

Coping Resources Inventory

M. Susan Marting, Allen L. Hammer

The *Coping Resources Inventory* (CRI) tells you about resources you have that can help you handle the stress that is a natural part of life. Resources are more than just the specific coping mechanisms or coping strategies that you use when you are under stress. While specific coping strategies help you to feel better at the time, resources are more powerful and enduring. Resources are reserves that you can draw on.

These reserves are the result of continually or habitually using certain behaviors or ways of thinking. For example, you may cope with a particular stressful event--such as looking for a new job--by jogging. But if you are not in shape, this activity may have limited effect, and you could end up hurting yourself. On the other hand, if jogging is part of your lifestyle, you will have built up reserves--or resources--that can help you deal with those inevitable stressful events whenever they do come along.

Having a high level of coping resources, therefore, can help you :

- 1) limit the ill effects of stress
- 2) recover faster from a stressful event

SUMMARY OF YOUR RESULTS

The CRI scales shown below represent important areas for balance in your life.

If you scored 17 or more on any scale:

You show strength in that area. Continuing to do what you are currently doing in that area can help you cope with the stress of a career change.

If you scored 16 or less on any scale:

You may be indicating a need to strengthen that area of your life. When going through a career change, you may find yourself feeling anxious or drained of energy.

Click in the **Comments** column in your Summary of Your Results box to get in-depth information on your scores. If you **need to develop resources**, you will find some **action steps** that can help you develop ways to deal with stress and anxiety. You may want to print your results.

SCALE NAME	SCORE	COMMENT
Physical	8	You may be feeling tired or drained of energy.
Spiritual	8	You are probably feeling unclear about your life.

Self-esteem	8	You probably doubt your abilities to succeed.
Social	8	You probably do not feel comfortable talking or sharing with others.
Emotional	8	You may have difficulty identifying or expressing your feelings.
Total Score	40	Find out more.

See how coping resources or lack of resources can affect a career change. Check out the examples in the next column.

Examples

If you have strength in at least 4 areas, read about Greg.

If you have some areas of strength and some that need developing, read about Maria.

If you need to develop resources in 4 or more areas, read about Kevin.

Physical Resources

Your score on the Physical scale was 16 or less, which indicates you have low physical resources. You probably do not participate very often in activities that can help you build up your physical resources. You may find that when under stress you get tired easily, or lack energy, or even develop physical symptoms. Physical resources come from taking care of your body: from eating right and from getting enough sleep and exercise. If you are strong and rested, you will have more energy to deal with stress and your body will be more resistant to injury or disease.

To increase your physical resources, try these action steps. Although some may seem silly or inappropriate for you, take a risk and try them. You may be surprised at the results.

ACTION STEPS

- Eat a balanced diet. Consult with your doctor if you are unsure of nutritional requirements.
- Keep your weight within five to ten pounds of ideal weight. Your doctor can tell you your ideal weight for your gender, age, and build. But remember, diet is more important than a number on a scale.
- Exercise. Get your heart pumping until you break a sweat (usually 20-30 minutes of activity) at

least three days a week. If necessary, start slowly by exercising 10 minutes, 3 times a day. It is sometimes easier to work in short sessions than to find a large chunk of time. Choose an activity that you enjoy: brisk walking, riding a bike, swimming, etc. You are more likely to stick with an activity that you like.

- Stretch for at least 5-10 minutes every morning. Consider taking a yoga class. Yoga not only stretches your muscles but strengthens them and gives you balance. You will also learn how to breathe deeply, which helps you to relax. For classes, check out continuing education courses at local colleges, fitness centers at local universities and colleges, YMCAs and YWCAs, and local hospitals.
- Get plenty of sleep. Your body needs to replenish itself. If you have trouble falling asleep, talk to your doctor or check into books on relaxation techniques.
- Stop smoking, limit drinking, avoid self-medication, and do not abuse drugs.

Spiritual Scale

Your score is 16 or less on the Spiritual scale. You may find yourself wondering, "What's the point?" or "Why bother?" You may have trouble settling on a career that seems right for you. You may have no clear idea of what you want to do with your life and this lack of clarity can be very unsettling to you. To help you gain resources in this area, try these action steps. Although some may seem silly or inappropriate for you, take a risk and try them. You may be surprised at the results.

ACTION STEPS

- Set goals for your life. What would you like to be doing next year at this time? What are you going to do to get there? Write down these goals and look at them every month to make sure you are working toward them. If you find that you are not making progress, you might need to re-evaluate your goal.
- Try to spend a little time each week doing something you love. Many of us spend a lot of time doing things we don't enjoy. Or we are so busy that we don't have time to do what we enjoy. Sometimes we don't even know what we enjoy.

To figure out what you really like doing, take a little time-- maybe before work or on a lunch break--to make a list of things you love or things you love to do. The list may include people you love, activities you enjoy, places you love (or would love to see), and things you have that you love, such as a car or a family photo album. Think about why you love these things. Putting them on paper can often help you to realize that you need to spend more time with what you really love.

