

# ARSENAL™ REPORT



## John Doe Sample Report

1-Jun-10

## Section I: ARSENAL™ Overview

Stress can have a significant impact on your health, well-being and ability to make effective decisions. Fortunately, many tools are available to help you mitigate the negative impact of stress. 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™ 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 a 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.

## 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.

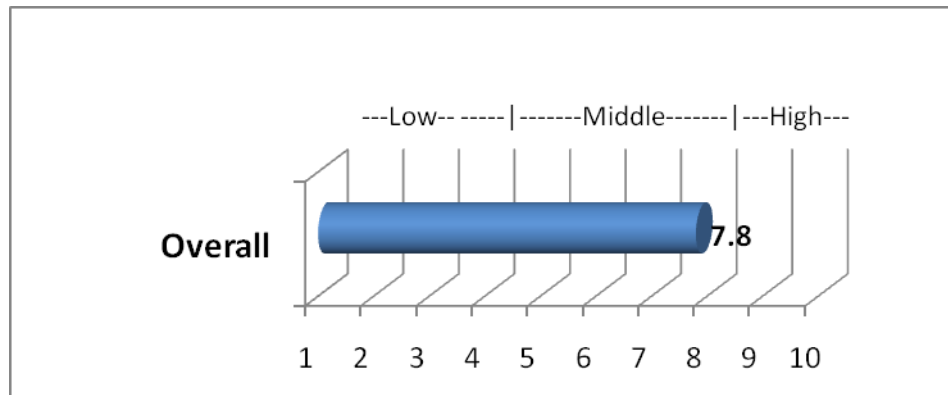


Figure 2  
Overall ARSENAL™ Graph

Overall your results indicate that you have a balanced Stress Resilient System™ that allows you to function well most days. You are usually focused on applying the ARSENAL™ best practices, although you become inconsistent at times. In general, however, you tolerate stress fairly well and are resilient in most situations. Although you have built a fairly well-balanced and 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 3 provides a visual preview of which best practice areas are your strongest and which areas need work. 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. 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 in the same direction.

