

# ON THE BRINK OF BURNOUT?

**The Changemaker Stress Test**

# By Erin O'Brien

Chief Encouragement Officer at Activate28


[www.activate28.com](http://www.activate28.com)

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# Are **you** on the brink of burnout?

Does any of this sound familiar?

You don't get enough sleep. Your mind constantly races with everything you need to do. Your inbox makes never-ending demands of you. Personal commitments have been sacrificed because of a deadline. At night, you sometimes wake up with a jolt, tense with worry. Will the project survive? Will there be enough money? Will I actually make a difference? Will it wear me out?



We changemakers are an interesting lot. A lucky lot, too. For the most part, we get to do stuff that matters to us. Stuff that has a positive impact on our local community or the world at large.

People often admire us, respect us. Sometimes they even envy us. "You're so lucky to do meaningful work," they say. But rarely do they see what it's *really* like.

On the outside, many of us changemakers appear to be doing well. But behind the façade, things aren't always so rosy. We may be teetering on the edge of failure. Barely holding it all together. Feeling plain-and-simple exhausted.

There are some serious challenges with changemaking work. Sure, it may be semi-acceptable to admit there are problems with the *work* itself – you know, to complain about the crazy pace, an annoying client or bureaucratic hurdles – but anything more personal than that?

That's pretty much taboo.


There aren't many places where we can be real, so we go on pretending that everything is just fine (thank you very much).

## **It all boils down to this unspoken assumption:**

“If you're solving the world's problems,  
then you should be able to solve your own problems  
without any help.”

In other words: Don't admit you're weak. Just try harder and figure things out on your own.

Well, frankly, that's bullshit.



# Time for a reality check.

The first crucial step is to actually see what's going on. To open your eyes and have a real hard look at reality. I want to make it easy for you because finding the time + mental space is practically impossible when you're caught up in the day-to-day busy.

So give yourself some time – 15 minutes should be plenty – to do the Changemaker Stress Test that follows. I highly recommend you do it now unless you have a really, truly good reason to wait till later.

(And if you decide that, yes, you'll do it later, be kind to your brain. Take a moment now to pop it in your calendar, set your alarm or email yourself with "Do Changemaker Stress Test" in the subject title).

By the end of the Changemaker Stress Test, you'll have clarity about where you fit on the stress spectrum + have some resources at your fingertips to start making changes. And when I say 'change', for once we're not talking about changing the *world*. I'm talking about changes inside *you* – positive, healthy, sustainable, incremental improvements to your wellbeing. So that you can keep doing the awesome work you're doing without burning out.

For this tool to work properly, it's important to get real with yourself. To take a gulp of honesty. This *isn't* a place where you need to keep up appearances – it's a chance to get your truth on.

But don't worry. No one else will be looking at this. It's top secret confidential. For your eyes only. (Unless, of course, you *want* to share it with someone. Which you're more than welcome to do.)

# The Changemaker Stress Test

In the following pages, you'll find a series of questions across 4 distinct yet overlapping categories:

Physical Stress

Psychological Stress

Relationship Stress

Financial Stress

For each question, rate yourself using this scale:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always

You can print this PDF or just jot down your scores on a piece of paper. **Be sure to record your scores somewhere because you'll need to total them at the end.**

Alright, are you ready?

# Physical Stress

Your rating 0-5

(see scale below)

1. I have tension in my shoulders, back or jaw.	
2. I feel exhausted.	
3. I feel both wired and tired.	
4. I have trouble sleeping.	
5. I skip meals or eat late.	
6. I avoid regular exercise.	
7. I get headaches or migraines.	
8. I need caffeine, drugs or alcohol to help me relax, sleep or stay awake.	
9. When I take time off, I often get sick.	
10. I spend long hours at the computer.	

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always

# Psychological Stress

1. I get easily overwhelmed.					
2. I can't switch off. My mind races constantly.					
3. I'm easily distracted and have trouble concentrating.					
4. I feel like there's never enough time.					
5. I procrastinate.					
6. I'm a perfectionist.					
7. I get hung up on my past mistakes.					
8. I'm more critical of myself than I am of others.					
9. I don't take time to celebrate my successes. I move straight onto the next thing.					
10. I prioritise working over having time-out or a vacation.					
0 Never	1 Rarely	2 Occasionally	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always



# Psychological Stress (part 2)

11. I feel overly responsible for my projects and/or my clients.	
12. I feel hopeless when I think about the problems in the world.	
13. I compare myself to others and feel inadequate.	
14. I'm scared people will think I'm a failure.	
15. I feel like what I'm doing isn't good enough.	
16. I'm scared of admitting my weaknesses.	
17. I think about quitting because my work feels like too much.	
18. I fluctuate between feeling 'on top of the world' and feeling lethargic.	
19. I have episodes of depression, anxiety or panic attacks.	
20. I have thoughts of self-harm or suicide.	

0                      1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Never                  Rarely                  Occasionally                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always

# Relationship Stress

1. My work puts strain on my personal relationships.	
2. My professional relationships feel stretched or strained.	
3. I have trouble saying no and setting boundaries.	
4. My friends and family say that I'm not as available as I used to be.	
5. I feel alone. I don't have a community of people who understand what it's like.	

0  
Never

1  
Rarely

2  
Occasionally

3  
Sometimes

4  
Often

5  
Always

# Financial Stress

1. I worry about money.	
2. I feel vague around my money. I'm not clear on what's coming in or what's going out.	
3. I have more debt than I feel comfortable with.	
4. I have no contingency fund or savings for unforeseen circumstances.	
5. I need to outsource, but don't have the money to hire anyone.	

