**SPARQtools: Rethinking StressToolkit Workbook**

The questions and statements found below are part of the [*Rethinking Stress*](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress/) toolkit from [Stanford SPARQ](https://sparq.stanford.edu/), a nonprofit “do tank” that creates and shares social psychological insights with people working to improve society. The toolkit, part of [SPARQtools](http://sparqtools.org/), presents science-based activities that help people use stress to enhance their work and health.

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Email [Stanford\_SPARQ@stanford.edu](mailto:Stanford_SPARQ@stanford.edu) if you have any questions, or find us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/stanfordsparq), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StanfordSPARQ/), or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/stanford-sparq-social-psychological-answers-to-real-world-questions/). And if you'd like to keep up with SPARQ's activities, [subscribe to the team's quarterly newsletter](http://sparq.stanford.edu/newsletter).

**Questions and Statements Accompanying the Toolkit Instructions**

[**Step 1: Watch the introductory video (3 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step1)

There are no questions or statements accompanying Step 1.

[**Step 2: Watch a video on the science of stress (10 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step2)

1. Think about a time in your life when you performed at your highest level or experienced significant personal growth.

2. What fueled you to perform at your highest level? What motivated you to improve and grow?

[**Step 3: Watch a video on the power of mindset (10 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step3)

1. What is your typical mindset about stress? Examples: "stress is good for me" and "stress is bad for me."

2. What do you think is the most adaptive or useful mindset to have?

[**Step 4: Watch two videos on acknowledging stress (10 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step4)

**Step 4, Part A**:

1. What is stressing you right now? Think about something that is very real for you and that is happening right now.

2. What are your typical EMOTIONAL responses to this stress? What are the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings that you have? Examples: frustration, sadness, or wanting to get rid of stress.

3. What are your typical BEHAVIORAL responses to this stress? What actions do you take or inaction do you exhibit? Examples: arguing, eating, or avoidance.

4. What are your typical PHYSIOLOGICAL responses to this stress? What sensations and changes occur in your body? Examples: sleepiness, pounding heart, or stomach ache.

**Step 4, Part B**:

1. For the next few days, pay careful attention to your level of stress.

2. As soon as you notice stress, call it out to yourself. There is no need to avoid it. Simply acknowledge, “Oh, I am stressed right now.”

3. See how this simple act of acknowledgement affects you.

[**Step 5: Watch two short videos on welcoming stress (5 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step5)

**Step 5, Part A**:

1. Think about how you answered the Step 4 question, “What is stressing you right now?”

2. Now consider what personal values or goals are behind your stress.

3. Complete this sentence: “I am stressed about this because I care about … ”

**Step 5, Part B**:

1. For the next few days, when you notice stress, ask yourself, “Why am I feeling stress? What is important to me about this situation?”

[**Step 6: Watch a video on utilizing stress (10 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step6)

1. Think about how you answered the Step 4 questions regarding your typical responses to stress, including your emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses.

2. Now consider how you answered the Step 5 questions regarding the values and goals that are behind your stress.

3. Are your typical responses to stress helping or harming your pursuit of your values and goals?

4. What changes can you make so that experiencing stress enhances your pursuit of your values and goals, rather than inhibits it? Examples: taking three deep breaths to calm your physiological responses; telling yourself that your stress means you are excited and ready for a challenge, rather than scared or unprepared.

5. What opportunities or insights does experiencing this stress give you? Examples: stressful interactions with your professor or boss are also opportunities to learn how to communicate with more powerful people; an argument with your romantic partner is also an opportunity to learn more about your partner's wants and needs.

[**Step 7: Watch four short videos on integrating and applying what you have learned (15 minutes)**](http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step7)

**Step 7, Part A**:

1. What is your daily anchor going to be? Examples: brushing your teeth, using your keys, or seeing a photograph on your desk.

2. Mark your anchor on your calendar every day for the next month.

3. During your anchor interaction, recall the stress-is-enhancing mindset and review the three steps to rethinking stress:

• Acknowledge stress

• Welcome stress

• Utilize stress

*Examples*:

• “I use my car and house keys each day as my anchor. When I have them in my hand I remind myself I have choice in how I react to the stresses of the day. I find it very helpful. On very bad days, I leave a set of keys on my desk as a reminder all day.”

• “Every time I feel overwhelmed at work, I focus on the anchor, which is a picture of my family, and I feel a lot better.”

**Step 7, Part B**:

Which of your stress responses will you use as a trigger to use the three steps and ask, “Is the best way to achieve my goals?”

*Examples*:

• “Every time I feel my racing heartbeat, I plan to think about my children. It helps remind me that any amount of stress will not change the dynamic with the most important things in my life.”

• “I notice that I get really short with people and yell at them when I start to feel stressed. Now I see the urge to yell as a signal that I am stressed but that I am probably stressed for a good reason so I redirect that energy to getting the job done.”

• “I tend to eat a lot when I am stressed out. Now, when I feel the urge to splurge, I stop to think about what I might be stressed about and what emotions I may be avoiding. Just that awareness has helped.”