

# **Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program Workbook**

William McCracken, LCSW, CADAC, ICADC, NBCCH

## HOMEWORK

### WEEK ONE OF THE STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Congratulations on completing your first class in the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program! You have taken a first step toward moving “Upstream” in the management of your health and well-being.

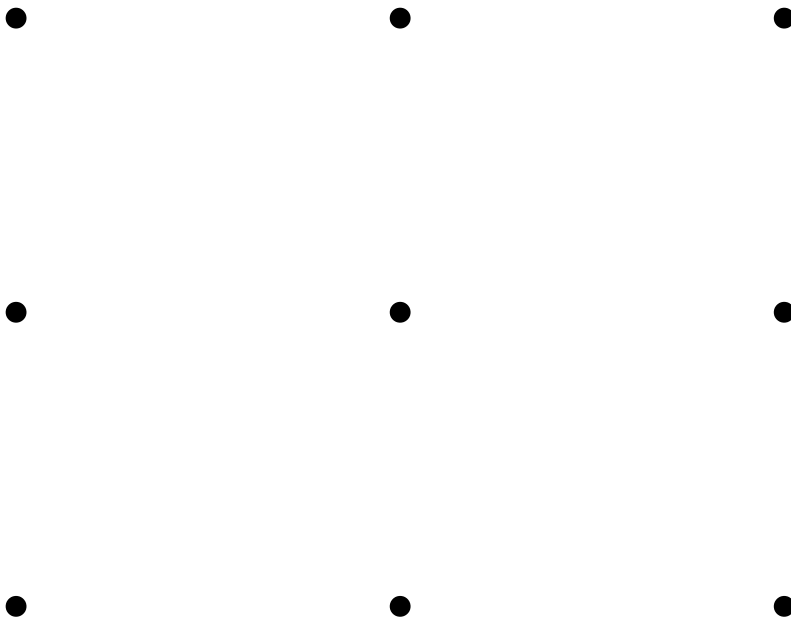
This week I am asking you to do several activities that will deepen your mindfulness practice and help you continue on this pathway. Those activities are:

1. Find a quiet place where you will be uninterrupted for about 30 minutes and listen to the recording entitled “Body Scan Meditation.” Listen to this recording and follow its instructions on six or seven days between today and our next meeting.
2. In your workbook, complete the 9-Dots exercise. Remember to think “outside the box” on this one.
3. In your workbook, read the “Upstream/Downstream” fable. Read this early in the week between our meetings and, perhaps, read it a few more times throughout the week.
4. Eat at least one meal mindfully (with “raisin-mind”) this week.

Best wishes for a peaceful week. See you next week.

## NINE DOTS

**CONNECT UP ALL THESE DOTS WITH FOUR STRAIGHT LINES WITHOUT LIFTING THE PENCIL, AND WITHOUT RETRACING OVER ANY OF THE LINES.**



## A CONTEMPORARY FABLE

### UPSTREAM/DOWNSTREAM

It was many years ago that the villagers of Downstream recall spotting the first body in the river. Some old timers remember how Spartan were the facilities and procedures for managing that sort of thing. Sometimes, they say, it would take hours to pull 10 people from the river, and even then only a few would survive.

Though the number of victims in the river has increased greatly in recent years, the good folks of Downstream have responded admirably to the challenge. Their rescue system is clearly second to none: most people discovered in the swirling waters are reached within 20 minutes – many less than 10. Only a small number drown each day before help arrives – a big improvement from the way it used to be.

Talk to the people of Downstream and they'll speak with pride about the new hospital by the edge of the waters, the flotilla of rescue boats ready for service at a moment's notice, the comprehensive health plans for coordinating all the manpower involved, and the large numbers of highly trained and dedicated swimmers always ready to risk their lives to save victims from the raging currents. Sure it costs a lot but, say the Downstreamers, what else can decent people do except to provide whatever is necessary when human lives are at stake.

Oh, a few people in Downstream have raised the question now and again, but most folks show little interest in what's happening Upstream. It seems there's so much to do to help those in the river that nobody's got time to check how all those bodies are getting there in the first place. That's the way things are, sometimes.

