

Lora Sasiela, LCSW, BCD

80 East Eleventh Street • New York, NY 10003 • 917.673.3867
13 West River Road • Rumson, NJ 07760 • 848.218.6381
www.lorasasiela.com

Stress Awareness Journal

Although we may recognize the symptoms of stress, sometimes it can be hard to identify the causes. Keeping a stress/relaxation journal will help you notice the triggers and patterns of stress symptoms, as well as the times that you find your life absent of stress. You can then use this record to make informed choices that will bring beneficial changes to your life.

- ❖ Stress can manifest itself with physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms. Below is a list of some common symptoms of stress. Check off those that you experience on a regular basis. These will be the ones you can be especially aware of as you begin to keep your stress/relaxation journal.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness/pins & needles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeplessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Palpitations/rapid pulse | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty making decisions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indigestion/heartburn | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous diarrhea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aching joints | <input type="checkbox"/> Listlessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over- or Under-eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Being without a sense of humor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive smoking or drinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiousness/fearfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skin problems | |

- ❖ Start with a blank notebook or journal. Divide each page horizontally into sections, by time segments of each day, i.e., morning, afternoon, evening; or, before work, workday, after work, etc. Choose time segments that make sense for your life. You may need separate designations for work and non-work days.
- ❖ Fill in your journal as often as you can, ideally as each stress symptom occurs and when you notice moments of serenity. Note down precisely what happened just before the symptom appeared, or what was going on to promote times of relaxation.
- ❖ At the end of the first week, review your journal. Notice any patterns regarding when you felt stressed and when you were relaxed. You may notice that you felt most under pressure when shopping – try to go to the store at a less busy time. If you felt relaxed with your children during the evenings, try to spend more time with them.
- ❖ Keep the journal for at least two weeks. Continue to record events if you feel the stress/relaxation patterns have not revealed themselves.
- ❖ Use your stress journal to guide you in making more informed decisions regarding the triggers that prompt a stress response, as well as being able to integrate more relaxation-inducing activities into your daily life.