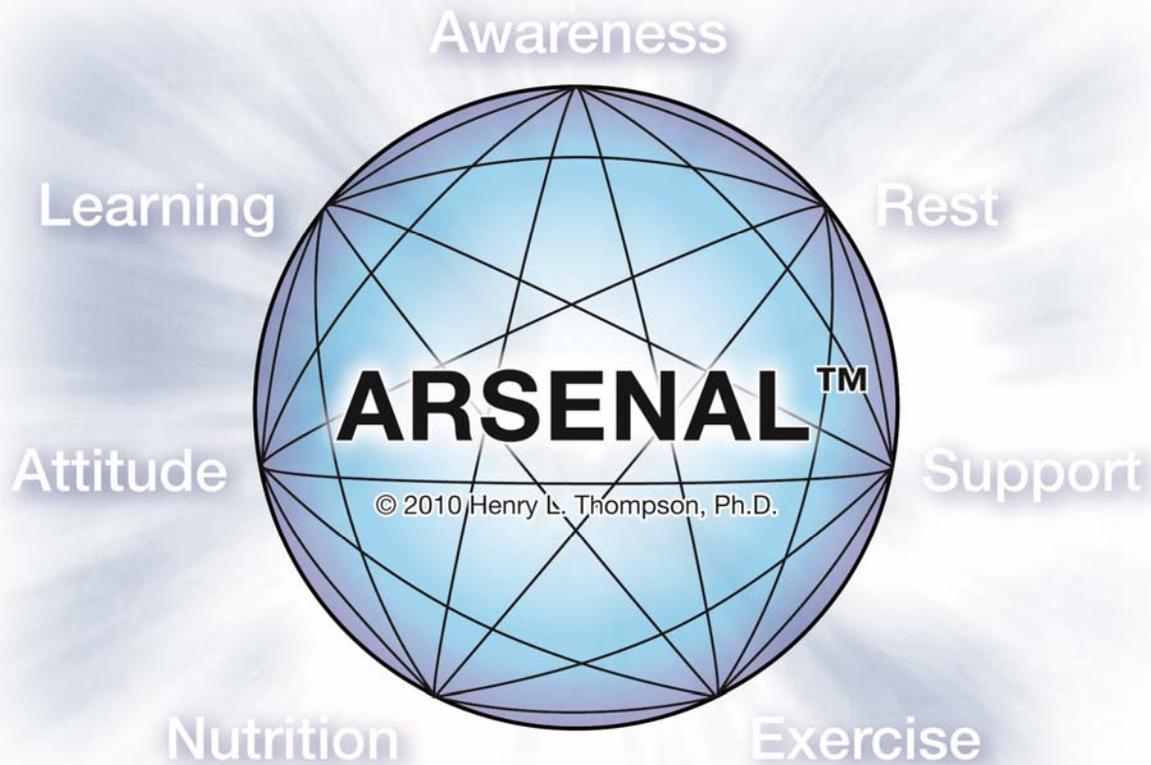


CONFIDENTIAL

# ARSENAL™ Assessment Feedback Report



**Chris Sample**

1-Apr-21



## Section I: ARSENAL™ Overview

Stress can have a significant impact on your health, well-being and ability to make effective decisions. Research has shown that stress contributes to:

- As much as 66% of all visits to primary-care physicians
- More than 200 million people who take medication because of stress-related illnesses
- Industry losses in excess of \$300 billion per year due to absenteeism, lost productivity, accidents and medical insurance
- As much as 85% of medical accidents
- As much as 60% of long-term disability
- The six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide

There are many other effects of negative stress that can create a vicious cycle with significant health effects.

Fortunately, many tools are available to help you mitigate the negative impact of stress. The key is to build a Stress Resilient System™ that can enable you to bounce back easily following a stressful event. The seven best practices of building a Stress Resilient System™ are Awareness, Rest, Support, Exercise, Nutrition, Attitude and Learning. These best practices form the ARSENAL™ system (see Figure 1) and quite literally become your arsenal against stress. Each of these best practices has been shown by a large body of research to be a key strategy for increasing Stress Management Capacity™, developing Cognitive Resilience™, building Stress Resilient Emotional Intelligence™, remaining healthier and making more effective decisions.

This assessment presents a summary of each best practice and your current level of performance in each area. Also included is a development plan that you can use to help you begin working on these areas immediately. *Keep in mind that success in each of these practices requires making it an emotional process.* The logic of rational thought can help you make the decision to begin an exercise program, but to follow through with the program requires an emotional commitment to keep you motivated.