Donald Ardell: High Level Wellness: An Alternative to Doctors, Drugs and Disease



What do YOU see?

## HOMEWORK

### WEEK TWO OF THE STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Your second week of mindfulness practice will begin to introduce you to everyday mindfulness. This requires even more commitment to daily practice in order to facilitate mindful awareness within the context of your routine activities.

This week's activities include the following;

1. Continue finding that quiet place to listen to the "Body Scan Meditation." Listen to this recording and follow its instructions on six or seven days between today and our next meeting.
2. Find 10 – 15 minutes each day to find a quiet spot, where you will be uninterrupted, to practice sitting meditation. Remember that in sitting meditation one directs one's attention to the breath, without judging oneself when the natural phenomenon of "wandering mind" sets in, but simply escorting one's attention back to the breath.
3. In your workbook, fill out the pleasant events calendar each day, with one entry per day.
4. Practice everyday mindfulness by bringing mindfulness to your everyday activities. You might try mindfulness of washing dishes, brushing teeth, taking out the garbage, taking a shower, reading to the kids, and/or eating. Remember, mindfulness is established the moment you bring your attention to your breath and then expand that attention to whatever activity you are doing.

Best wishes for a peaceful week. See you next week.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

## PLEASANT EVENTS

<b>What was the experience?</b>	<b>Were you aware of the pleasant feelings <u>while</u> the event was happening?</b>	<b>How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?</b>	<b>What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?</b>	<b>What thoughts are in your mind now as you write about this event?</b>
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

## HOMEWORK

### WEEK THREE OF THE STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Your third week of mindfulness practice will introduce a new level of working with your body and its limits, mindful Taoist yoga. Many of us are reluctant to exercise because we think it requires special clothes, special places, and lots of time that we don't have. But yoga is a practice that can be done with little or no equipment, pretty much anywhere, only requiring that your clothing be somewhat loose and comfortable.

The word "yoga" means "yoke" in Sanskrit, and implies a harnessing together and a unifying of body and mind. Yoga is a form of meditation, and when done regularly is an excellent mind/body discipline for people who wish to move towards greater levels of health.

Remember to do your yoga postures mindfully and with awareness of breathing. Be gentle, find your limits and explore them, not pushing beyond them. Honor your body and the messages it gives you about when to stop and when to avoid a posture because of your particular condition. And remember to let go of your self-judgment and striving; just be aware of what you can do with a deep spirit of acceptance and self-honoring.

Here is what I'd like you to do this week:

1. Alternate your daily practice between the Body Scan and Yoga #1 recordings.
2. Once again find 10 – 15 minutes each day to find a quiet spot, where you will be uninterrupted, to practice sitting meditation.
3. In your workbook, fill out the unpleasant events calendar each day, with one entry per day.
4. Continue to practice everyday mindfulness by "capturing" moments every day and noticing those times when you go on "automatic pilot." Try to become aware of what circumstances pull you away from the present moment, what it is that seems to pull you off center, that maybe you don't want to look at.

Best wishes for a peaceful week. See you next week.



## UNPLEASANT EVENTS

<b>What was the experience?</b>	<b>Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings <u>while</u> the event was happening?</b>	<b>How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?</b>	<b>What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?</b>	<b>What thoughts are in your mind now as you write about this event?</b>
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

## HOMEWORK

### WEEK FOUR OF THE STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

This is your week to begin to tie together the relationship between your style of relating to Stressors (know your style of Primary Appraisal and Secondary Appraisal) and your experience of Stress in your body/mind. Remember, you have SOME capacity to manage the level of Stressors to which you are exposed, but you have GREAT capacity to manage your relationship to those stressors. Management of your body's Stress Response includes mindfulness of your body's Stress level when there is not a Stressor immediately present and mindfulness of whether you React or Respond to a Stressor when it IS immediately present.