- Enjoy beauty around you. Set aside 5 minutes every day to look around and find something beautiful in your environment. That "something" could be a cloud, a flower, a building, or an animal. Focus on something different each day. Focus on its intricacies. Focus on its simplicity. This 5-minute exercise can help you feel more positive, more connected, and more relaxed.
- Begin a tradition. People who have traditions are able to draw upon them as a resource. You can count on traditions--their consistency--when everything seems indefinite. A tradition can be as simple as having dinner with family or friends every Sunday night, hosting an annual barbecue, or a going to a monthly support group.
- Meditate or pray at least once a day. Most people who pray or meditate on a regular basis have lower blood pressure and greater feelings of peace and contentment.

Self-esteem Scale

Your score is 16 or less on the Self-esteem scale. You may feel great anxiety under the pressure of considering or making a career change. You may doubt your abilities and worry about your decisions. You need to boost your self-esteem and develop resources that strengthen your ability to cope with stress. Try these action steps to help you gain new resources. Although some may seem silly or inappropriate for you, take a risk and try them. You may be surprised at the results.

ACTION STEPS

- Accept what you cannot change. Have patience. Although difficult, it is extremely helpful to realize that some things are out of your control. It is better to focus on those things that you CAN do something about.
- Turn negatives into positives. Having a negative attitude is like poison--it taints everything it touches. Rather than seeing what is wrong with a situation, or a person, try to see the positive side.

Spend a few minutes making a list of things that you really dislike. Next to each item on the list, write something positive about it. Sometimes we must acknowledge the positive before we can focus on it.

- Read a book on building self-esteem. You must believe in yourself and your abilities to tackle the stress of a career change. Several recommended books are: *Why Can't I Get What I Want?* by Charles Elliott and Maureen Kirby Lassen and *I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just Not You* by Roger R. Pearman and Sarah C. Albritton. You can find out more about these books at www.cpp-db.com or by calling 1-800-624-1765. You may also want to check out www.amazon.com or your local bookstore for other relevant books.
- Do you have a hard time making decisions? Often people "second guess" their decisions. They worry if they have made the right decision. They tell themselves, "I should have" or "I could have." You need to look ahead, not back.

To improve your decision-making skills, practice making very small, inconsequential decisions such as: What should I have for breakfast? What will I wear today?

If you don't realize it already, you will soon see that your life is filled with decision-making opportunities--and most of the time, you do handle decision making very easily. For more difficult decisions, you might find it helpful to make a list of pros and cons, or to talk to a trusted family member or friend, or career counselor. Visit the Finding a Career Counselor section of this site for help in locating a professional.

Social Scale

Your score is 16 or less on the Social scale. You are probably not at ease with others. You may not have friends and family who can support you during big changes in your life. It is important to build these resources. Nearly every burden is lightened with the help of others. Try these action steps to help develop resources in this area. Although some may seem silly or inappropriate for you, take a risk and try them. You may be surprised at the results.

ACTION STEPS

- Call someone you like and trust. Maybe you have not talked to a particular friend or family member for quite a while. Our lives get busy. But by reconnecting with others, you have the opportunity to talk about what is going on in your life. Often just talking about an important change--such as a career transition-- can lessen your stress. Also, talking things out often helps you to see situations more clearly and thus helps you to make decisions. You never know, you may even get some good advice from your friend or relative!
- Do something for others. Take the focus off your own needs. By getting involved with those who need our help, our own problems are often put in perspective. Caring for others can help you feel good about yourself. An added bonus is that you can meet new friends with whom you can share your own concerns about your career change and the direction you are taking.

To search volunteer opportunities online, take a look at the Taking Action section of the Links and Resources pages on this site. Another way to find organizations that could use your help is to look up "Social Service Agencies" in the Yellow Pages. Find an agency that sounds interesting and offer to volunteer (determine the amount of time you can spend). Nearly everyone will jump at a chance to have free help! Also places of worship can often connect you with projects. Neighborhood schools are also often grateful for help.

- Look for the good in others. Are you too critical of others? Often being overly critical is a defense mechanism we use to keep people at a distance. Think about whether you are keeping some very kind, helpful people at a distance by criticizing them too often. If so, practice giving

compliments--sincere compliments. This behavior breaks the ice and helps others to open up to you. By developing close friends or relatives, you will then have a resource to help you carry the load of a stressful situation.

- Don't blame others. No one wants to be around someone who will always dump blame on him or her. Take responsibility. You may be avoiding responsibility without realizing it. Are you willing to say, "That's my fault" or "I'm sorry"? If you can do that when appropriate, you will draw people in.

