

Optimal Health Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to help you assess how well you are balancing the various elements in your life. The basis of the process is that we have 5 “dimensions” which contribute to our overall well-being – and the names we have given them are: physical; emotional; mental/intellectual; social and spiritual.

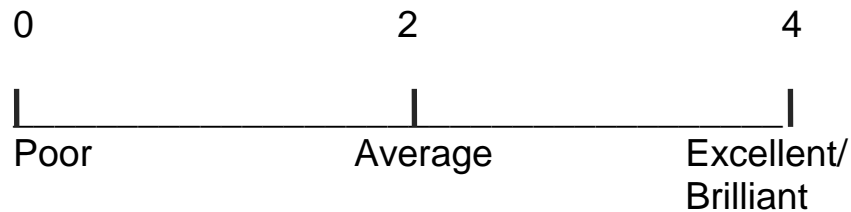
- The physical dimension, as the name suggests, is about fitness, general health and looking after yourself in these areas.
- The emotional factor concerns how well you feel you are able to handle yourself, whether controlling your emotions or expressing them.
- Mental or intellectual is what is happening to keep your brain stimulated and alive – keeping yourself motivated and wanting to be open to learn and develop.
- Your social dimension is about your network of friends and family – who you can mix and relax with, and whether you can manage the range and variety of commitments.
- The spiritual dimension may or may not include any religious beliefs you have. It is your sense of “I am” or when you feel part of some bigger element.

The principle is that the better balanced we are with these – and the stronger each dimension – the more stress-resistant we are as we are equipped to handle the various pressures which occur. In short, they provide for our *“Optimal Health”*.

The “Pressure Management Model”, on page 12, shows how we receive these external pressures and then respond to them. The main sources of pressure can be categorised under two headings – either change (especially where it is outside our control) or relationships (as in any inter-personal interaction). Our response to these is influenced by the potential impact on our values and our beliefs – and whether limiting or empowering. We then follow the process – and our ability to handle these pressures will either be a positive one, where we consider them as a challenge and respond accordingly or a negative reaction. This is what most people think of as “stress” – with the various behaviours and feelings that we associate with that word! A primary influence of your response is in the “foundations” of the model: your overall sense of fulfilment – or purpose – and the strength and balance of your Optimal Health Dimensions.

You can use the questionnaire in various ways. Score each of the Dimensions and think what it has told you – maybe using the summary at the end. Assess yourself on any one Dimension and set specific action plans to improve it. Alternatively, you can work through the activities for each of the Dimensions and develop your own plan to improve things for yourself.

For each of the Dimensions of the questionnaire rate how you have been recently, using the scale below. (Recently is whatever definition seems right for you.)



Physical

- My energy levels are _____
 - I am maintaining regular eating habits _____
 - I am having a balanced diet _____
 - I am not experiencing pains, headaches, tension _____
 - I take regular exercise _____
 - I am getting enough good quality sleep _____
 - I am having enough relaxation time _____
 - I am free from illnesses such as colds or flu _____
 - I am keeping to a controlled level of alcohol intake _____
 - My overall health/well-being is _____
- Total** _____

Emotional

- I generally have a positive outlook on life _____
 - I have kept a low level of irritability or bad temper _____
 - I have been willing to face up to, and deal, with problems _____
 - I have a sense of feeling valued _____
 - I am able to be open with others _____
 - I rate my general level of humour and enjoyment as _____
 - I generally feel calm and relaxed _____
 - I allow myself to experience the whole range of emotions _____
 - I have a sense of security and trust with others _____
 - My level of feeling good about myself is _____
- Total** _____