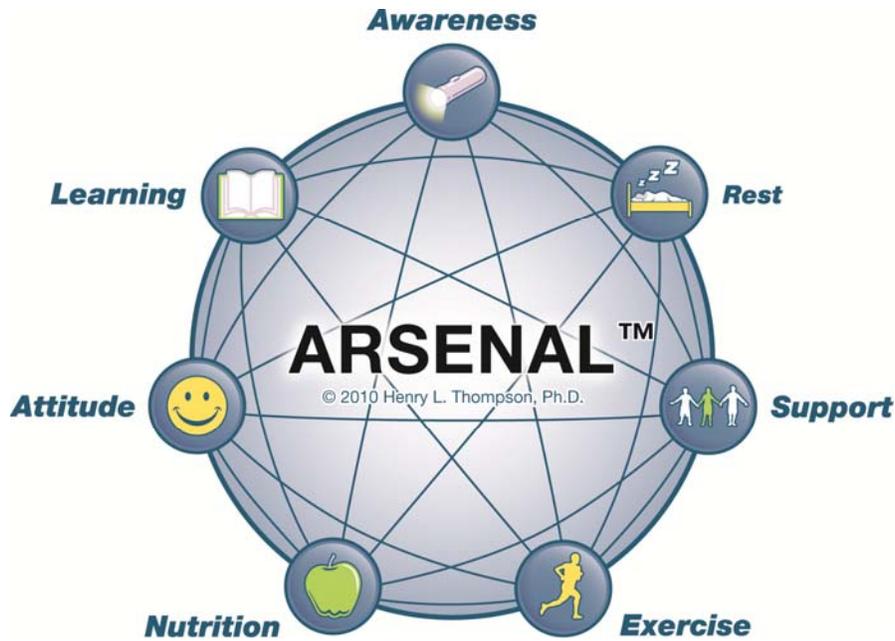


Figure 1  
The ARSENAL™ Model

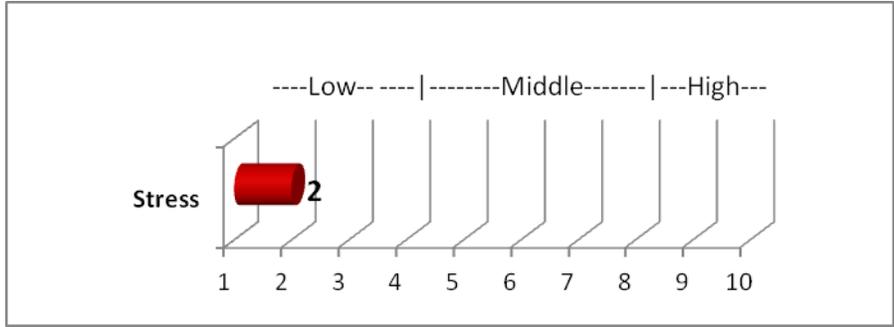
## Section II: Results

The ARSENAL™ Individual Assessment is a self-report of how well you are doing on the seven ARSENAL™ best practice areas. Understanding the degree to which you currently apply the best practices will provide insight into your overall stress level and will give you a starting point for your Development Plan for improvement. As you review the results that follow, identify the areas in which you are performing well and think about ways to take full advantage of the benefits they provide. Also focus your attention on the areas that have room for improvement and reflect on the development ideas that are provided. Increasing your Awareness through the feedback results is the first step in making the positive changes that will help you decrease your overall stress level.

### Current Stress Level

Your Current Stress Level shown in the graph below represents how you described your level of stress on the day (and time) you completed the ARSENAL™ questionnaire. Although today it might be a little different, your previous rating gives you a benchmark for tracking your stress level. Incorporate the information in the next paragraph into your Development Plan (at the end of the Report).

**CONFIDENTIAL**

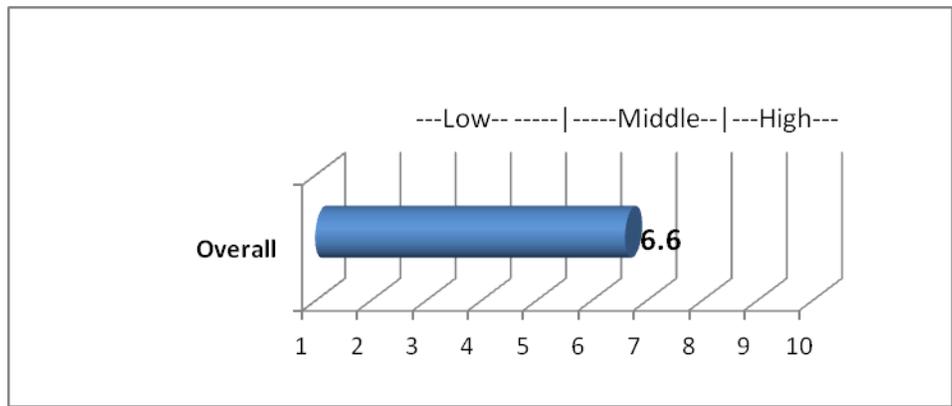


*Figure 2*  
*Stress Level Graph*

Your responses (when you completed the questionnaire) indicate that you are usually relaxed and able to enjoy life. You seldom allow stress to interfere with your health or ability to make good decisions and you rarely feel overwhelmed by stress. Although maintaining a low level of stress is good for your physical and emotional health, having too little stress can cause you to lack a sense of urgency that motivates you to do your best. By applying the ARSENAL™ best practices, you can maintain your current stress level or, if beneficial, become more focused and energized.