Here is what I'd like you to do this week:

1. Once again, alternate your daily practice between the Body Scan and Yoga.
2. Once again make time each day to find a quiet spot, where you will be uninterrupted, to practice sitting meditation, focusing on Awareness of Breath, bodily sensations, and your body as a whole. Try to find about 20 minutes each day for this practice.
3. Review the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, perhaps sharing your observations with a trusted person.
4. Be aware of your stress reactions during the week, without trying to change them in any way. Tune in to any feelings of being "stuck," or any feelings of blocking, numbing, or shutting off to the moment when stress happens this week.

Best wishes for a peaceful week. See you next week.

## WHAT IS STRESS?

*“Stress is the nonspecific response of the organism to any pressure or demand.”*

*“A Stressor is any stimulus, whether in the external or internal environment, that produces the body’s stress response.”*

*“For example: An overwhelming stress response (caused by prolonged starvation, worry, fatigue, or cold) can break down the body’s protective mechanisms. This is true both of adaptation which depends on chemical immunity and of that due to inflammatory barricades. It is for this reason that so many maladies tend to become rampant during wars and famines. If a microbe is in or around us all the time and yet causes no disease until we are exposed to a stress, what is the “cause” of our illness, the microbe or the stress? I think both are – and equally so. In most instances, disease is due neither to the germ as such, nor to our adaptive reactions as such, but to the inadequacy of our reactions against the germ.”*

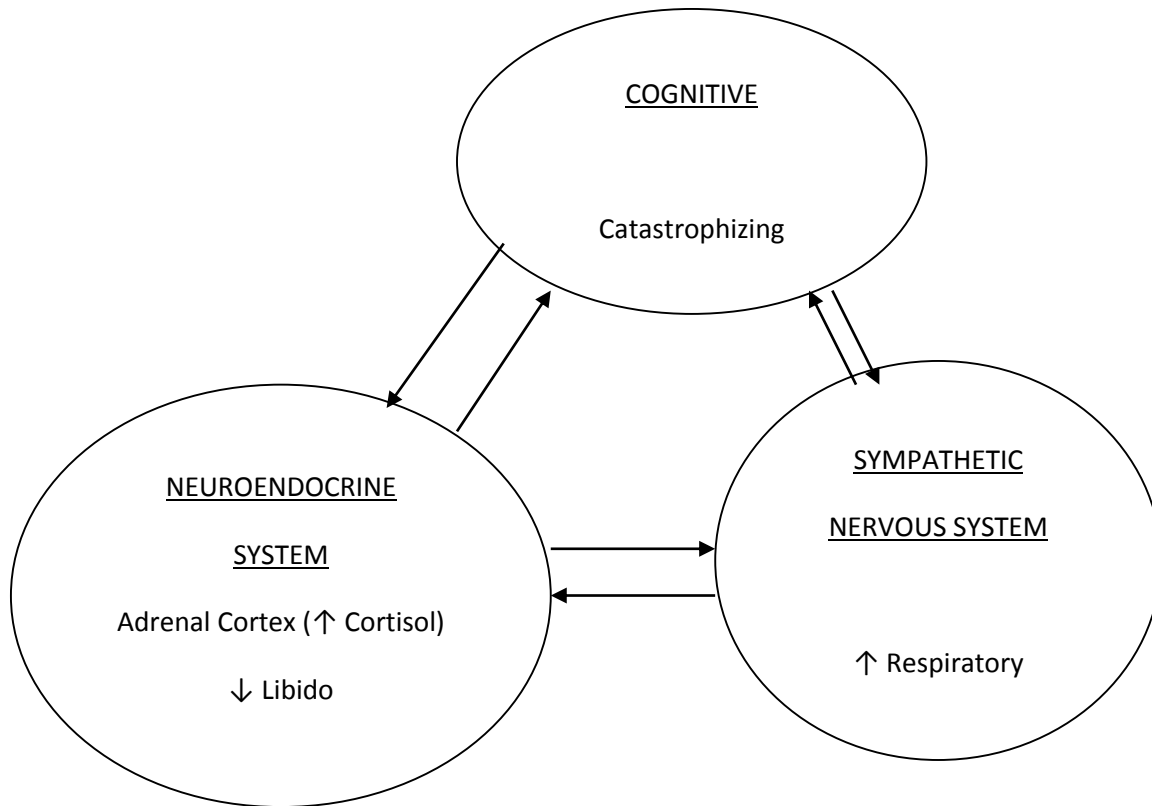
– Dr. Hans Selye

Exposure to Stressors → Stress Response (release of Cortisol)