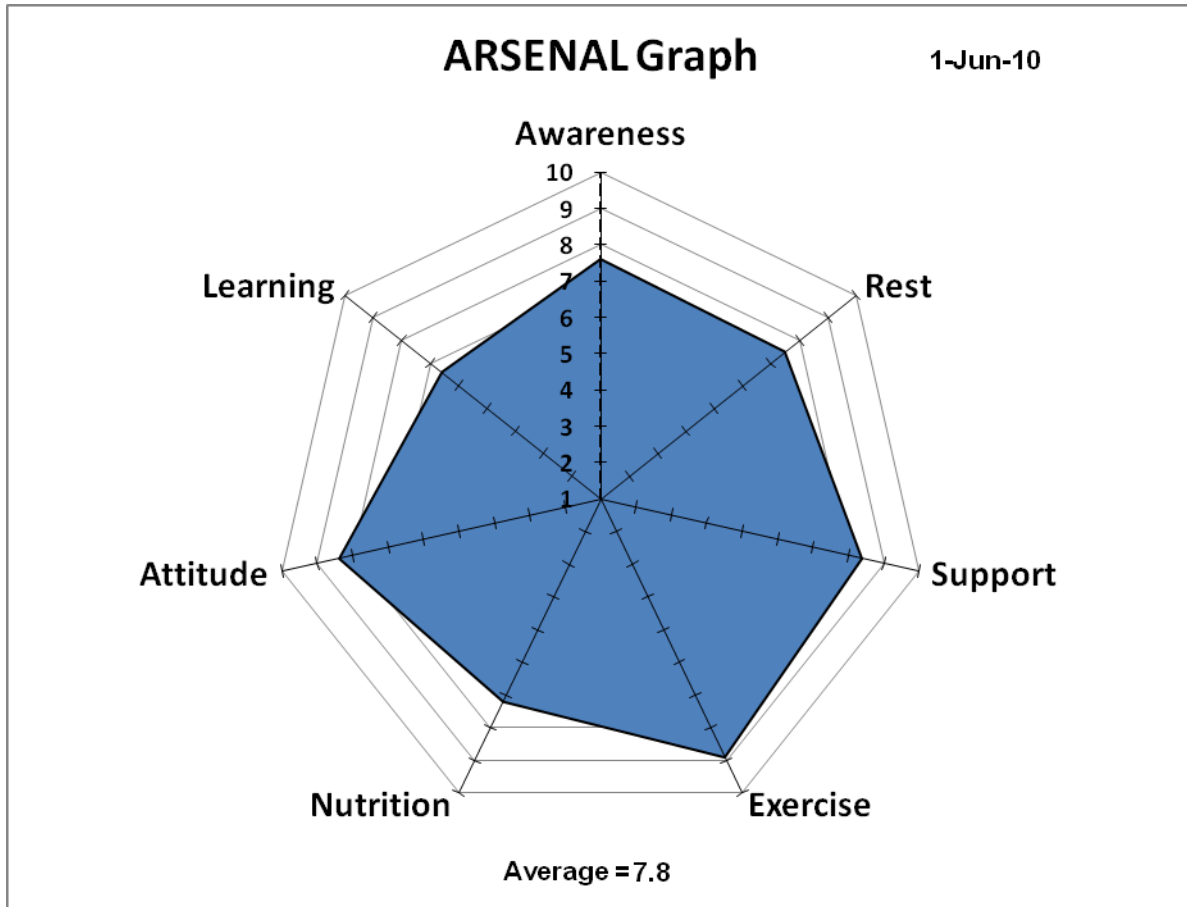


Figure 3  
ARSENAL™ Subscale Graph

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. 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.

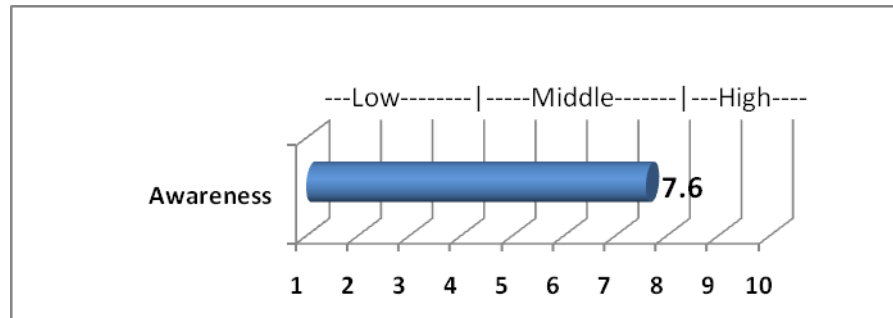


Figure 4  
Awareness Graph

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. 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

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. Sleep is the most critical piece of Rest. Most people need at least 7 hours of sleep a night.

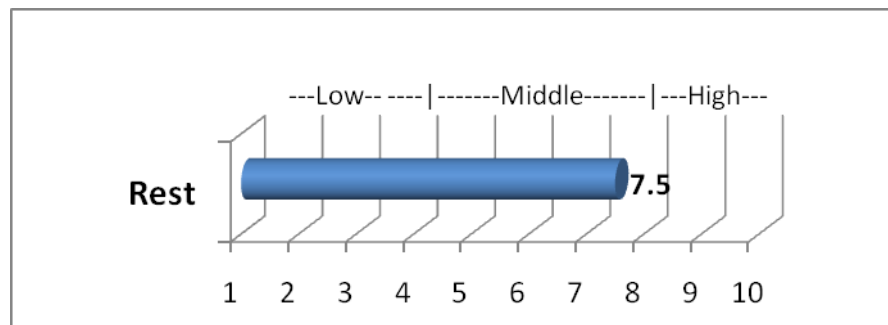


Figure 5  
Rest Graph

Your results indicate that, in general, you balance your personal time with your obligations and get adequate Rest. As a result, you generally feel energized and mentally sharp. You may find, however, that you go through periods when you do not get as much Rest as you need or take on more than you can handle. Getting adequate Rest will help you take better advantage of the other ARSENAL™ best practices. You should explore whether you tend to get less Rest at certain times or under certain circumstances and develop an action plan to help you become more consistent. Specific suggestions for development are provided below.

