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ARSENAL™ Individual Assessment Feedback Report



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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.

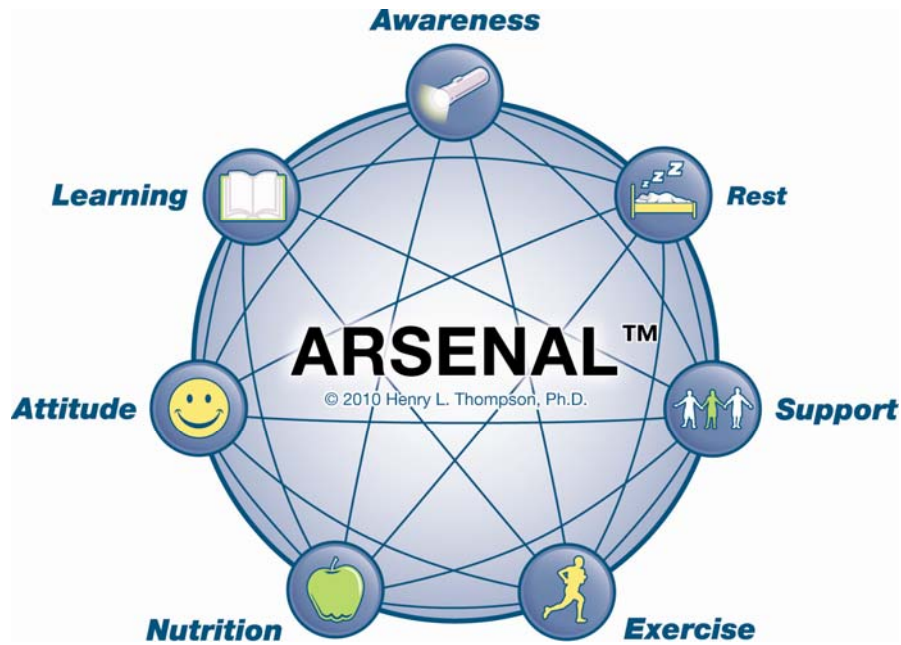


Figure 1
The ARSENAL™ Model

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).

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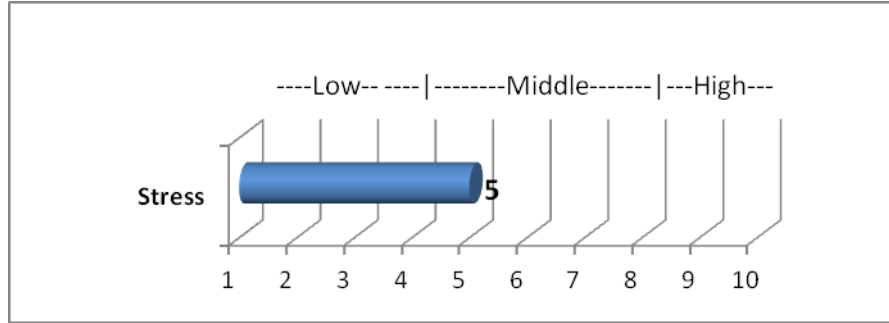


Figure 2
Stress Level Graph

Your responses indicate that your overall Current Stress Level (when you completed the questionnaire) allows you to relax and enjoy life. You probably seldom feel too tired or unmotivated to do your best and are focused when you need to be. As a result, you may find that stress rarely interferes with your ability to make good decisions. By applying the ARSENAL™ best practices, you can maintain your current level of stress so that you remain healthy and focused.

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.