Stress Response = ↑ Blood Pressure  
↑ Respiration Rate  
↑ Muscular Tensing  
↑ “Voiding” Response (bowels & bladder)

↓ Sleep  
↓ Gastrointestinal Activity  
↓ Immune System Activity  
↓ Libido

## HOW THE STRESS RESPONSE PERPETUATES



Chronic Hypervigilance (Cognitive) → Chronic Cortisol Release (Neuroendocrine System)

Chronic Cortisol Release → Chronic Bodily Responsiveness (Sympathetic Nervous System)

FIGURE 9

# THE STRESS-REACTION CYCLE

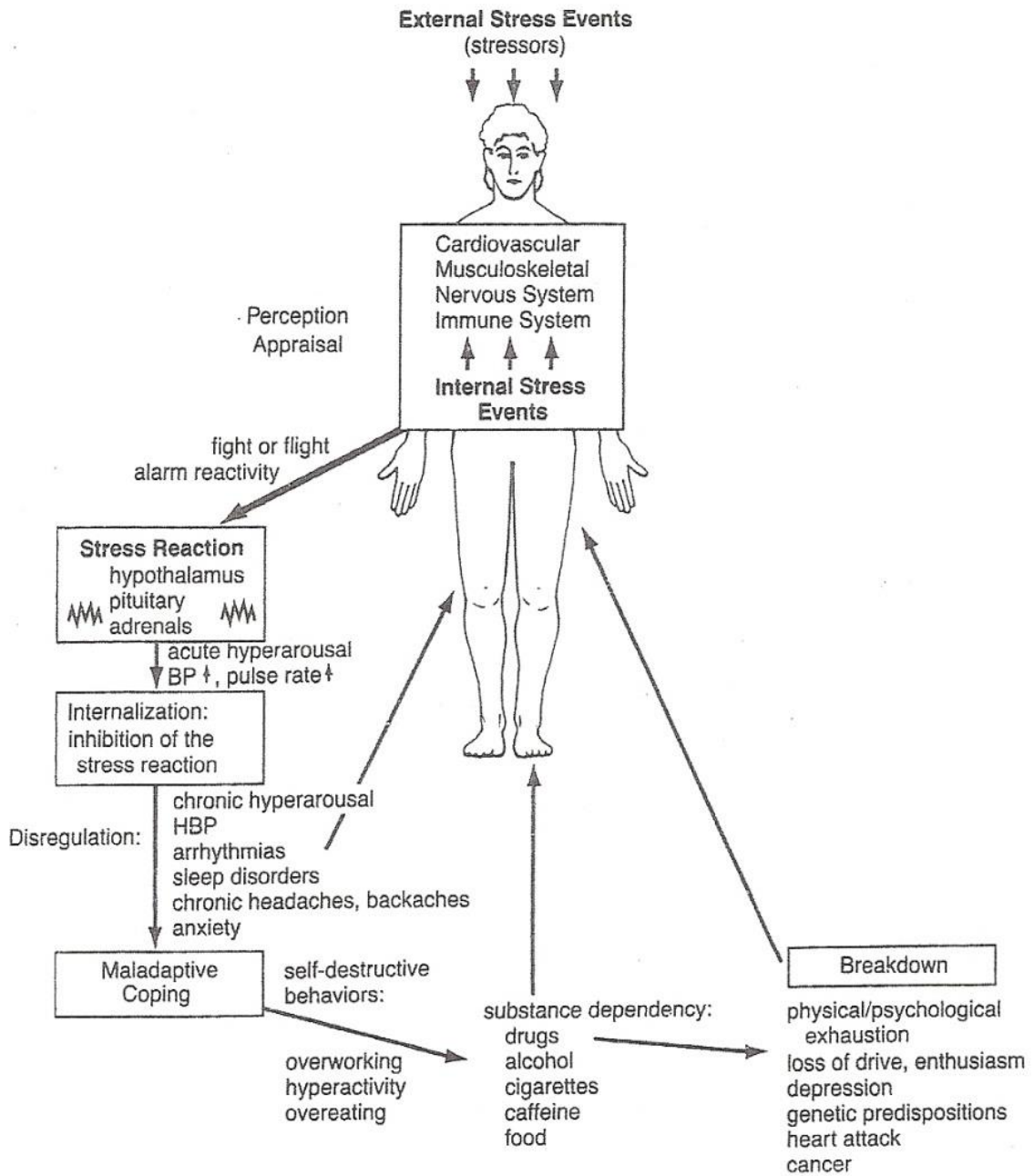
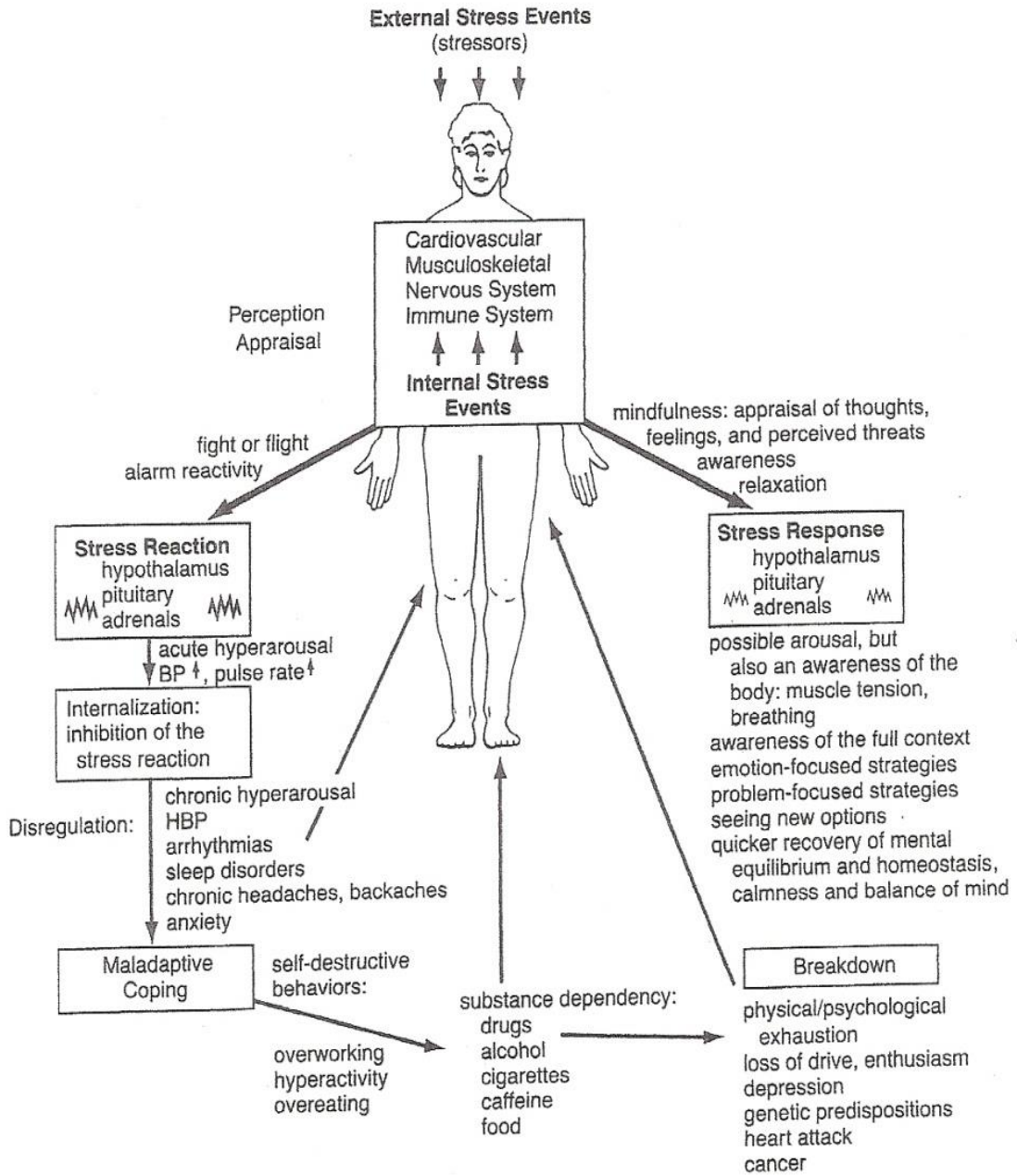


