

The Subjective Thoughts REgarding Stress Scale (STRESS)

Administrator Instructions

Background

The Subjective Thoughts REgarding Stress Scale (STRESS) was developed based upon the stress belief literature to date. The scale is rooted in the concept of lay beliefs – the everyday explanations we hold for the world around us – and draws upon a range of cognitive theories that all posit that our beliefs/schemas/representations/perceptions of the world influence the way we respond/interact with the world around us at a behavioural, emotional, and physiological level. The underlying premise of the scale was that those who held more positive beliefs about stress would perceive stress in a more positive way. Research using the STRESS has confirmed in a laboratory setting that those with more positive beliefs do, in fact, appraise a stressful situation as more challenging (positive) and less threatening (negative) than those with more negative beliefs about stress. For specific details on these theories and how they relate to the STRESS and the stress experience, please see [Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich \(2022\)](#).

The development and validation process of the stress involved: i) a literature review of the stress belief literature ([Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich, 2020a](#)), ii) a qualitative belief-elicitation study which was validated via a DELPHI process with an international panel of experts in stress research ([Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich, 2020b](#)), iii) an item development procedure that covered all content from the qualitative research and the literature review in which items were reviewed by the research teams of both projects to ensure items represented the information arising from both studies ([Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich, 2022](#)), iv) a piloting of included items in a sample of 107 international participants ([Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich, 2022](#)), v) an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on two separate samples ($Ns \geq 300$), vi) assessments of convergent, divergent, and predictive validity ([Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich, 2022](#)), and vii) internal reliability and test-retest reliability ([Kilby, Sherman, and Wuthrich, 2022](#)).

The STRESS is a self-report measure of stress beliefs that can be used in online data collection in software such as Qualtrics. The scale has 19 items with 3 subscales: Consequences, Coping Efficacy, and Social Factors. All items are measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale:

1. Completely not like me
2. Very much not like me
3. Slightly not like me
4. Slightly like me
5. Very much like me
6. Completely like me

There is no neutral option as, in stress beliefs, a neutral response could represent holding a balanced opinion on the belief (it is equally sometimes like me and sometimes not like me) as well as the view that the person does not hold this belief.

Scoring

As each subscale has a different number of items, we use an average of all responses to ensure all subscales are on a range of 1 to 6. Items are reverse coded such that higher scores will always represent more positive beliefs.

The Consequence subscale

Items: Items 1.1 to 1.5

Reverse Scoring: All items on this subscale should be reverse scored.

Interpretation: Higher scores represent more positive beliefs about the consequences of stress (e.g., being able to think clearly or more clearly under stress), whereas lower scores represent more negative beliefs about the consequences of stress (e.g., becoming immobilised by stress).

The Coping Efficacy subscale

Items: Items 2.1 to 2.6

Reverse Scoring: No items are reverse scored

Interpretation: Higher scores represent more positive beliefs about one's ability to cope with stress (e.g., I change my coping strategies to match the situation), whereas lower scores represent more negative beliefs about one's ability to cope with stress (e.g., I do not know how to deal with stressful situations).

The Social Factors

Items: Items 3.1 to 3.8

Reverse Scoring: 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, and 3.7 need to be reverse scored

Interpretation: Higher scores represent more positive beliefs about how one interacts with others when they are stressed or the other people are stressed (e.g., I am happy to be around other people when I am stressed), whereas lower scores represent more negative beliefs about how one interacts with others when they are stressed or the other people are stressed (e.g., Being around other people who are stressed makes me feel stressed).

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Below is a list of statements that some people associate with stress. Not all statements apply to all people. Please rate your level of agreement from 'Completely not like me' to 'Completely like me' with each statement.

		Completely not like me	Very much not like me	Slightly not like me	Slightly like me	Very much like me	Completely like me
1.1	It is harder for me to make decisions when I am stressed						
1.2	I cannot think clearly when stressed						
1.3	I find it harder to remember things when I am stressed						
1.4	I feel immobilised by stress						
1.5	Being stressed always ends badly						
2.1	There are things that I can do to control my stress						
2.2	There is always a way to respond when stressed						
2.3	I change my coping strategies						

	to match the situation						
2.4	I know how to deal with stressful situations						
2.5	I do lots of different things to cope with stress						
2.6	I can respond to stress in many different ways						
3.1	Being around other people who are stressed makes me feel stressed						
3.2	I do not mind being in the same room as someone who is stressed						
3.3	I can't be around other people when they are stressed						
3.4	I do not become stressed if I am around other stressed people						
3.5	I tend to avoid people when I am stressed						

3.6	I am comfortable around others when I am stressed						
3.7	I do not like socialising when I am stressed						
3.8	I am happy to be around other people when I am stressed						