI	QUESTION #	13	34	35	38		<input type="text"/>
BR	QUESTION #	10	24	26	27	31	<input type="text"/>
UA	QUESTION #	4	15	19	20	36	<input type="text"/>
TE	QUESTION #	7	11	23	30		<input type="text"/>
PS	QUESTION #	3	5	8	12	14	<input type="text"/>
	QUESTION #	16	22	29	37	39	<input type="text"/>
LW	For the LW - LIFE/WORK SATISFACTION SCALE , enter the total from page 5 .						<input type="text"/>
LE	For the LE - LIFE EVENTS SCALE , enter the total from page 4 .						<input type="text"/>
HA	For the HA - HASSLES SCALE , enter the total from page 4 .						<input type="text"/>

Not to be Copied or Distributed

Continue on next line



YOUR STRESS PROFILE

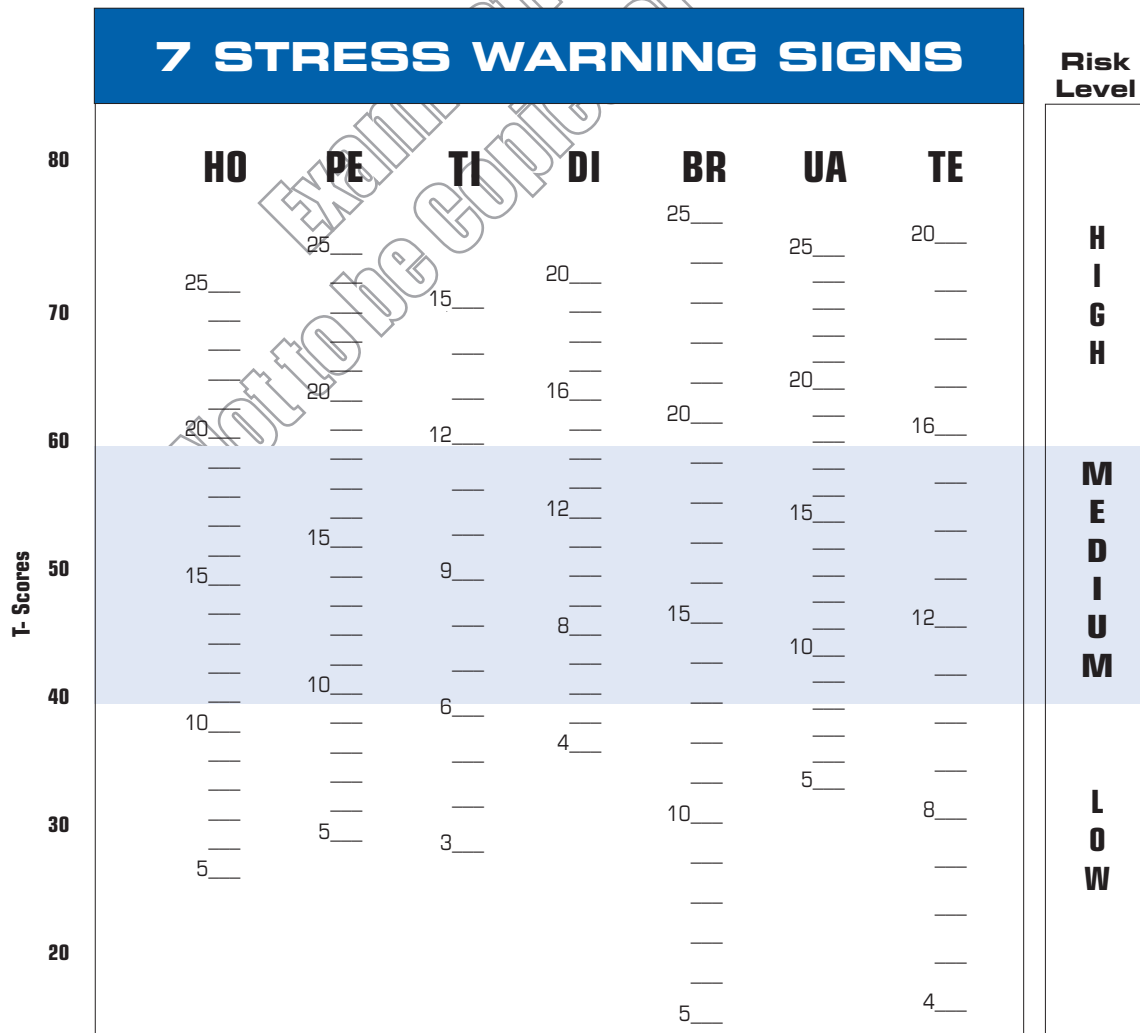
INSTRUCTIONS

Transfer the **Scores** from **your SMQ™** (page 6) and your **Companion's SMQ™** (page 7, if available) in the boxes below. On Graph I place a dot (•) on the line corresponding to each scale score. Then, place another dot (•) on the line corresponding to each of your companion's scores. Draw lines between the dots on each scale to show your profile. Do this for both your and your companion's scores. Use different color pens to show the difference between your view of yourself and your companion's view.

Place your scores and your companion scores in the boxes below . . .

	HO	PE	TI	DI	BR	UA	TE
YOUR SMQ™	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
COMPANION SMQ™	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

GRAPH I





INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

The Interpretive Guide helps you to evaluate the results obtained by completing and scoring the **SMQ™**. This Guide provides information on the meaning of each scale and offers suggestions on what to do when you score high on a given scale. Keep in mind that no questionnaire or assessment alone can give you a complete view of how well you are mastering stress. The **SMQ™** is one approach, which many have found useful for learning new ways to create a more stress-free life. Use good common sense and make your own determination as to the “risk” associated with a given high scale score. If you think there is a challenge or problem in your life, independent of this assessment, then take action to solve or improve your situation.

The **Interpretive Guide** also provides proven stressmastery approaches and techniques, as well as guidelines for learning how to master stress more effectively. For each section, tips and ideas are presented on ways to master stress more effectively. The goal of **Stressmaster™** is to help you learn new and effective ways of mastering stress.