**Overall**

The Overall Score below provides a general overview of how well you are applying the ARSENAL™ best practices to build a Stress Resilient System™. Keep in mind that this Overall Score is an average of the seven subscale areas, and as such, is a broad, big-picture view. It provides a good snapshot of how well you are applying best practices, but it does not provide the level of detail that the individual subscale scores will. Remember that higher Overall Scores, i.e., higher application of the ARSENAL™ best practices, are associated with higher resilience to stress, better control of emotions, improved interpersonal relationships, increased cognitive functioning, better health and well-being and better decision making.



*Figure 3*  
*Overall ARSENAL™ Graph*

## CONFIDENTIAL

Overall your results indicate that you have a Stress Resilient System™ that allows you to function well most days. You are usually focused on applying the ARSENAL™ best practices, although you may become inconsistent at times. In general, however, you tolerate stress fairly well and are resilient in most situations. Although you have built a fairly effective Stress Resilient System™, you may want to work on a development plan that helps you remain consistent in all areas.

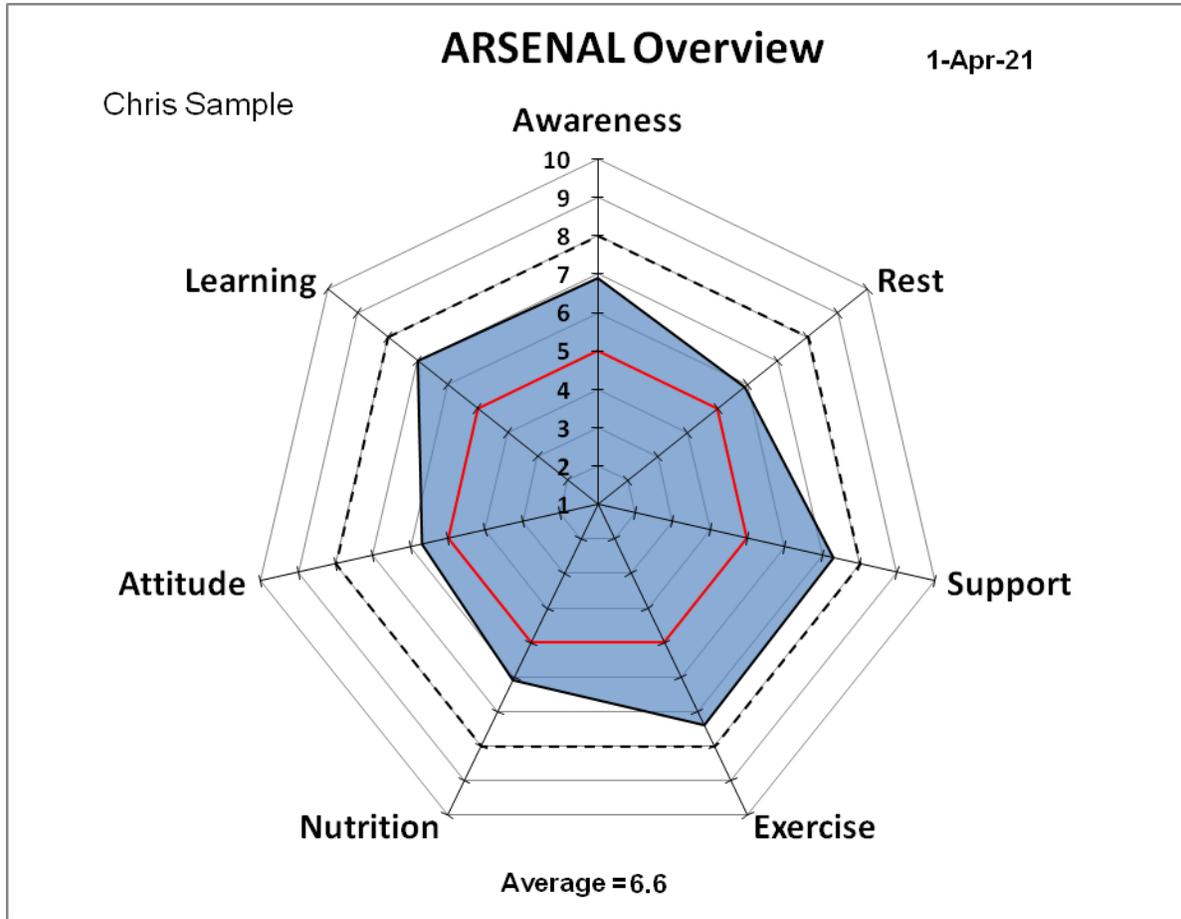
The graph in Figure 4 provides a visual preview of which best practice areas are your strongest and which areas need work. On each best practice area of the ARSENAL™, your score can range from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best. Viewing the scores in this format indicates not only the relative score in each best practice area but also the overall total application of all the best practices. To interpret the graph, consider two perspectives. The first is to identify how much blue area is shown on the graph. Ideally the entire graph would be shaded in, but that may not be realistic for most people. Your goal should be to expand your ARSENAL™ ability levels to fill as much of the graph as possible. The dashed line on the graph represents a score of 8. Any results at or above the dashed line are in the high range. The second consideration is the shape of the overall graph. If you're applying the best practices evenly, your graph would look almost like a circle. Being fairly balanced in using the dimensions evenly will help you build a stronger overall Stress Resilient System™ than relying too heavily on only one or two areas.

