

What it is

A self-assessment of people's stress-creating mindsets and habits

What it can do

This tool can assist people to:

- o Identify mindsets and habits that may contribute to unwanted stress.
- o Discern where urgency is a default habit or a considered response to real pressure.
- o Create motivation to change stress-inducing habits.
- o Create a baseline against which to measure progress in reducing stress.

How it works

Rate your responses to the statements in the assessment that follows using the scale below:

0	1	2	3	4
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

Option for use in group settings:

- o After individuals have completed self-scoring, with some fanfare, ask groups to stand in the following order:
 - Those with scores of 30 or less.
 - Those with scores of 31-40
 - Those with scores of 41-50
 - Those with score of over 50

Additional considerations

NOTE: This exercise leads naturally into self-reflection or discussions about what changes, if any, people wish to make in these mindsets and habits.

A good follow-up exercise is *Managing Your Workload: The Load Reduction Formula*.

Circle the number that best represents your normal behavior or attitude using this 1-4 scale:

- | | 0
Never | 1
Seldom | 2
Sometimes | 3
Often | 4
Always |
|----------|--|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | I tend to put myself under pressure from self-imposed deadlines when I work. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2 | I blame the rush and push of external things for my failure to spend deep, introspective time with myself. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | I get frustrated by the slowness of people and things around me and/or I feel impatient waiting, standing in line, etc. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4 | I feel guilty when I take time off from work. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | I seem to be in a hurry to get things done or rushing between places and events. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 | I get irritated when I'm interrupted and/or find myself pushing people away so I can finish what I'm doing. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7 | I feel anxious when I'm out of touch with the office. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8 | I find myself preoccupied with one thing when I'm doing something else. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9 | There's something attractive about the intensity of crisis situations. | | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- 10** I find myself doing two things at once, like eating while working at my desk, or checking my e-mail while I'm talking on the telephone.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 11** I keep thinking that someday I'll be able to do what I really want.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 12** It's difficult for me to really complete things without the pressure of a deadline.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 13** I give up quality time with important people in my life to handle situations at work.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 14** I feel like I've really been productive if I've checked off a lot of items on my "to do" list.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 15** I get irritated when I or others make mistakes, or when things don't go right or get delayed.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 16** I start thinking about what I have to do at work within a few minutes of waking up.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 17** I have a hard time slowing down and relaxing when I reach the end of the work day.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 18** When something cancels or I get unexpected free time, my first thought is what work I can fill the empty space with.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 19** I have a hard time creating sacrosanct space in my life into which work doesn't intrude.
- 0 1 2 3 4
- 20** While working, I feel the pressure of all the other things I have to do that are hanging over me.
- 0 1 2 3 4

Scoring and Considerations

Step 1 Add all your scores and put the total here: _____

0-30	low urgency mind-set
30-50	high urgency mind-set
51+	urgency addiction

Step 2 Consider:

- We often confuse urgency with importance.
- Many of us become habituated to a state of chronic urgency. It can have an almost addictive quality.
- The urgency with which we move through our work and life does not translate to the results we create.

In fact, part of what creates the urgency is the lack of investment in things like strategic thinking, good planning, thoughtful prioritization, process improvement, capacity building, expanding and developing our partnerships and networks.

- It is possible to create more real results with less effort.

*There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence:
Activity and overwork.
The rush and pressure of modern life are a form,
Perhaps the most common form,
Of its innate violence.
To allow oneself to be carried away by a
multitude of conflicting concerns,
To surrender to too many demands,
To commit oneself to too many projects,
To want to help everyone in everything,
Is to succumb to violence.
The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace.
It destroys our own inner capacity for peace.
It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work.
Because it kills the root of inner wisdom
Which makes work fruitful.*

– Father Thomas Merton