Disclaimer: There is no substitute for professional help. This guide is not intended to replace good quality medical and

■ ABOUT THE SMQ™ AND THE SCALES

The **SMQ™** was designed with two goals. First, the **SMQ™** provides information about stress theory, the nature of stress and how stress can affect your life and health, both positively and negatively. Second, the **SMQ™** is a unique self-assessment tool that helps you identify and understand how well you are currently handling stress.

The **SMQ™** consists of a total of 11 scales in three (3) separate stress areas:

I: Seven Stress Warning Signs ■ ■ ■

The 7 scales that make up the **Stress Warning Signs** area are the result of a comprehensive 1980 validity study conducted through a grant from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

The Seven Stress Warning Sign Scales are:

- 1 - Hostility/Anger (HO)
- 2 - Perfectionism (PE)
- 3 - Time-Urgency (TI)
- 4 - Disappointment (DI)
- 5 - Burnout (BR)
- 6 - Underachievement (UA)
- 7 - Tension (TE)

II: Stress Effects Scales ■ ■ ■

This scale provides a view of how stress can affect you both physically and emotionally. Since the effects of stress are prime indicators of how well you are mastering stress, these are important concepts to understand. These scales will give insight as to whether or not stress is currently affecting you.

The two scales that make up this area are:

- 1 - Physical Stress Effects
- 2 - Life Work Satisfaction Scales

III: Stressor Scales ■ ■ ■

The **Stressor Scales** evaluate two types of stressors (i.e., things, thoughts or events) that impact or cause stress. Learning the difference between these two concepts can make a big difference in how well you master stress.

The two scales are:

- 1 - Life Events (e.g., death of a loved one)
- 2 - Hassles (e.g., auto repairs, too many tasks)



HOSTILITY/ANGER (HO) SCALE 1

In the world of stress research, anger and hostility are the most widely studied behavioral characteristics. Studies indicate that anger is the behavioral factor most highly correlated with an increased risk of coronary heart stroke, myocardial infarction and, possibly, high blood pressure. Other physical and behavioral stress problems are known to be directly influenced by stress. For example, gastrointestinal or stomach problems have a high correlation with anger. The **Hostility/Anger Scale (HO)** of the **SMQ™** assesses the degree to which you are experiencing anger at this time.