As you review your results in greater detail below, consider how you will implement a Development Plan to become more rounded in the application of the seven best practices, if applicable, and to increase lower scores to build your stress resilience. Become aware of how each best practice area is affecting your decision making in a positive or negative way. Keep a record of how your decision-making effectiveness changes as these best practice areas change.

The seven ARSENAL™ best practices, when properly applied, will help you:

- Increase brain functioning
- Build stress resilience
- Control emotions and stay calm
- Build new brain cells
- Improve physical functioning
- Increase longevity

In addition, you will notice a synergistic effect, the result of each practice area reinforcing the other areas. The ARSENAL™ best practices act as a system—a change in one tends to change the others but not always in the same direction. For example, spending too much time on Rest might reduce your time to Exercise.



*Figure 4*  
*ARSENAL™ Subscale Graph*

A description of each best practice is provided below, along with an overview of how well you are currently applying each best practice.



Awareness is the foundation for developing all ARSENAL™ best practices. Awareness “watches” the other best practices. It should be used to monitor and collect feedback and provide oversight to the ARSENAL™ system. Awareness can range from a set of indicators such as *not being focused, not paying attention to details, and spending time with your head in the clouds* on the low end of the continuum to *being very focused on what’s currently happening, feeling sensations, and knowing how your brain and body are performing* on the high end. Research<sup>1</sup> suggests that increasing Awareness through techniques such as mindfulness meditation has long-term mental health benefits and can help reduce anxiety and depression, even up to three years after the Awareness techniques are first employed. Awareness is a dynamic skill that varies from day to day. If you track it for a few months, you will discover a baseline around which it varies.

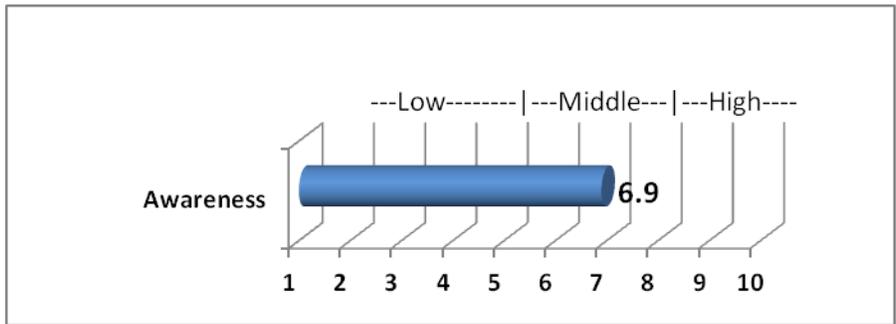


Figure 5  
Awareness Graph

Your results indicate that you are tuned in to your environment and focused most of the time. You know what you feel and why and are generally aware of your Rest and nutritional needs. Your results indicate, however, that you may have times when you are not as focused or fully engaged as you would like to be. Being more consistent in your Awareness will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should explore whether you tend to become less aware at certain times or under certain circumstances and develop an action plan to help you become more consistent.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Increase your focus when you feel especially tired or stressed.
- Use your Awareness to monitor your energy level during periods when you are most likely to become tired or de-energized.
- Become better tuned in to physical or mental indicators that suggest high stress levels.
- It is important to take a few minutes during the day to monitor your emotions during times of high stress.
- It is important to take time each day to monitor your energy level and health. Ask yourself, “How do I feel?”
- You may sometimes need to use support systems with alarms and reminders, such as smart phones or electronic calendars, to help keep you on track.

*Remember that an unaware brain is a surprised brain.*



Rest allows the brain and body to repair, rebuild, regenerate, process activities, consolidate information into long-term memory, learn and prepare for another round of activities. Rest can range from a set of indicators such as *feeling very tired, not sleeping well, feeling overworked and unable to relax* on the low end of the continuum to *waking up refreshed, feeling energized, taking frequent breaks or mini-vacations and doing relaxing things* on the high end. It is possible, with effort, to increase Rest and thereby increase decision-making effectiveness. Resting is a dynamic skill that can be accomplished in a multitude of ways. Relaxation<sup>2</sup>, for example, can reduce stress symptoms and promote many additional health benefits such as lowering blood pressure, reducing muscle tension and boosting confidence. Sleep is the most critical piece of Rest. Most people need at least 7 hours of sleep a night, and a recent study<sup>3</sup> found that men (and women to a lesser degree) with sleep problems had a significantly higher chance of a shorter life expectancy than men who sleep normally.

