



Every change in our life, the good and the tough, the big and the little, are stressful and mid-life brings its fair share!

In this simple test you can explore the accumulation of harmful stress in your life, the possible affects on your health and nine ways to reduce it.

Back in 1967 Holmes and Rahe devised a scale*. It rates the most common causes of stress in a person's life on a scale 1-100. They examined the medical records of 5000 patients that had recently suffered illnesses. They then asked the patients whether they had experienced any life events preceding the illness. Patients were then asked to rate the events with a score.

According to their statistical prediction model, a score of 150 or less means a relatively low (about 30%) probability of stress-related illness (including heart attack, cancer, stroke, etc.) A score of 151 to 299 implies a 50% probability and a score of 300 or above implies an 80% probability of experiencing a health change - usually a negative change.

While this approach is obviously a simplification of complex situations, using Life Change Units (LCUs) can give you a useful estimate of how stress may affect your health.

Finally, here is a test you don't want a high score on!

Scroll through the list of life events below, adding up the LCUs numbers located after events that you have experienced in the last year:

Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation from mate	65
Detention in jail, other institution	63
Death of a close family member	63
Major personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Fired from work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Major change in the health or behaviour of a family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sexual difficulties	39
Gaining a new family member (e.g., through birth, adoption, etc.)	39
Major business re-adjustment (e.g., merger, reorganization, bankruptcy)	39
Major change in financial status	38
Death of close friend	37
Change to different line of work	36
Major change in the number of arguments with spouse	35
Taking out a mortgage or loan for a major purchase	31
Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan	30
Major change in responsibilities at work	29
Son or daughter leaving home (e.g., marriage, attending college)	29
Trouble with In-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	28
Spouse beginning or ceasing to work outside the home	26

Beginning or ceasing formal schooling	26
Major change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits (dress, manners, associations, etc.)	24
Trouble with boss	23
Major change in working hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation	19
Major change in church activities (a lot more or less than usual)	19
Major change in social activities (clubs, dancing, movies, visiting)	18
Taking out a mortgage or loan for a lesser purchase (e.g., for a car, TV, Freeze, etc.)	17
Major changes in sleeping habits	16
Major change in the number of family get-togethers	15
Major change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Christmas season	12
Minor violations of the law (e.g., traffic tickets, etc.)	11

Total number of LCU's

Below 150 - 35% chance of illness or accident within 2 years

Between 150 - 300 - 51% chance of illness or accident

Over 300 - 80% chance of illness or accident

Please remember these predictions are not absolute. Health changes are the result of many different factors, including how significant those life events are to you, your personal capacity to cope with change, and the support available to you through family, work and friends. Nevertheless, taking this quiz can give you some insight into potential risks to your health and well being.

What was your score? Has this questionnaire helped you in any way? Has it relieved you of stress or created more?

Where you are in possible danger of suffering the ill effects of life crises, try to minimise the disturbance to your life. If, for example, you have lost someone close to you, it's worth avoiding changing jobs.

If you have a high score, or know that you will have a high score in the future, it may be worth pre-empting any problems by adopting stress management strategies now.

Nine ways of reducing stress

1. Understanding what you find particularly stressful and working out ways to decrease or minimise it.
2. Practising assertiveness.
3. Developing good time management skills.
4. Learning to relax on a regular basis.
5. Having a healthy diet.
6. Regular physical exercise.
7. Having fun and allowing yourself to enjoy life!
8. Expressing your emotions clearly and safely.
9. Getting support, physically, emotionally and spiritually when you need it.

Bottom line

Mid-life is an important time to look after yourself by making self-care a priority.

With love

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*The Holmes-Rahe Life Events Rating scale was first published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 1967. It was researched and authored by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe.