Common Stress Reactions - A Self-Assessment

Think about how you know you are experiencing stress by marking the reactions you commonly have. This is for your personal use and will not be shared. (This chart was adapted from CMHS. Rev. Ed., 2002).

Behavioral:
- Change in activity level
- Decreased efficiency and effectiveness
- Difficulty communicating
- Increased sense of humor/gallows humor
- Irritability, outburst of anger, frequent arguments
- Inability to rest, relax or let down
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in job performance
- Periods of crying
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, drug, sugar or caffeine
- Hyper-vigilance about safety or the surrounding environment
- Avoidance of activities or places that trigger memories
- Accident prone

Physical:
- Increased heart rate and respirations
- Increased blood pressure
- Upset stomach, nausea, diarrhea
- Increased or decreased appetite which may be accompanied by weight loss or gain
- Sweating or chills
- Tremor or Muscle twitching
- Muffled hearing
- Tunnel vision
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Headaches
- Sore or aching muscles
- Light sensitive vision
- Lower back pain
- Feeling a “lump in the throat”
- Easily startled
- Fatigue that does not improve with sleep
- Menstrual cycle changes
- Change in sexual desire or response
- Decreased resistance to cold, flu, infections
- Flare up of allergies, asthma, or arthritis
- Hair loss

Psychological / Emotional:
- Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
- Denial
- Anxiety or fear
- Worry about safety of self or others
- Irritability or anger
- Restlessness
- Sadness, moodiness, grief or depression
- Vivid or distressing dreams
- Guilt or "survivor guilt:
- Feeling overwhelmed, helpless or hopeless
- Feeling isolated, lost, lonely, or abandoned
- Apathy
- Over identification with survivors
- Feeling misunderstood or unappreciated

Cognitive:
- Memory problems / forgetfulness
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Slowness of thinking, analyzing or comprehending
- Difficulty calculating, setting priorities or making decisions
- Difficulty concentrating
- Limited attention span
- Loss of objectivity
- Inability to stop thinking about the stressor

Social:
- Withdrawing or isolating from people
- Difficulty listening
- Difficulty sharing Ideas
- Difficulty engaging in mutual problem solving / working with others
- Blaming
- Criticizing
- Intolerance of group process
- Difficulty in giving or accepting support or help
- Impatient with or disrespectful to other