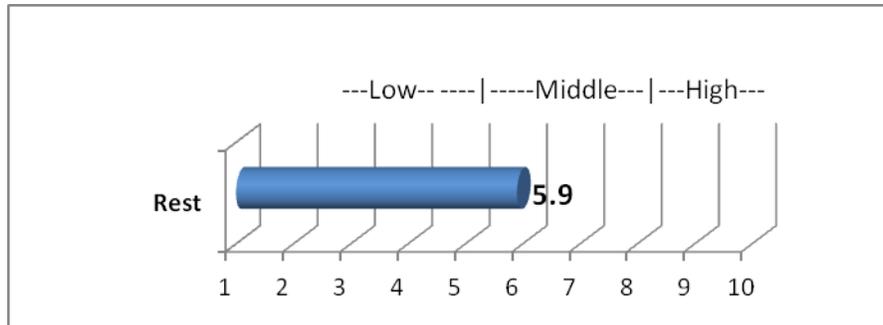


Figure 6  
Rest Graph

Your results indicate that you sometimes get adequate Rest but may not do so on a consistent basis. Your results indicate that you do not have a good balance in this area and that you alternate between days of feeling well-rested and days of feeling tired and overworked. Remember that sleep loss is cumulative. If you are not consistently getting adequate Rest, the periods of low Rest will begin to catch up with you and take a negative toll on your health and well-being. You should develop an action plan to raise your Rest to a consistent level.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Avoid caffeine or excessive activity after 3 p.m. so that you can sleep well once you've gone to bed.
- Develop an evening structure that helps you wind down and get to bed on time.
- Be as consistent as possible with the times you go to sleep and wake up each day, including weekends.
- Be sure to get 7 hours or more of sleep each day.
- Participate in leisure activities that you enjoy at least once a week even when you are busy.
- Spend some time every day focusing on issues or participating in activities that help you relax.
- Leave your office to eat lunch and/or take one or two short breaks daily; these breaks will allow you to be more productive throughout the day.
- Take some time every day to focus completely on your personal life.
- Evaluate your schedule when asked to take on new tasks; if your schedule is full or the new task might de-energize you, say "no."
- Evaluate your personal and professional schedules and plan a vacation or several 3-day weekends in the next 6 months.
- Evaluate your schedule and decide which tasks use your skills and energize you and which leave you drained. Eliminate as many tasks as you can that sap your energy.

*Remember that a tired brain is a grumpy brain.*



Support refers to the psychological, emotional and physical help you get from others. A substantial amount of research shows the healthy value of having a Support network. Research also suggests that the higher the quality of your relationships, the longer you may live. Support ranges from a set of indicators such as *I am a loner, I have few or no friends* and *I don't have close family ties or a Support network* on the low end of the continuum to *I have a strong Support network, a lot of friends and close family ties* on the high end. The presence of supportive others has been found<sup>4</sup> to aid in diminishing the effects of stress and the risk of developing certain mental illnesses such as depression. It is possible, with effort, to increase Support and thereby increase decision-making effectiveness. Tracking how you use your Support network for a few months will help you discover how to improve this practice area and allows you to adjust the techniques that work best in your life.

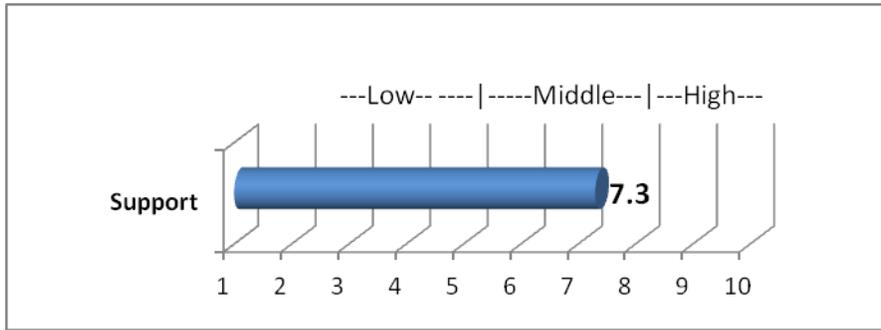


Figure 7  
Support Graph

Your results indicate that, in general, you have an adequate Support network and take time to maintain close contact with family and friends. Your results also indicate, however, that you may occasionally feel a lack of Support or lose contact with others during especially busy or stressful periods. Getting adequate Support will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should explore whether you tend to feel less Support at certain times or under certain circumstances and develop an action plan to help you become more consistent.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Maintain your Support network by meeting with at least one person on a regular basis.
- Make time to get together with friends or family members on a regular basis.
- Make yourself available to at least one other person in such a way that you can Support them when they need it.
- Use your Support network so that you continue to communicate openly and honestly about your needs.

*Remember that an unsupported brain is a sad brain.*



Exercise as used here refers to physical activity that builds cardiovascular and muscular strength. Cardiovascular health fights off diseases associated with high stress such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, blood clots, heart attacks, strokes, type II diabetes, obesity, back pain and osteoporosis (particularly in women). Muscular strength helps you avoid strain and fatigue. Exercise ranges from a set of indicators such as *not having an Exercise program, sitting a lot during the day and not being physically active* on the low end of the continuum to *exercising five or more times a week, being in excellent physical condition and very active* on the high end. Exercise has been shown to have a significant positive effect on stress management and cognitive and emotional abilities by increasing blood flow, and thus oxygen, to the brain. Numerous research<sup>5</sup> studies have shown a relationship of Exercise to life expectancy. Not only does Exercise reduce stress and increase resiliency, it can literally add years to your life!

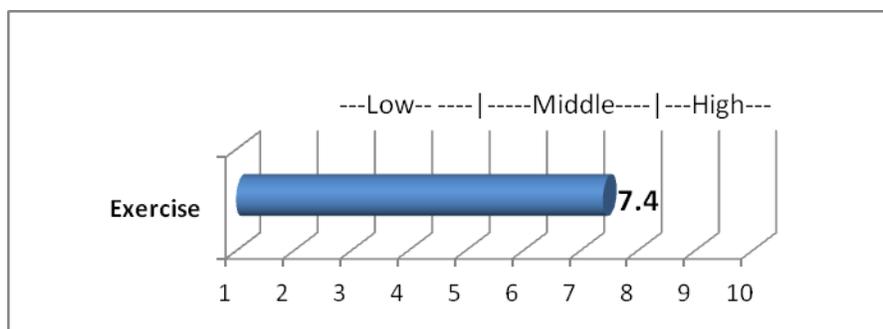


Figure 8  
Exercise Graph

Your results indicate that you usually Exercise on a consistent basis and are probably in moderate or good physical condition. Exercise may help you reduce your stress and keep you energized during busy periods. Your results also indicate, however, that you may not balance your workouts or that you may put off a workout when you get busy. Consistent Exercise will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should keep a log to determine whether you have a good balance in your Exercise routine and under what circumstances you tend to put off workouts. Then develop an action plan to help you become more consistent.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Get a physical before beginning or increasing the intensity of your Exercise regimen.
- Use your Exercise to maintain other ARSENAL™ best practices.
- It is important to maintain regular workouts each week, setting goals to increase performance.
- It is important that your fitness routine includes a balance of strength, cardio and stretching exercises.
- Recognize the importance of Exercise by noting your energy level during the periods when you Exercise on a regular basis.
- Continue to Exercise even when you are busy as a means of reducing your stress and keeping it under control.

*Remember that an unfit brain is a slow brain.*



Nutrition refers to what, when and how you nourish your brain and body—eating, drinking and digesting. The old saying that you are what you eat is certainly true with this best practice. Everything entering your system—air, water, food and chemicals (caffeine, vitamins and prescription drugs)—has an effect on your health, well-being, stress level, IQ and Emotional Intelligence. Nutrition ranges from a set of indicators such as *I am overweight, have poor eating habits, drink too much caffeine and eat too much sugar and fat* on the low end of the continuum to *I have very healthy eating habits and low body fat and drink plenty of water* on the high end. Nutrition is a mentally demanding best practice. It is not easy, but if you continue to improve Nutrition for at least sixty days, you will be pleasantly surprised at the progress you make in appearance, health and stress reduction.

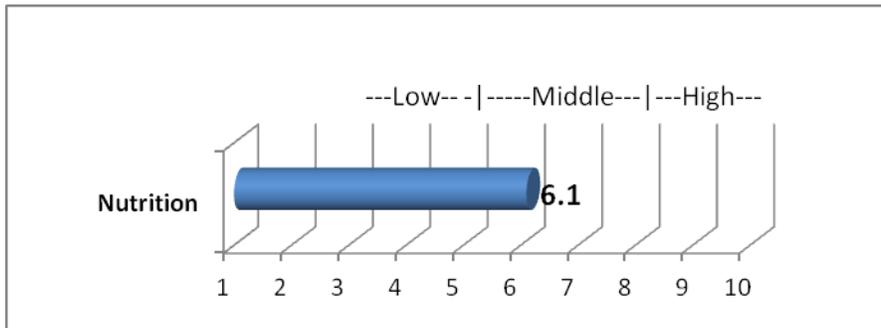


Figure 9  
Nutrition Graph

Your results indicate that you may have periods when you eat well and avoid sugary or caffeinated foods, but may not have as strong and consistent a Nutrition plan as you could. As a result, you may find that when you most need energy, your diet makes you more sluggish than normal and increases your stress. Raising your level of Nutrition will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should develop an action plan to raise your Nutrition.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Consult your medical doctor before initiating any significant change to your Nutrition plan.
- Keep a food log for a month so that you document what types of unhealthy foods you eat and whether you tend to eat them more at some times than others. Based on patterns you see, create a plan for reducing unhealthy foods.
- It is important to make sure you are drinking at least 32 ounces of water every day.
- Take a multi-vitamin daily if you do not feel that you are getting all of the vitamins you need in your daily food intake.
- Reduce or eliminate sugared drinks from your diet.
- Weigh yourself at least once a week as a means of monitoring your health.
- It is important to avoid trans fats and reduce your intake of saturated fats.
- It is important to make sure you eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Limit yourself to no more than two caffeinated beverages per day. Do not drink caffeine after 3 p.m.
- Limit yourself to no more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day.

*Remember that a hungry brain is a distracted brain.*



Your Attitude reflects your mindset, happiness, optimism and contentment with your environment and those around you. It is a window into your motivation, commitment, character and self practices. It is pervasive and tends to spill over into everything else you do. Attitude ranges from a set of indicators such as *constantly having a negative Attitude, criticizing and blaming others and saying it's "not my fault"* on the low end of the continuum to *being very positive, loving the challenge of life, accepting responsibility and being adaptable* on the high end. Research<sup>6</sup> has shown that people with a high sense of humor reported less stress and anxiety than those with a low sense of humor. Attitude tends to be relatively stable across time, meaning that in most cases, your Attitude is not caused by your work associates or job. This is not always true, but in a high percentage of cases, it is. Attitude is also strongly related to being stress resilient. Track your overall Attitude for a few months, and you will discover how much it varies.

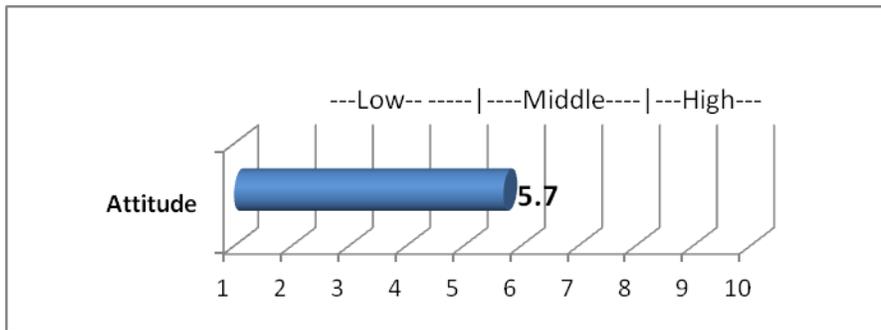


Figure 10  
Attitude Graph

Your results indicate that you have some days when you look forward to the day and feel energized and optimistic. Other days, however, you may find yourself making negative comments or avoiding others. You may find that, in general, your first reaction to new ideas is to criticize them or think they won't work. Improving your Attitude will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should develop an action plan to improve your Attitude.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Note times or situations during which you feel negative, and develop strategies to help you anticipate and manage those situations so that you are more optimistic.
- Document times when you feel helpless, unhappy or victimized and then look for patterns. Develop strategies to help you feel in control and more positive during similar situations or times.
- Take time each day to relax or celebrate something positive in your life so that you wake up with something to look forward to every day.
- Set short-term goals and celebrate when you reach them.
- Participate in at least one activity per week that builds your self-confidence.
- Be aware of how you project your emotions and make sure that you smile when you engage others.
- Avoid people with whom you tend to gossip and stop yourself as soon as you realize that you are making negative comments about others.

*Remember that a negative brain is an angry brain.*



Learning refers to actions taken to increase knowledge, skills and abilities on a continuing basis—being a lifelong learner. People who continually engage in Learning tend to display learning agility, which enhances their ability to learn, adapt, flex and function well during periods of high change. These people handle stress better than low-learning agility people because they can learn and adapt faster to the changing environment. Learning ranges from a set of indicators such as *I don't like having to learn new things* and *I don't want more training or education* on the low end of the continuum to *I'm a lifelong learner, I like puzzles, I read a lot, I take classes* and *I'm always trying to learn something new* on the high end. It is possible, with effort, to increase Learning and, thereby, increase decision-making effectiveness. Novelty and whole-brain Learning are key factors in keeping the brain sharp. The Learning best practice is also strongly related to being stress resilient.

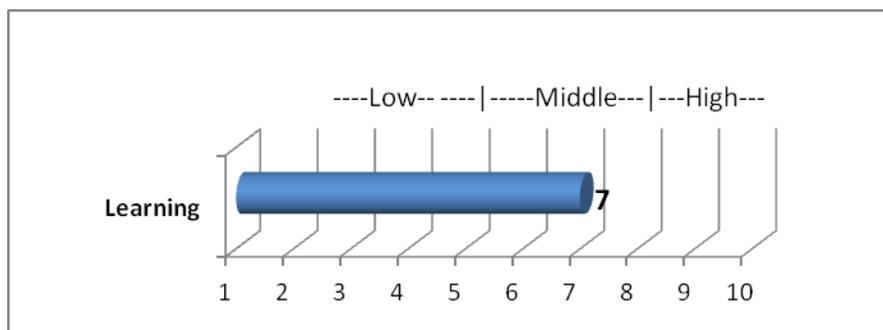


Figure 11  
Learning Graph

Your results indicate that you like to Learn new skills or information and probably take the time to do so on a fairly regular basis. You may also participate in professional organizations, attend webinars or participate in activities to keep your mind sharp. Your results also indicate, however, that you may not consistently take advantage of opportunities to Learn. Being a continuous Learner will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should develop an action plan to help you become more consistent.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Use your Learning to stay current on areas of interest and help maintain other ARSENAL™ best practices.
- Be more intentional about your Learning by scheduling time to improve a skill or gain more knowledge in an area of interest.
- Take a formal class or join a group discussion as an incentive to be more consistent and intentional about Learning.
- Spend time with people who are more intelligent than you are and, therefore, stretch your mental capacity.
- Follow your Learning plan more consistently as you seek to master new skills or subject areas.
- Choose a time when you are at your best and set aside 30 minutes or more each day to study a new subject or improve a skill.

*Remember that an unused brain is a forgetful brain.*

## **Wrap-Up**

Although the best practices are presented separately, keep in mind that they are part of a system: each of the seven best practices interacts with all the others. Exercise, for example, helps the brain and body Rest and sleep soundly. Rest helps recovery from Exercise, which enables the leader to build strength and capacity. The reduction in stress and cortisol increases the desire to eat healthier food. Your brain functions more efficiently and you begin to look better, resulting in higher self-esteem, which contributes to a more positive Attitude. Your Support network will affirm these differences, improving your self-esteem further.

Exercise without Rest, however, leads to high stress and eventually exhaustion. All Rest and no Exercise leads to a myriad of deteriorating effects that degrade decision making. The bottom line is that you need to work on increasing capacity and effectiveness in all seven best practice areas.

## **Section III: Next Steps**

### **Review and Reflect**

This Report contains a large amount of information specific to you. It tends to be a lot to absorb in a short period of time. This Report is a powerful resource for you. To get the most out of it, review the information carefully, making notes where appropriate, and reflect on the impact and implications of the feedback.

## **Development Plan**

The Development Plan is a process that helps people take decisive, structured action to control their stress and improve their health. The first step is to identify your strengths and weaknesses based on your ARSENAL™ Report. Then complete these steps:

- Prioritize areas in which you can improve
- Set clear and reasonable goals
- Design a common sense plan that you can stick with
- Implement your plan
- Monitor your plan until you reach your goals
- Continue to monitor your stress levels and overall health

Your Development Plan should focus on how you will maximize your strength areas and improve potential challenge areas. Review the recommendations contained in this Report to help you get started.

Now that you've read the feedback about your current use of the ARSENAL™ best practice areas, use the template below to create your Development Plan.

First, identify your two strongest areas from the ARSENAL™ Individual Assessment. Write these in the blanks next to the numbers below:

1.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
2.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Identify four ways in which you can capitalize on each of these strengths. Write these next to the four letters under the appropriate numbers above.

Now identify your two weakest areas from your Report. Write them next to the numbers below:

1.

Action:

Resources:

Action:

Resources:

2.

Action:

Resources:

Action:

Resources:

Identify two ways (e.g., eat 5 servings of fruits or vegetables each day, get a physical and begin a walking program, etc.) you can improve in each of these areas. Be as specific as you can in determining the steps you should take (action) as well as any assistance required to be successful (resources).

## CONFIDENTIAL

In the space below, identify any additional action steps you want to take immediately.

Finally, review the recommended action steps that were provided in each area of this Feedback Report, and use the information to identify the behaviors you need to focus on immediately in order to become more effective. Establish your personal action plan and start your further development right now! Review your plan weekly, and update as needed. You'll be amazed at your progress if you follow through on your plan.

High Performing Systems is available to provide additional Learning and Support and to answer questions about this Report. Best wishes as you implement your ARSENAL™ Development Plan!

Henry L. Thompson, Ph.D.  
President & CEO  
High Performing Systems, Inc.  
Email: [dick@hpsys.com](mailto:dick@hpsys.com)  
[www.hpsys.com](http://www.hpsys.com)  
[www.TheStressEffect.com](http://www.TheStressEffect.com)  
Phone: 706-769-5836

## Reference

Thompson, H. L. (2010). *The Stress Effect: Why Smart Leaders Make Dumb Decisions—And What To Do About It*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## End Notes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Miller, J., Fletcher, K. and Kabat-Zinn, J. (1995). Three-year follow-up and clinical implications of a mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention in the treatment of anxiety disorders. *General Hospital Psychiatry* 17:192-200.
- <sup>2</sup> Mayo Clinic (2011). Relaxation techniques: Try These Steps to Reduce Stress. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/relaxation-technique/SR00007>
- <sup>3</sup> Vgontzas, A. N., Liao, D., Pejovic, S., Calhoun, S., Karataraki, M., Basta, M., Fernández-Mendoza, J., Bixler, E. O. Insomnia with short sleep duration and mortality: The Penn State Cohort. *SLEEP* 2010; 33(9):1159-1164.
- <sup>4</sup> Salem Press. (2009, October). Social Support and Mental Health. *Salem Health: Psychology & Mental Health*. Retrieved from [http://salempress.com/store/samples/psychology/psychology\\_social.htm](http://salempress.com/store/samples/psychology/psychology_social.htm)
- <sup>5</sup> Stein, R. (2005, November 15). A Daily Workout Could Add 4 Years to Life, Study Finds. *Washington Post*. Retrieved April 29, 2012 from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/14/AR2005111401051.html>
- <sup>6</sup> Abel, M. H. (2002). Humor, Stress, and Coping Strategies. *Humor*, 15(4), 265-282. Retrieved from <http://www.csulb.edu/~djorgens/abel.pdf>