FIGURE 10

## COPING WITH STRESS: RESPONDING VS. REACTING



## HOW OUR APPRAISALS HELP/HINDER OUR COPING WITH STRESS

Primary Appraisal = The individual's judgment of the Stressor's relevance to his or her own well-being.

Secondary Appraisal = The individual's judgment of what resources he or she has to cope with the Stressor.

Do you “water the seeds of suffering” by either

Over-judging the relevance of the Stressor?

Or

Under-judging your resources to cope with the Stressor?

Do you “water the seeds of suffering” by REACTING instead of RESPONDING?

ARE YOU MINDFULLY AWARE, IN THE PRESENT MOMENT, OF YOUR  
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY APPRAISALS?

ATTENTIONAL CONTROL → EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

## Social Readjustment Rating Scale

By Thomas Holmes & Richard Rahe, University of Washington School of Medicine

Simply add up the values for all of the listed life events that have occurred to you within the past year. If a particular event has happened to you more than once within the last 12 months, multiply the value by the number of occurrences. Enter your value total at the end of the list.

	LIFE EVENT	VALUE
1	Death of Spouse	100
2	Divorce	73
3	Marital Separation	65
4	Jail	63
5	Death of Close Family Member	63
6	Personal Injury or Illness	53
7	Marriage	50
8	Fired at Work	47
9	Marital Reconciliation	45
10	Retirement	45
11	Change in Health of Family Member	44
12	Pregnancy	40
13	Sex Difficulties	39
14	Gain of New Family Member	39
15	Business Readjustment	39
16	Change In Financial State	38
17	Death of Close Friend	37
18	Change To A Different Line Of Work	39
19	Change In Number of Arguments With Spouse	35
20	Mortgage over \$40,000.00	31
21	Foreclosure of Mortgage or Loan	30
22	Change In Responsibilities at Work	29
23	Son or Daughter Leaving Home	29
24	Trouble With In-Laws	29
25	Outstanding Personal Achievement	28
26	Spouse Begins or Stops Work	26
27	Begin or End School	26
28	Change Living Conditions	25
29	Revision of Personal Habits	24
30	Trouble With Boss	23
31	Change In Work Hours or Conditions	20
32	Change In Residence	20
33	Change In Schools	20
34	Change In Recreation	19
35	Change In Church Activities	19
36	Change In Social Activities	18
37	Mortgage or Loan of Less Than \$40,000.00	17



38	Change In The # of Family Get-Togethers	15
39	Change In Sleeping Habits	15
40	Change In Eating Habits	15
41	Single Person Living Alone	*
42	Other – Describe	*
Total		

\* Give appropriate points to yourself

If your score is 300 or more, statistically you stand an almost 80% chance of getting sick in the near future. If you score is 150 to 299, the chances are about 50%. At less than 150, about 30%. This scale seems to suggest that change in one's life requires an effort to adapt and then an effort to regain stability.

## HOMEWORK

### WEEK FIVE OF THE STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

This week brings a new set of lessons in mindfulness, with emphasis on mindfulness during communications, whether difficult or easy. You'll be doing the full sitting meditation this week, alternating with either yoga or body scanning, as you prefer. What is essential is that you begin to practice moment-to-moment awareness in your social interactions, as you become fully present in the course of a conversation. Just practice each day, and take each moment as a new beginning, a fresh opportunity to be fully engaged, fully alive.

