

Child's Name _____ Age _____ Grade _____
 Parent's Name _____
 Primary Address and Phone # _____

Instructions

The *Children's Stress Scale* consists of two parts, stress factors and coping mechanisms. If you feel, because of specific factors unique to each child, that a statement should be rated higher or lower, you should feel free to add or subtract five points from that statement. Note adjustments in the column at the right with either a plus or minus sign.

Since it is impossible to list every situation or factor that affect a child's life, the adult filling out this scale should add additional statements as he/she sees fit under the section marked *Other Stress Factors*.

Give each Stress Factor a numerical value according to the following scale and add that number into the total Stress Score:

- 30 Traumatic stress factors
- 25 Highly significant, but not necessarily traumatic stress
- 20 Significant stress factors which may vary according to individual circumstances
- 15 Normal, but intense stress in the child's life or the family
- 10 Normal, but cumulative stress in the child's life
- 5 Low, persistent stress factors

Give each additional Coping Mechanism a score according to the following scale and add that number into the total Coping Mechanism Score:

- 4 Inner Resources
- 3 Family
- 2 Community

Part I: Identifying Stress Factors

Circle the number next to the statements below that describe the child you are rating.

Score		Adjustments (+ or - 5 pts)
30	The child's parents have been separated/divorced for a period of less than one year.	_____
30	The child's parents are actively fighting over a significant issue in the child's life (this could be a custody or visitation issue, but it could also include such issues as where to go to school, a discipline issue, etc.).	_____
30	A member of the child's immediate family has died within the past year (father, mother, sibling, or a significant other with whom the child spent more than ten hours a week).	_____
30	The child has experienced a natural disaster within the past 12 months, including: fire, earthquake, flooding, and so on.	_____
30	The child frequently uses "drugs" including alcohol, illegal substances, as well as cigarette and the abuse of vitamins, diet pills, and so on.	_____
25	The child's family has moved more than 100 miles away.	_____
25	The child has had to switch schools.	_____
25	The child has experienced a recent separation, with limited contact, from one parent due to military duty, job relocation, or other external factors.	_____
25	One or both of the child's parents has remarried within the past year (this situation can be more stressful depending on many factors including the presence of step-siblings, the child's relationship with the step-parent, and so on).	_____
25	The child has experienced a prolonged illness (more than 1 month) and/or hospitalization.	_____
20	The child <i>occasionally</i> uses "drugs" including alcohol and illegal substances, as well as cigarette and the abuse of vitamins, diet pills, and so on.	_____
20	The family income has been substantially reduced in the past six months.	_____

- 20 The child is experiencing a prolonged period of difficulties in school. _____
- 20 The child is experiencing significant problems with his/her peers, including, but not limited to: prolonged teasing or harassment, social ostracism, aggression to or from peers, etc. _____
- 20 The child perceives that he/she is significantly different than his/her close peers (due to physical differences, ethnic or racial differences, language differences, learning differences, and so on). _____
- 20 One or more of a child's parents has a significant or chronic physical or mental illness. _____
- 15 The parents of a child are experiencing prolonged and obvious problems including: frequent quarreling, problems at work, problems with relatives, health-related problems, etc. _____
- 15 The child is entering a new school as part of his/her normal school career (e.g., preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, etc.) _____
- 15 The child is in a disadvantaged environment (e.g., the family's income is below the poverty line and/or the child is exposed to significant social problems). _____
- 15 Expectations for the child are significantly unrealistic concerning his/her innate abilities. _____
- 10 The child is having a significant reaction to local or world events (e.g., The Persian Gulf War caused fears and anxiety in a significant number of the nation's children. Local or regional news about violence may have a similar effect on some children.). _____
- 10 The child's week is "over-scheduled," so that nearly every day he/she is running from one activity to another (a "hurried" child). _____
- 5 There is a general lack of organization and scheduling in the household. _____
- 5 The child does not have a nutritious, well-balanced diet. _____
- 5 The child is entering a new school year. _____
- 5 The child watches television and/or plays video games for more than two hours a day. _____
- 5 The child is exposed to long periods of high decibel noise. _____

Other Stress Factors (please fully describe and enter an appropriate numerical rating of 30, 25, 20, 10, or 5)

Total Score _____
 Plus or Minus Adjustments _____
 Final Stress Factors Score _____

Part II: Coping Mechanisms

Circle the numbers by the statements that accurately describe the child whom you are rating from an age-appropriate perspective.

Score

Adjustments
(+ or - 5 pts)

Inner Resources:

- 4 The child readily communicates his/her feelings. _____
- 4 The child has hobbies or interests (other than school work) which he/she spends time with each week. _____
- 4 The child has excellent study and organizational skills. _____
- 4 The child actively seeks out adult help when needed. _____

- 4 The child actively seeks out peer help for support when needed. _____
- 4 The child has a resilient personality and even-tempered disposition. _____
- 4 The child adapts particularly well to transitions. _____
- 4 The child has an exceptional striving towards independence. _____

Family:

- 3 The child has specific time each week to spend with one or both parents. _____
- 3 The child sees his/her extended family (aunt/uncle, cousins, grandparents, etc.) at least once a week. _____
- 3 The child has a close relationship with one or more siblings. _____
- 3 The family has weekly "rituals" of events that it does as a unit (e.g., a religious ritual, playing a game every Friday night, etc.). _____
- 3 The family has specific and regularly-scheduled meetings to talk about family issues and concerns. _____
- 3 The child has regularly-scheduled chores or other responsibilities. _____
- 3 The child lives in an "organized household" where events are planned and scheduled, TV time is monitored, meals occur at a regular time, etc. _____

Community:

- 2 The child has one "best friend," with whom he/she spends some time almost every day. _____
- 2 The child has a group of friends with whom he/she shares activities at least once a week. _____
- 2 The child participates regularly in a religious school or service. _____
- 2 The child experiences frequent success in school. _____
- 2 The child has frequent successful experiences in the community (e.g. sports, clubs, etc.). _____

Other Coping Mechanisms (please fully describe and enter an appropriate numerical rating):

Total Coping Score _____

Scoring

To obtain a combined total score, you should subtract the score for Part II (Coping Mechanisms) from the score for Part I (Stress Factors). You should then note any extenuating factors.

Total Stress Score: _____ = (Stress Score _____ - Coping Score _____)

Interpretation

Because this scale has not yet been "normed" on a large sample, the total stress score should be interpreted cautiously. Generally, we believe that a score of 20-30 should be a cause for concern, and a score above 30 should suggest immediate intervention to help a child deal with stress.

No matter what the score, it is important to help the child find ways to reduce stress in his/her life and seek developmentally appropriate ways to handle the stresses that cannot be avoided or controlled.