As situations arise, practice saying, "I'm sorry." Start with seemingly innocuous situations, for example, when you accidentally step on someone's foot or when you have shown up late somewhere but have forgotten to call. Apologizing gets easier, the more you do it. So, as you feel more comfortable with saying "I'm sorry", try it in riskier situations, such as when you have really hurt someone's feelings or when you have made a mistake at work. You will gradually be able to handle the responsibility and people will appreciate that. Also honesty and sincerity will attract others who can become a good coping resource for you.

- Avoid toxic people--those who demand so much of you that being with them adds to your stress load. They offer nothing in the way of reciprocal friendship. You may find yourself bending over backward to please such people, yet get no support when you need them.

Think about if there is anyone like this in your life. Can you avoid them? If they cannot be avoided, take an assertiveness training class to learn how to communicate better with them. Such courses are usually offered as part of continuing education classes of university and community colleges, hospitals, or community groups such as the YMCA/YWCA.

Your Total Score

Your Total Coping Resources Score is simply the sum of your scores on all five scales. Your total score is fairly low (80 or less). A score like this could result from having low scores on all of the scales, or high scores on one or two scales and low scores on the others.

A low score may mean that you have simply depleted or "used up" your resources. Under normal conditions, you may have resources that help you cope with stress. But you may have been under so much stress lately that you have used up your resources. Think about how you can get back to your more normal state. What do you need to do in the short term and in the middle term, to help you cope?

A low total score may also mean that you have not learned many ways to cope with stress. You may tend to get overwhelmed easily when under stress because you have few resources to help you through the stressful event. You can begin to build up your resources by first taking a look at the scale on which you scored highest. Since this scale represents your strongest resource, you should try to develop it further. If all scores are equal, just pick a resource that sounds most interesting to you.

We have provided action steps that can help you develop your coping resources. (Click in the Comments column of your Summary of Results to find the action steps.) To start, choose just one of the steps that is easiest for you and work on it for a period of time. Then, after a while, move on to another action step. Don't try to do too much and don't try to make any major life decisions if you are feeling overwhelmed.

It is not our intent to cause you stress while trying to build your resources. Therefore, we recommend you consult a career counselor to help you prioritize actions, learn some more specific ways to cope with stress, and develop your coping resources. Your counselor can be a resource for you until you develop more of your own. You can find out how to locate a counselor in your area in the Finding a Career Counselor section of this site.

Case Study: Greg

Greg is seeking a new job in marketing. While he is fairly confident that he will eventually be able to find a job to match his talents and interests, he is feeling the stress of being in transition. Although anxious about finding the right job, he is optimistic and sees this time as an exciting opportunity.

Greg has a score of 24 or higher on each of the 5 coping resource scales, which means that he does have abundant resources in all the areas identified on the *Coping Resources Inventory*. He likes being in shape, paying close attention to what he eats and working out at the gym about three times a week. While not a social butterfly, he does have a small circle of close friends with whom he feels comfortable sharing his anxiety about being in the job market. Some of his friends have given him tips about job openings. He also knows what is important to him, which helps him to focus his job search on companies with values similar to his own. Like anyone seeking a job, he does experience stress. However, he has a lot of resources available that help him cope with this difficult period.

Case Study: Maria

Maria's position was eliminated when her company merged with a larger firm. Although she has many skills and a proven track record, she has experienced a high level of stress at the surprise announcement. Her scores on the *Coping Resources Inventory* indicated that she had high social and emotional resources. She has a wide circle of friends and an even wider group of casual acquaintances. She feels comfortable talking about her feelings of anger and anxiety, and her friends provide a lot of support and comfort. Her large network may be able to help her identify new opportunities.

On the other hand, her physical resources are low and as a result the stress is taking its toll; she is feeling tired and is not sleeping well. Despite her previous success, her self-esteem resources are also low. Her low spiritual resources reveal that she has never really stopped to reflect on how important work or other things are in her life. She tends to discount her accomplishments and therefore may have a difficult time presenting herself in job interviews. While her social and emotional resources may get her through this stressful period, she will have to be careful not to deplete them. Even close friends are not always available or may tire eventually of listening to someone with a negative attitude. She may need to take some action steps to increase her physical and spiritual resources and especially her self-esteem.

Case Study: Kevin

Kevin is a college student who is trying to make a decision about what to do after he graduates. The thought of being on his own scares him. His coping resources scores are below 16 on all five scales, which means that he has few resources to rely on.

Kevin lives on fast food and gets little exercise. He has a few friends with whom he hangs out but has no really close friends. He is embarrassed talking about his feelings; his self-esteem is low and he does not have any clear sense of values or tradition that he can fall back on to help guide him. Since he has so few resources to draw upon in this highly stressful period of his life, he feels overwhelmed by having to decide on his future. He tries not to think about the decisions he has to make, but that only adds to the pressure. He has finally decided to seek help at the college counseling center. Although he felt that taking this step was admitting failure, he also felt a sense of relief that he had finally acted and taken a step forward.

Copyright 1987 by CPP, Inc. All rights reserved.