Mental/Intellectual

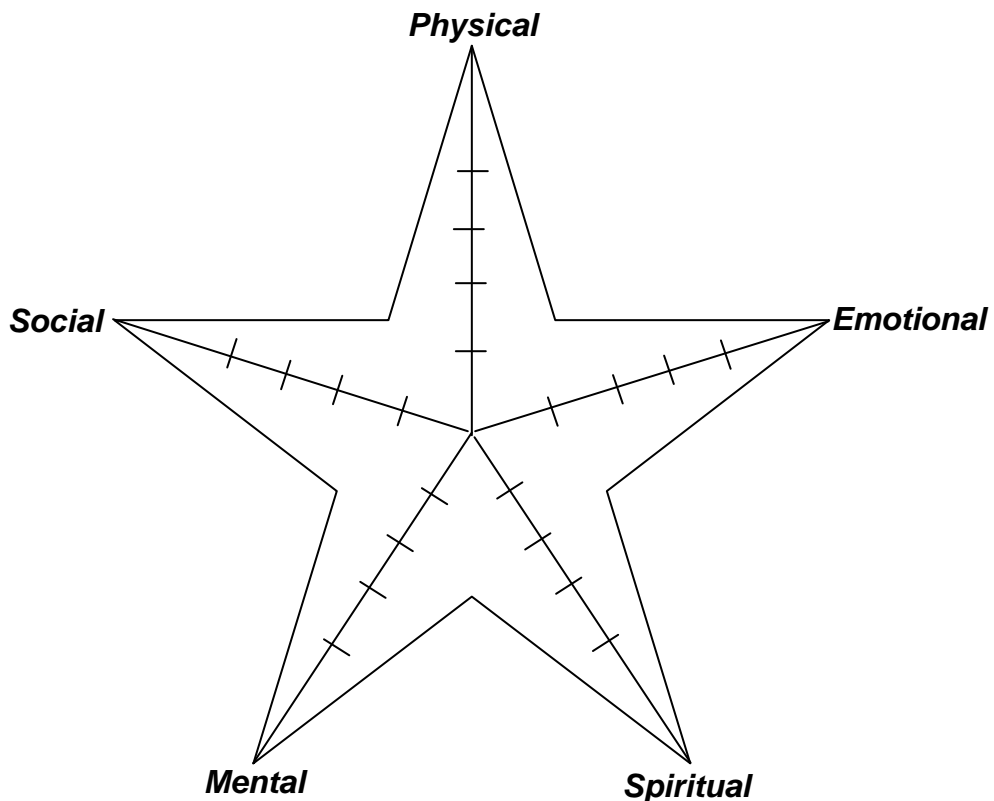
The amount of stimulation for my mind at work is	___
I have a sense of continuing to learn and develop	___
I have a variety of interests and challenges	___
I am able to concentrate on the tasks I have to do	___
My personal motivation level is	___
I feel that I am able to cope	___
I am able to make decisions with sound judgement	___
I have a clear and accurate memory	___
I feel mentally alert and keen	___
I am willing to stretch myself with new challenges	___
Total	___

Social

I am able to spend time with the people who matter to me	___
I have people around who I can relax with	___
I have people I can count on for support and confide in	___
I feel confident with others and able to assert myself	___
I am able to do the things I enjoy	___
I have a manageable range of social commitments	___
I am able to respond to others appropriately	___
I am able to enjoy others' success	___
I feel wanted and valued by others	___
I am able to get on with a variety of people	___
Total	___

Spiritual

I have a strong sense of “who I am”	___
I have an overall sense of purpose	___
I am open to, and accept, the values and beliefs of others	___
I am able to draw upon a sense of inner strength	___
I have a feeling of unity/congruence about my life	___
I am able to be comfortable on my own	___
My awareness of the things which really matter to me is	___
I am able to, and do, spend time reflecting	___
I can offer support and/or do things for others	___
I am aware of the larger groups I am connected to	___
Total	___



Using the Optimal Health Questionnaire

You can use this profile in several ways. The overall score will give you an indication how well you are doing for the total of the 5 Dimensions and, therefore, how stress resistant you are. The individual Dimensions, and their balance, will indicate if there are any areas that seem to be out of balance. It is possible that these will be sources of extra pressure -and, if not managed effectively, could lead to stress. You can set action plans in place for the Dimension concerned and also for specific aspects of each. The section starting on P7 might be very useful for this.