A **high** level of anger is a strong behavioral predictor of early illness and, possibly, even death. This scale measures such things as irritability, anger, and impatience and is one of the classic Type-A behaviors. If you scored **medium** to **high** on this scale, practice more constructive and appropriate ways of dealing with anger and the internal and external situations

THINGS TO KNOW ▲

Most, but not all anger, is inappropriate and counterproductive. Determine for yourself if your anger is excessive and if it is beginning to or already has affected you and your relationships. You know better than anyone if your anger is harmful.

In addition to the physical affects of anger, anger has consequences in your social life as well. Some examples of destructive anger include verbal abuse of a child, spouse or other person when they do not meet expectations. Physically hitting or abusing a person is an unfortunate common occurrence in homes across the world. This form of anger is almost always wrong, as are the frequent explosive outbursts of rage and anger toward others for minor infractions. Excessive verbal or physical anger is a problem for many.

Why Anger? Anger is typically an attempt to control the actions or behaviors of others to get our needs and wants met by others. Anger is the result of frustration when you do not get what you need, want, or expect from life or others. Anger is essentially a control tactic.

Underlying anger is fear. The most common fear is not feeling in control of a person or event. Anger is an attempt to control one's own world by attempting to control the actions of others. To reduce fear or anxiety and to get the person to behave "properly", anger is employed. After all, once the person is under your control, you feel better.

Anger can be expressed either directly through "lashing out" or indirectly through "passive-aggressive" behavior. With passive-aggressive behavior, individuals punish others by being belligerent, not responding, pouting or simply running away. Active anger is obvious: you simply lose control and "explode" onto someone with a verbal or physical attack.

Continued expressions of anger can damage your health as well as your relationships. Angry words and acts can never be taken back. The harm done is not really healed. The effects may linger for years and frequently come back to haunt you.

THINGS TO DO ▲

There are many things you can do to control or redirect your anger. One thing you can do is change your thinking about the person or situation. You can also simply take a walk or exercise when you are very angry. However, the first step is to recognize when you are in an "anger state" and that you **MUST** find a better way to deal with people and events that don't meet your expectations. Change starts from within!

■ **RECOGNIZE THE FEAR DRIVING YOUR ANGER**

Since fear is the engine that drives you to do such things such as hit, yell or scream at someone, ask yourself, "What am I fearing right now?" Do you fear the person will not do or say what you want? Do you feel anxious

TIME-URGENCY (TI) SCALE **3**

More than any time in history, we, as a society, are in a mad-rush to achieve and accomplish. Much of this attitude is positive and beneficial...make no mistake, a “go-get-’em” attitude and an enthusiasm for life and work can be the spark which makes things happen. However, with the explosion in information technology, the pressure to do more and to do it quicker is rampant.

Excessive or chronic **Time-Urgency** is a classic component of the Type-A personality. Individuals who are overly time-oriented risk more cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and other health problems than the more patient or less time-urgently oriented person. Excessive **Time-Urgency** keeps the mind and body at high anxiety and stress levels. **Stressmasters™** are time oriented and aware, but do not feel the stress as much as those locked into the “rush-rush” way of living and functioning.

Individuals who constantly perceive life in a time-urgent way tend to worry excessively about schedules, keep overly-tight deadlines, rush when rushing is not necessary, and do many activities at the same time. These self-defeating behaviors and thoughts create stress and rob enjoyment from work and play. The key is not based on excessive and unnecessary time-urgency, but on solid time mastery and planning.

If you scored **medium to high** on this scale, learn to slow down and take life and events as they are and not as you think they should be. Learning to manage your time and yourself will help defeat this negative thought/behavior pattern.

THINGS TO KNOW ▲

Often called “the hurry sickness,” excessive time-urgency means tying oneself to the clock and trying to do too many things at once. Excessive time-urgency often does not produce better results. In fact, working too fast often results in errors and lower work quality. Remember the saying, “The hurrier I go, the behinder I get”. It’s generally true! Keep in mind, people who behave this way “self-impose” this form of thinking and behaving on themselves...often unknowingly.

Excessive time-orientation is a “double-edged sword”. Even when you do accomplish more, the cost can be high. One consequence of this style of behavior is emotional exhaustion. Also, for many, the focus is often on tasks and not people. While “accomplishing” much, it is often at the expense of relationships.