- Be as consistent as possible with the times you go to sleep and wake up each day, including weekends.
- It is important to get 7 hours or more of sleep each day even if you are especially busy.
- Participate in leisure activities that you enjoy at least once a week even when you are busy.
- Spend some time every day participating in activities that help you relax.
- 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

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, lots of friends and close family ties* on the high end. 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.

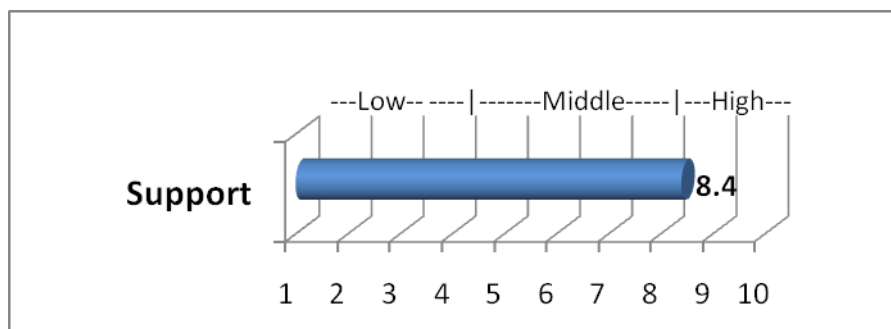


Figure 6  
Support Graph

Your results indicate that you have strong Support from friends and family members and stay in touch with them on a regular basis. When you need help, you ask for it with the expectation that others will be there for you. Likewise, you provide Support for friends and family when they need your help. These Support networks help you achieve your goals and maintain a healthy balance. You should tap into Support as a tool to keep the other ARSENAL™ best practices in balance. Specific suggestions are provided below.

- Use your Support to maintain a good balance between work and your personal life even during times when you are especially busy.
- Use your Support network to get honest feedback so that you remain balanced and aware.
- Monitor how often you use your Support network to make sure that others do not perceive you as being needy.
- Don't let others take advantage of your Support—know when to say “no” to others.
- Evaluate your level of dependence on others to make sure that you do not undermine your self-confidence or use your Support network too much.
- Be careful not to engage others so much that you do not get your work done.

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

## Exercise

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.

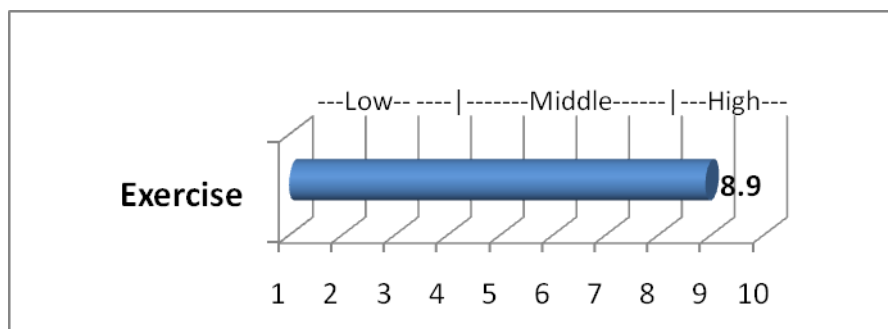


Figure 7  
Exercise Graph

Your results indicate that you Exercise on a regular basis and recognize the benefits of Exercise in reducing stress and staying healthy. You make Exercise a priority and may even feel guilty if you miss a workout. You should tap into your Exercise as a tool to keep the other ARSENAL™ best practices in balance. Specific suggestions 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.
- Be careful of the image you project to others; people who are not as physically fit may be intimidated by you. Be a good example without being arrogant.
- Rest your body at least two days a week so that your muscles have time to rebuild.
- It is important to vary your fitness routine to include a combination of cardio, strength and stretching exercises.
- Make sure that you do not become obsessed with Exercise and workout too much or too hard.
- Vary Exercise with other forms of stress reduction, such as relaxation.