When dealing with any issue, go through these five steps:

1. Identify and acknowledge it.
2. Decide what you want instead.
3. Plan to achieve this.
4. Go ahead and implement your plan.
5. Review the result and ensure that it has delivered what you wanted - and that the pressure or issue is no longer stressful.

Interpreting your scores: overall

There is a maximum of 200 points available across the 5 Dimensions.

Between 151 - 200

You are probably very satisfied with the overall pattern of your life. Assuming that the balance is OK across the Dimensions, you are able to respond to pressures with a healthy perspective. You can use most of them as a source of motivation and as a positive element. You are probably considered a strong person by others, as they see you being able to cope with pressures and acting calmly. You may be someone whom others look to in pressured times because of your ability to handle things without seeming to panic or over-react.

Between 101 - 150

You are probably able to cope with pressure for much of the time and respond positively when you do. However, there may be some instances where you feel stressed by the pressures and you respond differently. You will benefit from identifying if there are particular Dimensions which seem to be less satisfied than others. When any indications of stress are occurring it could be that action in this particular Dimension will enable you to cope better. If the particular sources of pressure do recur you may find it useful to explore the different ways in which you can reduce them. If they are things outside your immediate control, you can make sure that you put them into perspective by having some clear and achievable goals in the Dimensions. This will allow you to feel that you are in control of the important things in your life.

Between 51 - 100

Either all or some of the Dimensions are not fulfilled. This means that stress is likely to be affecting you in many areas of your life. Your response to external pressures is to interpret them as stressors. This could be affecting your behaviour and health both at work and at home. Identify which Dimensions appear to be the least fulfilled and work out some small steps to begin to improve these. Aim to set achievable targets in these so that you can get a sense of achievement when you do them. This will build your self-esteem and confidence and you will realise that you can succeed in things. It will be useful to share what you are doing with someone else so that they can encourage and support you. Now is the time to take action before you become too caught in the spiral which could lead to serious health or relationship problems.

Between 0 - 50

You are probably feeling stressed and unfulfilled in many areas of your life - and, possibly, not sure that you can find a way of coping with it. The good news is that you have made the first step on being able to change! Identifying the situation is essential and now it is up to you. Do you really want to do something about it? It is possible that you feel that you are just coping on a day to day basis - with a sense of no end in sight to the pressures. There are various ways of doing something about it. You will almost certainly find it helpful to share your concerns with someone else. From this, begin to focus on what you want and look at each of the Dimensions and find something that you want to do in each of them. Plan to achieve these - or part of them. It does not matter how small the steps, they will be moving you in the right direction. Become aware of the messages you give yourself. What is the language? What is the tone? Change the language to positive statements. (What is the point of negative talk unless you want to feel lousy?) As you do this notice the tone change. You may even find that the voice moves to a different part of you. Simple steps and coping strategies will work. It is harder to do it on your own so enlist support, draw breath and share your concerns.

Physical Dimension:

- My energy levels are _____
- I am maintaining regular eating habits _____
- I am having a balanced diet _____
- I am not experiencing pains, headaches, tension _____
- I take regular exercise _____
- I am getting enough good quality sleep _____
- I am having enough relaxation time _____
- I am free from illnesses such as colds or flu _____
- I am keeping to a controlled level of alcohol intake _____
- My overall health/well-being is _____

This is one dimension where we will often get the early warning signs that we are beginning to feel stressed. Problems with sleep, appetite, foods upsetting us, feeling tense or getting minor illnesses.

Taking some of the key elements here:

How important is “health” to you as one of your values?

Consider what you might want to do to raise it up your priorities!

What can you do to improve your diet? (Remember that balance is important.)

Have you challenged your time management recently? Make time for eating regularly – relaxation time (maybe coupled with exercise, whether walking or swimming).

Remember – “if you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get what you have always got!”

Without your health – what use are your other values?

Actions:

What are you going to do to improve your physical dimension? Which aspects can you improve? What will they give you when you do? What might stop you? What can you do about it?