Pushing yourself to frequently meet tight deadlines, to constantly be on time and on the move, even when being on time is not necessary, places tremendous stress on your mind and body. You can be goal-oriented and have a realistic sense of time. Balance is key!

Time-oriented people often fear being rejected or not being accepted for who they are. As with perfectionism, mentally “letting go” is an important step to successfully combating this way of thinking and living.

Many jobs require extremely tight deadlines which cannot be avoided. It is up to you to know how to respond to those deadlines and demands. If you cannot meet the deadline, you have only one choice...to mentally “let go” and do your best. Even when you must work harder and faster than you know is healthy, learn to mentally relax and proceed onward.

Unfortunately, excessively time-urgent people live too much in the future and not in the present. They seldom

STRESSMASTERS™ see the value of enjoying what they are doing, experience life in the “here and now” and make even the smallest task a pleasurable experience. Yet, STRESSMASTERS™ plan for and are aware of future needs and responsibilities, without getting emotionally bound up in the anxieties of those deadlines.

BURNOUT (BR) SCALE 5

Frequent periods of negative mood are a clear stress warning sign. Individuals who scored **high** on the **Burnout (BR) Scale** are likely experiencing greater stress than those who scored **low** on the **SMQ™**. If you scored **medium to high** on this scale, carefully evaluate what you are thinking. Is your thinking positive or negative? Are you constantly thinking the worst of situations, people or yourself. If your thoughts are largely negative, make changes to improve your view of yourself and the world around you. Keep in mind that **Burnout** is not the same as major depression or manic-depression.

THINGS TO KNOW ▲

People under chronic stress often become “burned-out” (mild depression) as a way of coping. Burnout includes feeling down or sad. It is a sense of pessimism and unhappiness. Some burnout is normal. All of us experience it. When burnout occurs frequently or with intensity, you need to identify ways to reverse the negative thinking which generates and maintains these moods.

Periods of negative mood or feeling “burned-out” may be an indication that stress is having or beginning to have an affect on your body and life. Recent research has shown that individuals experiencing burnout experience changes in the frequency and amount of stress hormones, such as cortisol, in their bodies. These hormones can produce the feeling of being down and “lifeless”. The more you feel this way, the greater the stress.

As with most stress “coping” mechanisms, Burnout is the result of prolonged periods of hassles and major life events that lead to increasingly negative thoughts and perceptions about self and others.

Frequent occurrences of negative mood indicate that stress is affecting you detrimentally. You may be experiencing personal burnout. You may also be trying to communicate with others in an indirect way that you are unhappy with yourself, them or life in general. Showing the world how bad you feel may be a plea for help! Unfortunately, they may not be able to interpret your moods, nor know what to do.

Some negative mood is normal. It cannot and perhaps should not be avoided. Occasional “down” times may have a cleansing effect. For example, after being rejected for a job promotion, you feel down and “blue”. This is a normal reaction to your “perceived” failure. As you work through your “down” feelings, you come to realize that there are things you can do that will improve your situation such as: move, get a new job, or simply talk to your supervisor about what you can do to improve yourself. Your mood lifts and you feel more in control.

Burnout is often the result of irrational thinking. A common irrational thought is to focus on the negative and not see the positive. For example, your spouse does not tell you he loves you. You see this as “he doesn’t love me anymore”.

You may discover that with some rational thinking you too have stopped saying, “I love you”—not because you don’t love him, but because, for example, with a new baby you’ve been too preoccupied and worn-out. You realize that love is there, but you and your spouse are just not saying what’s in the heart.

A cause of negative mood is negative thinking and self-talk. Because you are not changing the thoughts or attitudes that cause negative feelings to occur, the more you focus on trying to change how you feel, the less those feelings change.

THINGS TO DO ▲

■ DETERMINE IF IT IS REAL DEPRESSION

Depression or negative moods are closely linked but are not necessarily the same. If you think you are chronically depressed and not just experiencing the normal ups and downs of everyday living, seek professional help. If you have a work Employee Assistance Program (EAP), call them today. If not, seek out professional assistance from a psychologist or medical professional.

