



## Identifying the Things in Your Life That Drain And Sustain You

### Step One:

Use the following table to list the stressors you experience in different areas of your life. Your list may include events, circumstances, people, or anything else you choose to include.

<b>Work Stressors</b>
<b>Health</b>
<b>Financial</b>
<b>Family</b>
<b>Social</b>
<b>Other</b>

## Step 2:

Take a look at your list and choose one that you would like to work through using the AWARE (Ask, Wonder, Alternative, Result, Enact) strategy. To practice this strategy, it's a good idea to start small – so don't pick the stressor that feels most difficult or emotionally-charged. The goal of this strategy is to examine how you currently approach a stressor – how you perceive it, interpret it, react to it and act on it – and how you might change your perception, interpretation, reaction and action to reduce the stressor, have a more positive outcome and feel better.

**Stressor/Problem:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### ASK: How do I currently deal with this issue?

When I (hear, see, experience this stressor),

- I **think** (identify your thought, belief, interpretation):

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- As a result of my thought, I **feel** (identify your emotional reaction):

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- Based on this emotional reaction, I **respond** (identify your action(s) or behavior):

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**Wonder: Are the results working out the way I want them to? Why or why not?**

- **Yes** – the results are in line with my goals and values (therefore no need to change):

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- **No** – handling the stressor in this way has negative consequences

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**Alternative: What other choice(s) could I make to deal with this stressor?**

- **Could I interpret the stressor differently?**

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- **If I interpreted it differently, might my emotional response to it change as well?**

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- **If I my emotional response was different, might I react in a more effective or productive way?**

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- **Might the outcome be more in line with my goals and values?**

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**Result: Does this alternative way of responding lead to a “win” for me, my life, my relationships?**

- **What would my new choice give me that my prior choice does not, and how does it help me take care of myself in a functional way?**

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- **Would this new choice have a positive impact on my relationship(s)? Would it take into account the needs and feelings of others as well as my own?**

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**Enact: How, specifically, could I put this new choice into action?**

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### **Step 3:**

Recognizing that dealing with life’s stresses takes physical and emotional energy, it’s helpful to identify the positive sources of energy in your life. Perhaps there are some you want to develop further and others you’d like to cultivate for the first time. Look at the following list and check the good fuel sources you already have in your life. Then go through the list again and mark any you would like to try to enhance. The goal is to ensure that your sources of positive energy are greater than the stresses that drain you.

### **Social Relationships**

- I have supportive and caring friends/family
- I can share my concerns about MS with family and friends
- I enjoy closeness and companionship with special friends

- I am engaged in satisfying social activities with others
- I have a pet that gives me companionship and affection
- I share my life with a soul mate
- I have a relationship in which my sexual needs are met
- I have relationships that inspires me to be the best I can be
- I have a supportive network on which I can rely

## **Work**

- I feel secure in my job
- I feel fulfilled by the work I am doing
- I feel supported and accommodated by my employer
- My workload is manageable
- I have a pleasant relationship with co-workers
- I have adapted my work area and responsibilities in ways that accommodate by needs and optimize my performance
- I feel safe in my work environment
- I have gone on disability and feel good about it
- I am able to balance my work with other priorities in my life
- My identity includes what I do as well as who I am

## **Mental/Emotional**

- I manage my finances to I don't have to worry about them
- I have adequate health insurance that I can afford
- I know that my needs for medical treatment are being met
- I feel financially secure because I maintain a system of savings
- I feel calm and peaceful much of the time
- I express my emotions in fulfilling and appropriate ways
- Knowing that MS can be associated with major mood changes, I pay attention to my moods and get help with significant mood changes if they occur
- I feel happy and content much of the time

- I feel confident in my ability to solve problems and access the tools and resources I need
- I feel confident in my ability to manage whatever challenges the future may bring

### **Physical**

- I follow a healthy, low-fat diet that includes fruits, vegetables, lean protein and fiber
- I get enough sleep each night and feel rested when I wake up
- I regularly participate in exercise of various types – stretching, strength training, aerobic training
- I am able to access the healthcare I need
- I see my neurologist and primary care provider on a regular basis
- My doctor visits and health care needs require a manageable amount of time
- My symptoms are managed (with medication, rehabilitation strategies, mobility devices) so that I can function safely and independently, without discomfort
- I am able to manage my bladder and bowel functioning
- I have enough energy to accomplish my daily tasks and engage socially

### **Environment**

- My home is comfortable, adapted to my needs and decorated in a way that gives me pleasure
- My home is located conveniently, allowing me access to work, community, and social activities
- I feel safe and secure in my neighborhood
- My closets, garage and storage areas are organized, neat and accessible to me
- My transportation needs are met, either with a functioning car that I can safely drive and/or accessible public transportation
- The air quality in my area is good and I have plenty of access to fresh air.