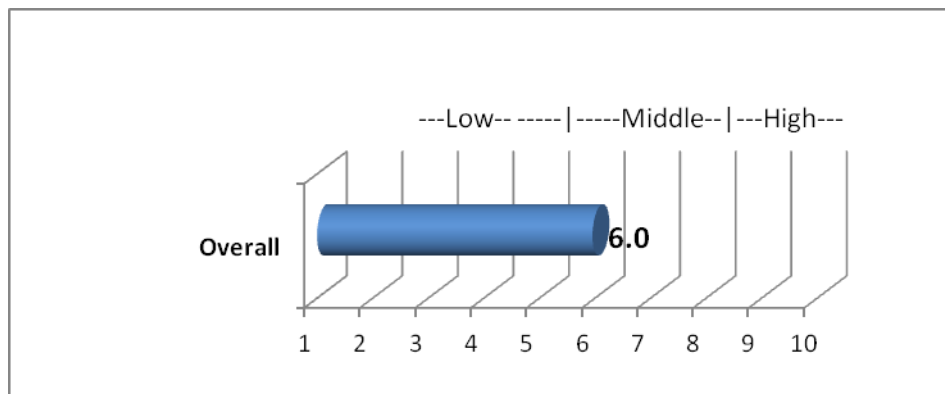


Figure 3
Overall ARSENAL™ Graph

Overall your results indicate that you have built a Stress Resilient System™ that is somewhat balanced and that probably allows you to function well most days. You may,

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however, find that a tendency to be inconsistent undermines your well-being just when you need to be at your best. You may use some of the ARSENAL™ best practices some of the time but may ignore them when you get rushed or are under pressure. The result of your inconsistency in several areas is that you may feel sluggish or overwhelmed during the times when you most need to be energetic and open to new ideas. You may want to work on a development plan that helps you build a more consistent Stress Resilient System™.

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 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.