0  
Never

1  
Rarely

2  
Occasionally

3  
Sometimes

4  
Often

5  
Always

# Now write all your scores here:

Physical Stress (out of 50) \_\_\_\_\_

Psychological Stress (out of 100) \_\_\_\_\_

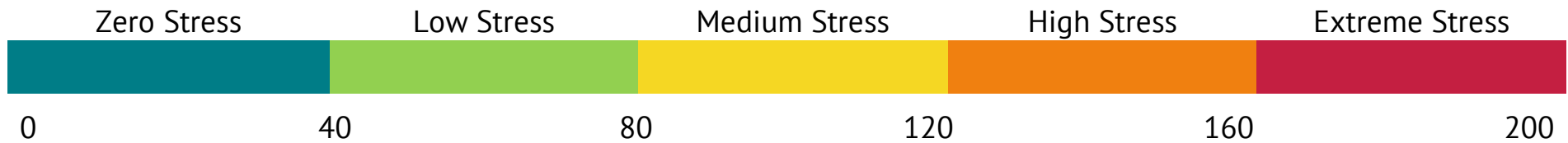
Social Stress (out of 25) \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Stress (out of 25) \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** (out of 200) \_\_\_\_\_

This is your Changemaker Stress Score.

## Next, place your Changemaker Stress Score on the stress-o-meter:



Before moving on to the next page, take a moment. I have a question for you. (But before I ask it, take a breath. Yes. Breathe. And another. And just for the sake of it, this time a really deep belly-breath.)

My question is: **What was your reaction when you saw your Changemaker Stress Score on the stress-o-meter?**

Were you surprised? Shocked? Perplexed? Did it 'land' really well in your body? Did your mind come up with some crazy chatter-story? Did you want to tell someone? Or hide under a rock?

Take a moment to write your answer (with a pen or simply in your mind) here:

When I saw my total, my initial reaction was ...

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So now you're clear on where you sit on a stress spectrum and you've also paid attention to your reaction.

FYI, whatever your reaction, it's 100% legitimate. Sometimes seeing that result can be reassuring. Sometimes it's a wakeup call. Sometimes you experience blatant denial. Or a whole range of other reactions. It's all normal.

FYI #2: It's also normal to experience seemingly 'contradictory' reactions simultaneously. Or for your reactions to shift. Like one moment you might feel sweet relief ... and a second later, whoosh, you're hit with this intense feeling inside and you want to throw the results page out the window!

However you're feeling, it's totally valid.



## So what are you going to do about it?

Consider the Changemaker Stress Test to be a catalyst for you to start making impactful, positive changes in your life. Armed with your Changemaker Stress Score, you can now move towards solutions.

(The other alternative? You can impersonate an ostrich and (re)bury your head in the sand.)

# Solutions, solutions ...

First, it's critical to mention this:

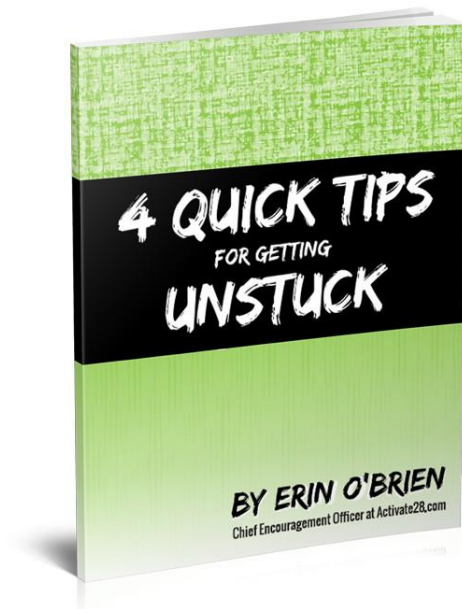
If you scored close to 200 (the max), or if you're really struggling to function, I highly recommend you see a health care professional such as a doctor or counsellor. Likewise, if you are feeling suicidal or worry that you could harm yourself or others, please ring a telephone helpline like [Lifeline Australia](#) (or the equivalent national support line in your country).

It is a sign of strength when you know it's time to call in the professionals.



If you need other types of support / guidance / advice, look to the following page for suggestions.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, stuck, perfectionist-y or procrastinate-y, I recommend my other eBook:  
4 Quick Tips for Getting Unstuck.



This is a super-easy-reading, massive-headings-with-plenty-of-white-space type of eBook. It contains the most popular advice I've given my clients. Hundreds of people have told me that at least one of these tips has made a BIG difference to how they approach their life and work.

I wonder which of the four tips will be *your* favourite?!



You're also welcome to **drop me a line** at [erinobrien1978@gmail.com](mailto:erinobrien1978@gmail.com) to book a coaching session. Prices start at \$160 USD.

Sometimes we simply need to be seen. To be witnessed. To know that 'someone out there' is aware that we exist and that we're feeling stressed.

I'm willing to be that person for you if you need it.

Warm regards,  
Erin



Erin O'Brien  
Chief Encouragement Officer  
Activate28

**Find out more here:**

Website: [www.activate28.com](http://www.activate28.com)

Email: [erinobrien1978@gmail.com](mailto:erinobrien1978@gmail.com)

**A LITTLE BIT OF STRESS**

**IS HEALTHY.**

**A LOT IS NOT.**

**What are you going to do about it?**