Emotional Dimension

- I generally have a positive outlook on life _____
- I have kept a low level of irritability or bad temper _____
- I have been willing to face up to, and deal, with problems _____
- I have a sense of feeling valued _____
- I am able to be open with others _____
- I rate my general level of humour and enjoyment as _____
- I generally feel calm and relaxed _____
- I allow myself to experience the whole range of emotions _____
- I have a sense of security and trust with others _____
- My level of feeling good about myself is _____

This dimension is about your emotional balance – almost a mini- Emotional Intelligence assessment. You need to be able to feel and express your emotions, whilst also having a sense of control of them – without bottling them up inside. The indicators of this being out of balance will possibly show in increasingly irritable behaviour, feeling tense, worrying about things – large and small, maybe feeling down, helpless or hopeless.

Taking some of the key elements here:

What are the internal messages you keep saying to yourself?

Listen to your own language – is it negative or positive?

Are you keeping emotions inside?

How and where can you express them?

Do you worry about things over which you have no control? What does this do for you?

What can you do to develop some relaxing activities and expressive ones?

Actions:

What are you going to do to improve your emotional dimension? Which aspects can you improve? What will they give you when you do? What might stop you? What can you do about it?

Mental/Intellectual Dimension

- The amount of stimulation for my mind at work is _____
- I have a sense of continuing to learn and develop _____
- I have a variety of interests and challenges _____
- I am able to concentrate on the tasks I have to do _____
- My personal motivation level is _____
- I feel that I am able to cope _____
- I am able to make decisions with sound judgement _____
- I have a clear and accurate memory _____
- I feel mentally alert and keen _____
- I am willing to stretch myself with new challenges _____

Increasingly research is showing that keeping the brain stimulated is good for our physical self as well as the mental. It also helps to prevent – or delay – many of the negative effects of aging!!

Taking some of the key elements here:

Do you consider yourself open to learning new things?

Are you curious about things, life, people?

What do you do to keep yourself mentally alert?

When you feel “stale” – what do you do to liven yourself up?

Do you seek opportunities to take on new challenges – whether in or out of work?

Actions:

What are you going to do to improve your mental dimension? Which aspects can you improve? What will they give you when you do? What might stop you? What can you do about it?

Social Dimension

- I am able to spend time with the people who matter to me _____
- I have people around who I can relax with _____
- I have people I can count on for support and confide in _____
- I feel confident with others and able to assert myself _____
- I am able to do the things I enjoy _____
- I have a manageable range of social commitments _____
- I am able to respond to others appropriately _____
- I am able to enjoy others' success _____
- I feel wanted and valued by others _____
- I am able to get on with a variety of people _____

This is about your social network and whether you are able to do things you enjoy with people who matter to you. This is where you should feel that you can relax and be “you” – and not feel over-committed to things in your social life!

Taking some of the key elements here:

How would you rate your social life?

Do you allow time for yourself and your friends?

Is there enough fun and relaxation?

What, if anything, is missing from your social dimension?

Where can you get more help or support with any aspect of this dimension?

Actions:

What are you going to do to improve your social dimension? Which elements do you want more of? What will they give you when you have them? What might stop you doing this? What can you do about it?

Spiritual Dimension

- I have a strong sense of “who I am” _____
- I have an overall sense of purpose _____
- I am open to, and accept, the values and beliefs of others _____
- I am able to draw upon a sense of inner strength _____
- I have a feeling of unity/congruence about my life _____
- I am able to be comfortable on my own _____
- My awareness of the things which really matter to me is _____
- I am able to, and do, spend time reflecting _____
- I can offer support and/or do things for others _____
- I am aware of the larger groups I am connected to _____

This is the intangible dimension – it is very much your own space and inner-self. This is about you as an individual and your sense of individuality, yet within the circles you live in at work, socially, family etc.

Taking some of the key elements here:

How would you rate your sense of self?

What questions caused you to think more deeply?

Did any make you feel uncomfortable? Why was this?

What, if anything, is missing from your spiritual dimension?

Where can you get more help or support with any aspect of this dimension?

Actions:

What are you going to do to improve your spiritual dimension? What do you want more of? What will it give you when you have it? What might stop you? What can you do about it?

Pressure Management Model