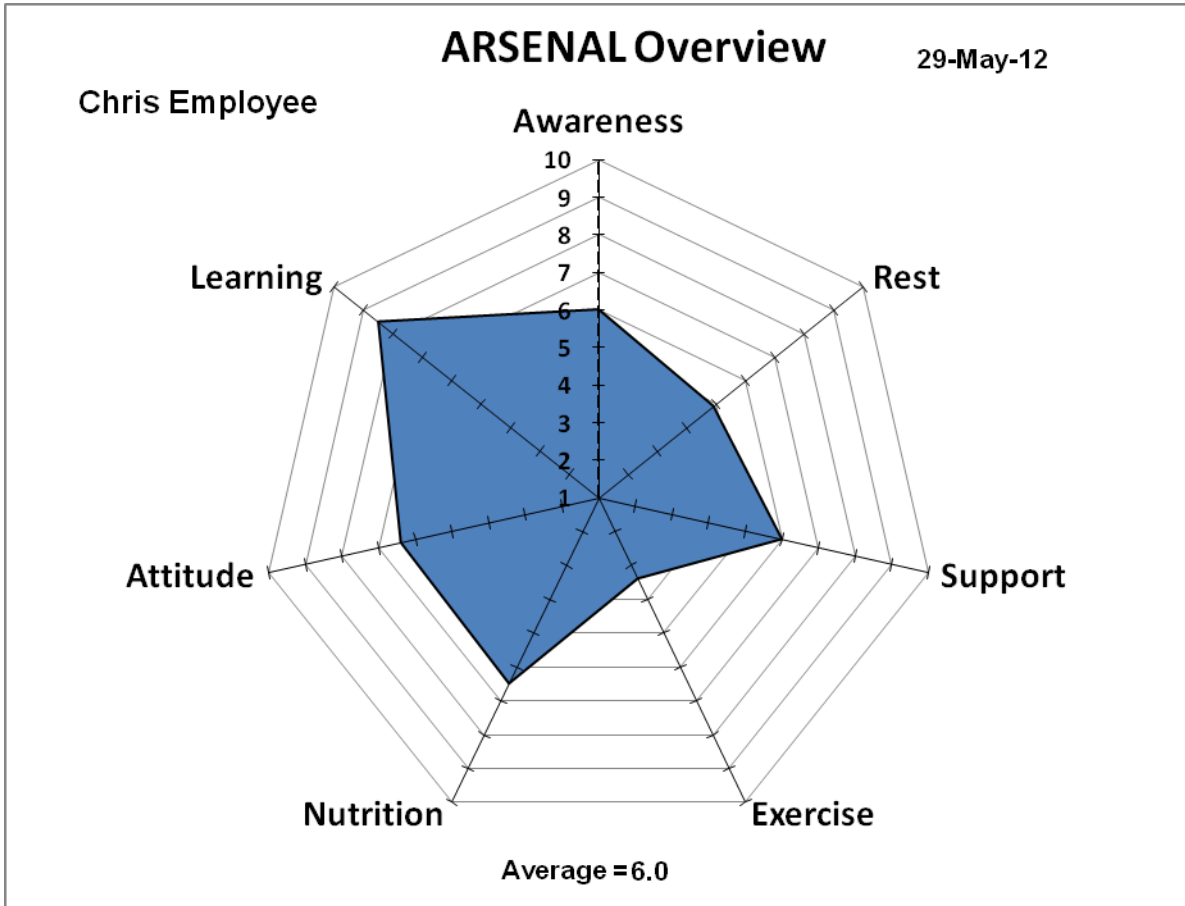


Figure 4
ARSENAL™ Subscale Graph

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



Awareness

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. Research¹ 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.

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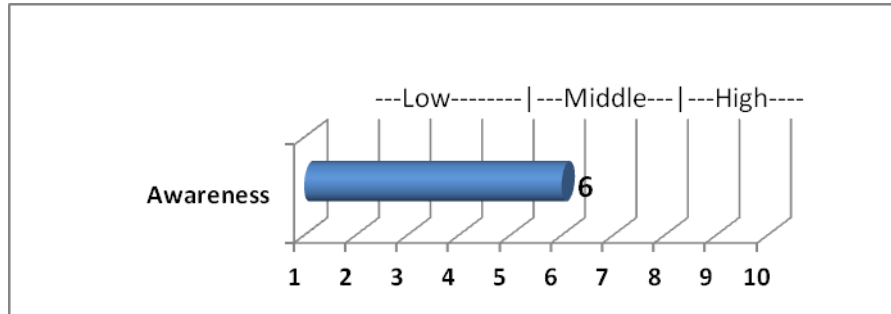


Figure 5
Awareness Graph

Your results indicate that you are tuned in to your environment in some situations but may not always be as focused as you could be. You may not always be aware of what you're feeling or why, which could impact your ability to be fully engaged in what you're experiencing. Raising your level of Awareness will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should develop an action plan to raise your Awareness. Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Take more time to focus on how you feel and what's happening around you.
- Develop strategies to employ at times when you feel yourself daydreaming instead of focusing on your immediate surroundings.
- Increase your attention to your energy level during periods when you are most likely to become tired or de-energized.
- Become more aware of and monitor physical or mental indicators that suggest high stress levels.
- It is important to take a few minutes once or twice a day to monitor your emotions, especially 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?" Challenge yourself to look deeper.
- 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

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accomplished in a multitude of ways. Relaxation², 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 study³ 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.

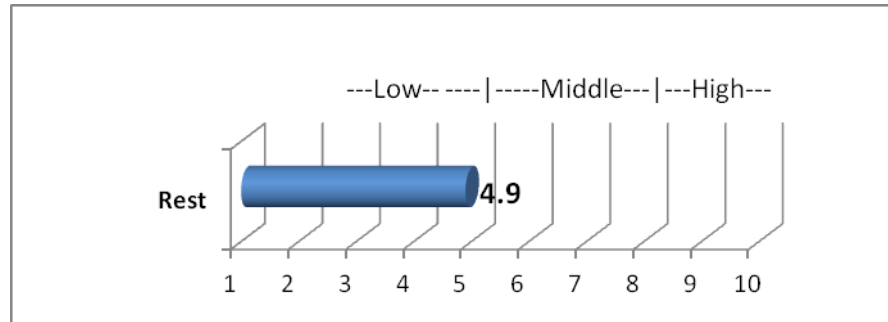


Figure 6
Rest Graph

Your results indicate that you may frequently feel tired or “drained” and fail to make downtime a priority. You may also schedule little time for sleeping or sleep poorly. You are at risk of serious effects to your health if you do not increase your level of Rest. Increasing the amount of sleep you get each night or taking naps/breaks during the day are good first steps. You should develop an action plan to raise your level of Rest as quickly as possible. Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Develop an evening ritual and avoid caffeine after 3 p.m. so that you can sleep well once you’ve gone to bed.
- Decide what time you need to go to sleep each night and develop an evening structure that helps you wind down and get to bed on time.
- Choose an activity that you enjoy and put it into your schedule at least once a week.
- Spend time each day focusing on activities that relax you, such as spending time with friends and family, listening to music or reading.
- Be as consistent as possible with the times you go to sleep and wake up each day, including weekends.
- Get 7 hours or more of sleep each day.
- Leave your office to eat lunch and/or take one or two short breaks daily so that you stay energized and productive throughout the day.
- Leave time each day to focus completely on your personal life.
- Evaluate your schedule when asked to take on additional tasks and decide whether the new task will energize or de-energize you; if your schedule is full or the new task might sap your energy, say “no.”
- Evaluate your personal and professional schedules and plan at least one 1-week vacation or several 3-day weekends in the next six months.

