

The stress table

Purpose & Output This exercise can help you to identify your limits concerning different kinds of stress, how to recognise these limits and measures to counter stress. Take some time, ideally when you are not under stress and try to create your own stress table.

Input & Materials For this exercise we differentiate between three levels of stress, like a traffic light:

Green = bearable, motivating stress. This kind of stress might keep us creative, but we may become tired more easily, need more breaks and know that we don't want to feel it for a long period of time.

Yellow = unpleasant stress. With this level of stress, we may feel tired and at the same time alert. We may manifest physical signs of stress (which vary from person to person). We will usually have a strong desire to change the situation which is causing this sensation.

Red = unbearable, profound and lasting stress. This kind of stress affects different spheres of our lives including our relationships at work, with our friends and family as well as our personal relationships. This level of stress also reduces the pleasure and relaxation we take from recreational activities, and we feel anxious and/or miserable. Our bodies show clear physical reactions, and we may feel close to collapse, and resort to unhealthy measures to stay alert, such as stimulants.

Format & Steps

Step 1: Basing yourself in the example below, draw up an initial stress table and reflect on it with somebody you trust.

Step 2: Decide on a regular schedule, when you want to review your stress status, and try to carry out these reviews accordingly.

**Format &
Steps**

Step 3: If you frequently experience high stress levels over a period of time, review your stress table to determine if it is still adequate.

**Remarks &
Tips**

Checking this stress table could be one step in your personal security guidelines and should be done regularly. Be sure to check if your definitions for the different levels are still accurate, or if you have simply become accustomed to higher stress levels!

	Indicators (How do you recognise that you are at this stress level? What makes this phase qualitatively different from the previous level?)	What can you do to reduce the level of stress, or increase your ability to cope?	Resources needed
Green
Yellow
Red

Bear in mind that emotional dangers are sometimes subtle and can creep up on us. They increase slowly over time and we may fail to notice how much has changed. Some strategies for regularly scanning for indicators of emotional danger include:

- paying attention when friends and family comment on your mood, appearance or interpersonal behaviour
- actively seeking out feedback from trusted friends and colleagues who care about you enough to be truthful with you
- keeping a private diary of your thoughts and feelings from day to day
- paying attention to ways in which your stress level might be making you less aware of security indicators (physical, informational, or emotional) in your environment;
- if necessary, seeking advice and support from a mental health professional.