UNDERACHIEVEMENT (UA) SCALE 6

High scorers on the **Underachievement (UA) Scale** believe, whether or not it is true, that they are living unproductive or unsuccessful lives. People who feel they are unproductive tend to feel dissatisfied, which, in turn, can produce a variety of physical and emotional problems. Ironically, both the quality and quantity of their work, not to mention other areas of their lives, can be negatively affected.

If you scored **high** on the **Underachievement Scale**, learn more about how to mobilize yourself in positive and productive directions. (See “What To Do” in the **Time Urgency** section).

Like all stress indicators, the perception of underachievement may be the result of faulty self-talk. Ironically, even a highly productive person can perceive themselves as underachieving. Learning to have a rational view of your life and personal productivity will help you conquer the perception of underachievement.

THINGS TO KNOW ▲

The perception of underachievement is a part of self-disappointment. While excessive disappointment (as seen on the **Disappointment Scale**) is largely related to disappointment with others, underachievement is related to disappointment with ourselves and what we view as our shortcomings and mistakes.

Underachievers perceive they are failing to accomplish what they set out to do with their lives. They feel frustrated that they are not achieving at their “ideal” level. For example, a highly “successful” insurance person, who reached all her goals and was the most successful person in her agency, perceived that she was an underachiever. Why? Because she had set herself up for failure. Her expectations for herself were extremely unrealistic and too high. Changing them made a difference in her stress levels and how she felt.

The perception of underachievement, whether expressed in statements or simply just thought in your mind, is directly related to your concept of what you think you should be achieving.

THINGS TO DO ▲

Many of the concepts and ideas expressed in the **Disappointment Scale** section apply to those who are

chronically feeling that they are underachieving. These concepts are not repeated here. (Review “What to Know” and “What To Do” in the **Disappointment Scale** section).

■ FACT OR FANTASY?

Underachievement is a relative concept, which means that you are accomplishing less than you expected. First, determine if there is a sound and rational basis for your underachievement. You may be correct that you have the capability and skill to achieve more. If you only occasionally fail to meet your own expectations, then look more closely at what is preventing you from doing what you want.

If you frequently fail to meet your expectations, ask yourself, “Did I really miss the mark? Did I truly fail at what I set out to do?” Take a different perspective. Perhaps there are levels of success to reaching your goal. Avoid thinking of success as all or nothing. Consider that satisfaction in life may come from a quest for constant improvement and not the actual achievement of a goal alone. Achieving a goal is good, but you will always look back at the process of reaching that goal as the most satisfying part—the quest!

People fail every day. Most people come very close to succeeding and miss the “mark” by only a little. Only underachievers interpret this as failure.

Evaluate your situation very carefully. If your



CONTRACT FOR CHANGE

The Contract For Change Form is your personal commitment to making a positive change toward stressmastery. To complete this **Contract**, review the **Seven Stress Warning Signs Section** and select one area to work on. By completing this contract **you** are agreeing that this area is in need of growth and change and that you will do something to about it.

STEP 1: From the Previous Section, Select the Risk Area to Work on:

If you scored HIGH or MEDIUM on any of the **Seven Stress Warning Signs Scales**, it is recommended that you focus on the one area of greatest concern to you at this time. Other areas can be worked on, but we have found that it is better to make small changes in a critical area than to attempt to do too many things. The key to effective change is to get some initial positive results. Stressmastery is a lifelong process for all of us. **Be patient. Work hard. Results will follow.**

STEP 2: Identify, Two or Three Things You Will Change:

Following are the behaviors, thoughts, or attitudes which I will change (be positive).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 3: List Two Things That Could Stop or Prevent You From Being Successful:

(Some barriers are: other people, things, attitudes, lack of knowledge, lack of commitment, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____

STEP 4: I Will do the Following to Overcome These Barriers:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 5: Assess Your Commitment:

My level of commitment to change is (circle one):

HIGH

MED

LOW

STEP 6: Time Allocation:

I will allow myself _____ months to achieve a reasonable level of success.

STEP 7: Commitment to Change:

I COMMIT to accomplish this goal!

YOUR SIGNATURE

DATE

IMPORTANT: Copy and share this contract with another person as soon as possible. Post on your refrigerator, bathroom mirror, or office wall! Let others help you to be accountable for your change. Remember, a secret goal is rarely achieved.