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- 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 found⁴ 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.

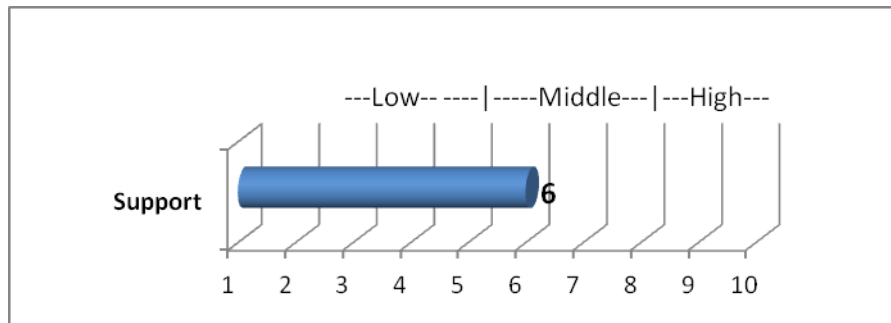


Figure 7
Support Graph

Your results indicate that you spend some time with friends and family but not on a regular basis. You may also feel that your relationships lack intimacy, or others may perceive you as somewhat of a loner. If you are not consistently getting adequate Support, times when you feel alone may take a negative toll on your well-being. You should develop an action plan to raise your Support to a consistent level. Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Take 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.

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- Make an effort to be less independent by asking for help in some situations when you normally wouldn't.
- Join at least one social or religious group and attend their meetings on a regular basis.
- Maintain a Support network that allows you 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 research⁵ 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!

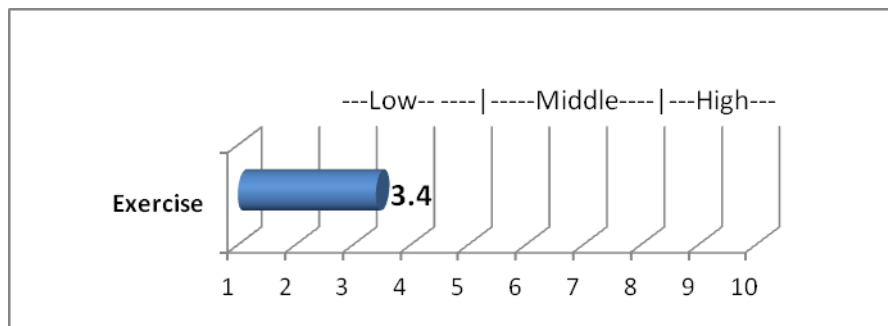


Figure 8
Exercise Graph

Your results indicate that you rarely Exercise or participate in physical sports. As a result, you feel sluggish and tire easily. You are at risk of developing health problems if you do not increase your level of Exercise. The good news is that a little effort in this area should have a big pay off! By doing something as simple as walking several times a week, you should see your energy level and stress resilience increase. You should develop an action plan to raise your Exercise as quickly as possible. Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

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- Get a physical before beginning an Exercise regimen.
- Participate in at least three 20-minute workouts a week, perhaps something as easy as walking.
- Document days or times when you feel sluggish and write down ways in which regular Exercise would raise your energy level and keep it where it needs to be.
- Create a fitness routine that includes a cardio, strength and stretching workout.
- Participate weekly in a physical sport.
- Recognize the importance of Exercise and compare your attitude about it to the attitude you have towards the importance of your job or your family.
- Schedule time to Exercise even when you are busy or tired, as a means of reducing your stress and increasing your energy level.
- Remember that too much Exercise too fast reduces your immune system's effectiveness—you may get sick from Exercise!

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



Nutrition

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.