Here is what I'd like you to do this week:

1. Alternate the Sitting Meditation, with either the Body Scanning or Yoga #1.
2. Keep finding times during the day, no matter how long or short, to stop, become still, and drop in on the moment with Awareness of Breath.
3. Read the material describing passive, assertive, and aggressive behaviors, answering the questions that accompany this material. Consider your styles in dealing with people, and use your mindfulness skills to notice how you react to people, exploring options for responding with greater mindfulness and creativity. Practice opening up space for responding in the present moment, using breath to slow things down.
4. Fill out the Communications Exercises calendar daily. Use this exercise to increase your awareness of your communication style, bringing awareness to the moment of communication.

Best wishes for a peaceful week.

## Passive

You avoid saying what you want, think, or feel. If you do, you say them in such a way that you put yourself down. Apologetic words with hidden meanings are frequent. A smokescreen of vague words or silence, “I know...,” “Well...,” “I mean...,” “I guess...,” and “I’m sorry...” You allow others to choose for you.

You use actions instead of words. You hope someone will guess what you want. You look as if you don’t mean what you say. Your voice is weak, hesitant, and soft. You whisper in a monotone. Your eyes are to the side or downcast. You nod your head to almost anything anyone says. You sit or stand as far away as you can from the other person. You don’t know what to do with your hands and they are trembling and clammy. You look uncomfortable, shuffle, and are tense or inhibited.

Your Goal: To please, to be liked.

You feel anxious, ignored, hurt, manipulated, and disappointed with yourself. You’re often angry and resentful later.

## Assertive

You say what you honestly want, think, and feel in direct and helpful ways. You make your own choices. You communicate with tact and humor. You use “I” statements. Your words are clear and well chosen.

You listen closely. Your manner is calm and assured. You communicate caring and strength. Your voice is firm, warm, and expressive. You look directly at the other person, but you don’t stare. You face the person. Your hands are relaxed. You hold your head erect and you lean toward the other person. You have a relaxed expression.

Your Goal: To communicate, to be respected.

You feel confident and successful. You feel good about yourself at that time and later. You feel in control, you have self respect and you are goal oriented.

## Aggressive

You say what you want, think, and feel, but at the expense of others. You use “loaded words” and “you” statements that label and blame. You are full of threats and accusations and apply one-upmanship.

You make an exaggerated show of strength. You are flippant. You have an air of superiority. Your voice is tense, loud, cold or demanding. You are “deadly quiet.” Your eyes are narrow, cold, and staring. You almost see through the other people. You take a macho fight stance.

Your hands are on your hips and you are inches from the other people. Your hands are in fists or your fingers are pointed at the other person.

Your Goal: To dominate or humiliate.

You feel self-righteous, controlling, and superior. Sometimes you feel embarrassed or selfish later.

## HOMEWORK

### WEEK SIX OF THE STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Having entered deeply into your interior silence, it is time to become adept at bringing this silence into your everyday living. Stressors are a constant; we cannot change that reality, nor should we. Our issue of concern is learning to become responders rather than reactors to stressors. As responders we can learn to manage our stress response. Here are some things to do this week to continue to grow in this skillfulness.

1. Continue to alternate the Sitting Meditation with either the Body Scanning or Yoga #2.
2. As always, keep finding times during the day, no matter how long or short, to stop, become still, and drop in on the moment with Awareness of Breath.
3. Pay close attention to what you put into your body and mind this week. Notice the foods you choose and how they affect you. Eat those foods mindfully. Also notice the stream of stressors that we absorb through all of our senses, particularly our eyes, ears, and noses. We live on a steady diet of stressors from television, newspapers, air pollution etc. It's not that these are bad things, but they do provoke the stress reaction in us. Notice how you are affected, and begin to experience your skillfulness as a responder to stressors.

Best wishes for a peaceful week. See you next week.