

 **STRESS WARNING SIGNS**

The first step to reduce a negative stress reaction in your life is to be able to recognize the signs of emerging stress. The following are warning signs that stress is in your life, and most likely others are also feeling your stress.

1. **Thoughts racing out of control.** If you notice that you cannot seem to stop your mind from racing from one thing to another like crazy, and/or you find that you cannot seem to focus on any one thing, you may be on the cusp of being stressed to the max.
2. **Muscle tightness, tension or twitching.** Are your shoulders rising up to your ears? Or is your back or stomach tightening up into a knot? Or, is your eye muscle twitching like crazy? These are all possible signs that you are internalizing stress.
3. **Shallow breathing.** How is your breathing? Are they quick, little breaths? People tend to hold their breath and breathe shallowly when they are getting stressed.
4. **Low-grade or sudden nervousness, anger, sadness or guilt.** Do not ignore these obvious signs of stress in the making.
5. **Chewing nervously on lips, fingernails, pencils, toothpicks, food, etc.** Are you trying to chew your stress away on whatever you can get in your mouth?
6. **Negative or fearful thinking.** You become what you think. Thinking negatively and fearing possible future outcomes is a sign of stress!
7. **Increased heart rate and/or blood pressure.** Your heart rate and blood pressure may be signs of stress. Notice your breathing.
8. **Change in appetite.** Your appetite is a great indicator of your level of stress. If your appetite suddenly increases or disappears, perceived or real stress may be present.
9. **Clutching things in your hands with a tense grip.** Squeezing the daylights out of whatever is in your hands may be an indicator of ignoring something stressful.
10. **Spacing out.** A lot of people have adopted the survival mechanism of spacing out when they feel stressed. If this sounds like you, check in on whether you have checked out.

Originally submitted by Ronya Banks, Mind Power Leadership coach and popular author of Mind Power articles, [rbanks@ronyabanks.com](mailto:rbanks@ronyabanks.com).  
© 2000-2004 CoachVille, LLC. May be distributed if full attribution is given and copyright is acknowledged.

**Perceived Stress Level:** A free tool and resource rich website on resilience and well-being. This is a measure of the degree to which you are experiencing stress in your various life situations. To take the assessment, visit <http://www.roadtowellbeing.ca/stress.html>.