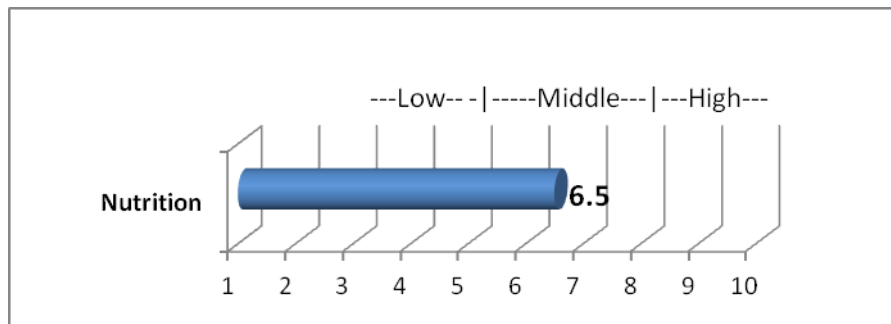


Figure 9
Nutrition Graph

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Your results indicate that you usually eat healthy foods and probably avoid consuming too much sugar, fat and caffeine. You probably track and maintain your body weight. Your results also indicate, however, that you may sometimes become inconsistent, with the result that your weight and energy level fluctuate. Nutrition will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should keep a food log for a few weeks and then develop an action plan to help you become more consistent. Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Consult your medical doctor before initiating any significant change to your Nutrition plan.
- 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.
- 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. Research⁶ 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.

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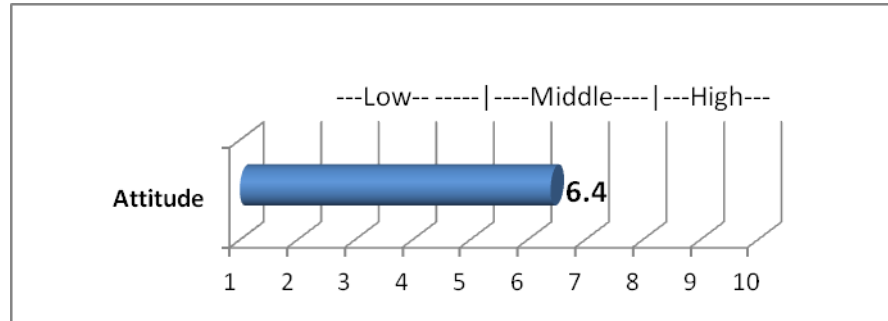


Figure 10
Attitude Graph

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. 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*

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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.

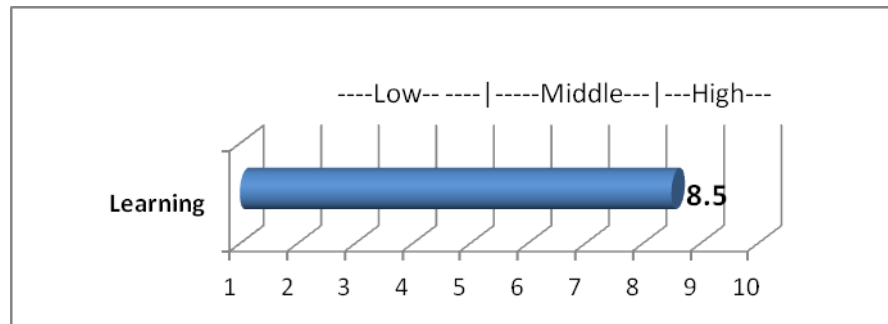


Figure 11
Learning Graph

Your results indicate that you like to Learn and are energized when you conquer a new area of study or skill. You actively seek knowledge and take advantage of new ways of Learning whenever you can. You should tap into your Learning as a tool to keep the other ARSENAL™ best practices in balance. Specific suggestions are provided below.

- Use your Learning to stay current on areas of interest and help maintain other ARSENAL™ best practices.
- Remember that the mind, as well as the body, needs Rest.
- Honing existing skills can be as important as Learning new ones.
- Resist a possible impulse to be an information junkie.
- Blend your Learning to balance intellectual knowledge with practical applications.
- Balance your love of Learning with the ability to take decisive action.
- Do not focus so much on Learning new skills or information that you fail to work in the areas in which you are already knowledgeable.

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.

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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.

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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).

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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!

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End Notes

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