

READING YOUR BODY IN REAL TIME

INTRODUCTION

Your body can be your most trusted ally in evaluating whether you are on track to respond or to react. As we have discussed, your body and facial expressions reveal your internal state. When you are primed internally to fight, you frown, grimace, pace, fidget, clench your teeth, and even sometimes pound the table. When you are primed internally to flee, you may have that deer-in-the-headlights look: your face is flushed; you turn away and even cringe or cower. In contrast, when you are primed to engage, you appear relaxed yet energetic. Your face and posture convey openness and a sense of positive expectancy. You lean in, not away from.

For decades, psychologists have known that by shifting your behavior, you can change your internal state, and vice versa.¹ Like most other people, you exhibit distinct and unique patterns of behavior when you are in responsive and reactive modes. A keen awareness of what happens when you are angry, afraid, energized, or engaged is key to making that shift from responding to reacting when necessary. This next test helps to increase your awareness of your specific behavioral patterns.

INSTRUCTIONS

In tables 10.1 and 10.2, circle the number that reflects how frequently you experience these signs of responsiveness and reactivity in the face of stressful situations. Then calculate what your scores show:

TABLE 10.1 SIGNS OF ADRENALINE RESPONSIVENESS

When I'm in a stressful situation, I feel . . .	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never
1. Enthusiastic	5	4	3	2	1
2. Hopeful	5	4	3	2	1
3. Engaged	5	4	3	2	1
4. Energetic	5	4	3	2	1
5. Curious	5	4	3	2	1
6. Resilient	5	4	3	2	1
7. Creative	5	4	3	2	1
8. Proactive	5	4	3	2	1
9. Open-minded	5	4	3	2	1

TABLE 10.2 SIGNS OF ADRENALINE REACTIVITY

When I'm in a stressful situation, I feel . . .	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never
1. Frustrated	5	4	3	2	1
2. Anxious	5	4	3	2	1
3. Close minded	5	4	3	2	1
4. Angry	5	4	3	2	1
5. Tense	5	4	3	2	1
6. Hyperactive	5	4	3	2	1
7. Worried	5	4	3	2	1
8. Indecisive	5	4	3	2	1
9. Self-critical	5	4	3	2	1

YOUR RESULTS

Add up your points for 1 through 9 for table 10.1.

Total score: _____

What Your Responsiveness Score Shows

- 36–45 Substantial responsiveness
- 21–35 Moderate responsiveness
- 9–20 Minimal responsiveness

Add up your points for 1 through 9 for table 10.2.

Total score: _____

What Your Reactivity Score Shows

- 36–45 Substantial reactivity
- 21–35 Moderate reactivity
- 9–20 Minimal reactivity

CONCLUSION

This questionnaire is designed to remind you that adrenaline serves two masters: responsiveness and reactivity. Reflect on the patterns of your internal signals so that you can quickly assess which track you are on the next time you encounter a stressful situation.

Download copies of these tests at DrKathyCramer.com, and ask one or two close friends or colleagues to fill them out. This will help you get a better understanding of how others view your responses and reactions to stress.