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.

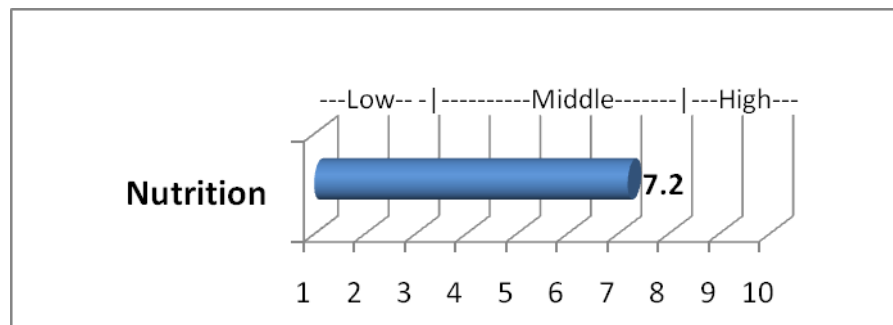


Figure 8  
Nutrition Graph

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*.

## Attitude

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. 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. Track your overall Attitude for a few months, and you will discover how much it varies.

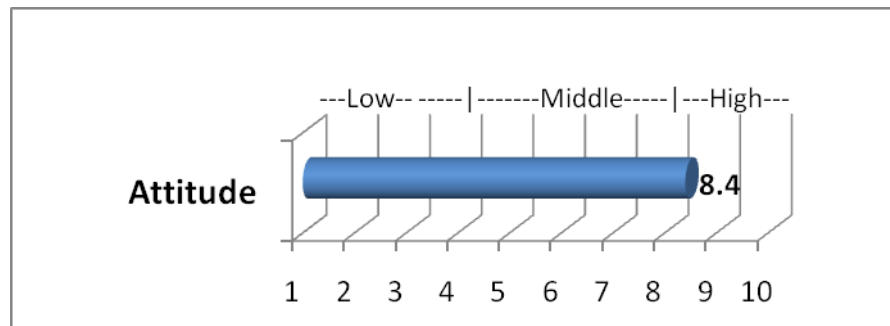


Figure 9  
Attitude Graph

Your results indicate that you are energized by life and confident that you can accomplish your goals. You rarely gossip or make negative comments about others and work well with your team. You should tap into your Attitude as a tool to keep the other ARSENAL™ best practices in balance. Specific suggestions are provided below.

- Use your Attitude to take on challenging projects that stretch your skills and self-confidence.
- Use your Attitude to balance your overall well-being during periods when you don't get the Rest or Exercise you need.
- Balance optimism with a realistic appraisal of situations.
- Balance your happy disposition with seriousness.

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

## Learning

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.

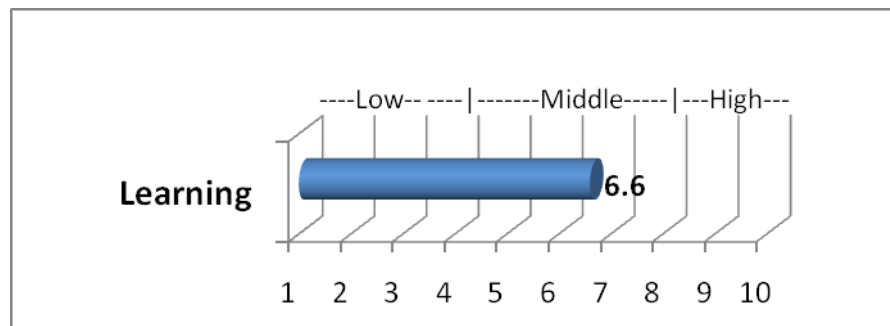


Figure 10  
Learning Graph

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. 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 practices are presented separately, keep in mind that they are part of a system: each of the seven 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 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.

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).

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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## Reference

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