

What's your freakout face?

1. You're stuck in traffic and late for an important meeting.

What do you do?

- a) Panic. I'm probably going to get fired, or at least scolded by my boss.
- b) I get depressed because I feel like I can't do anything right.
- c) Start cursing everyone on the road.
- d) Arrive late, don't go to the meeting at all, and try to avoid my boss for three days.
- e) Queue up another podcast and wait patiently.

2. You're having a dinner party and the main course was a disaster. What's your first reaction?

- a) My heart starts pounding. What is everyone going to eat?!?
- b) I'm so upset I might cry in front of my guests.
- c) Make a guttural noise and slam a bunch of pots and pans around.
- d) Pretend like everything is fine and hope everyone else does, too.
- e) Eh, it's not a big deal. We can order pizza.

3. You've been asked to give an important toast at a friend's wedding. How do you feel the morning of?

- a) Sick to my stomach with nerves.
- b) I can't believe they put their trust in me. I'm terrible at this stuff.
- c) I hate this kind of thing and I'm already in a bad mood.
- d) I... um... haven't exactly prepared.
- e) Fine. Why?

4. You think you messed up on a big exam. Results are in tomorrow. What's going through your head?

- a) Literally every question, over and over again, and I won't be sleeping tonight.
- b) I'm such a pathetic failure.
- c) I feel like screaming. I fucking blew it.
- d) Let's just say it's going to be a while before I even look at the results.
- e) I'll figure it out when the time comes.

5. The current state of world politics has you feeling mostly—

- a) Terrified for the future.
- b) Hopeless.
- c) Incandescent with rage.
- d) I can't think about it.
- e) I'm pretty Zen, tbh.

6. You're on vacation. The weather is ruining all your plans.

How do you feel?

- a) Anxious about wasting money on this trip.
- b) This stuff always happens to me. I'm so tired of being disappointed all the time.
- c) I used my vacation days on this? Fuck, fuck, FUCK!
- d) I'm going to bed. For three days.
- e) Who wants to play Boggle?

7. You've had a weird rash for a while and you should go to the doctor.

- a) I'm going to die, aren't I?
- b) I'm gross. I don't even want to leave my house, let alone go to the doctor.
- c) Dammit, I don't have time for this shit.
- d) Yeah, I'll get on that sometime in the nonspecific future.
- e) It doesn't seem like a big deal, but okay, I'll make an appointment.

8. Work is stressful lately. What's your go-to coping mechanism?

- a) I don't have time to cope. I'm too busy freaking out about getting everything done.
- b) It's hard enough to get out of bed and go to work. There is no coping.
- c) I like to throw things at other things, such as "staplers" and "walls."
- d) I'm a big fan of "ignoring it and hoping it will go away."
- e) I just relax when I get home. Doesn't everybody?

9. Your sister brings her obnoxious boyfriend to your birthday party uninvited. How do you handle it?

- a) What if I say something and she makes a scene? This could go badly. It's giving me a headache just thinking about it.
- b) I'm just sad that she doesn't care about me enough to respect my birthday.
- c) Have a go at her and kick him out, consequences be damned.
- d) I'm not going to bring it up. Ever.
- e) That kind of shit doesn't really bother me.

10. If a tree falls in the forest, it—

- a) Makes you worried about getting hit by a falling tree.
- b) Makes you sad that a tree has died.
- c) Makes you angry about deforestation and climate change.
- d) Makes you unwilling to face the effects of deforestation and climate change.
- e) Makes no difference to your life whatsoever.

If you got mostly As...



ANXIOUS

What it looks like: Anxiety comes in many forms, and for the uninitiated it can sometimes be hard to label. For example, you may think you've got a touch of food poisoning, when your upset stomach is actually due to anxiety. Or you might think you've been poisoned when really you're just having an old-fashioned panic attack. (Been there, thought that.)

Other indicators include but are not limited to: nervousness, headaches, hot flashes, shortness of breath, light-headedness, insomnia, indecision, the runs, and compulsively checking your email to see if your editor has responded to those pages you sent an hour ago. (And remember, you don't have to be diagnosed with capital-A Anxiety Disorder to experience lowercase-a anxiety. Plenty of calm, rational, almost-always-anxiety-free people go through occasional bouts of situational anxiety. Good times.)

Why it's bad: Apart from the symptoms I listed above, one of the most toxic and insidious side effects of being anxious is OVERTHINKING. It's like that buzzy black housefly that keeps dipping and swooping in and out of your line of vision, and every time you think you've drawn a bead on it, it changes direction. Up in the corner! No, wait! Over there by the stairs! Uh-oh, too slow! Now it's hovering three feet above your head, vibrating like the physical manifestation of your brain about to explode. WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE, HOUSEFLY???

MAKE UP YOUR MIND.

Overthinking is the antithesis of productivity. I mean, have you ever seen a fly land anywhere for more than three seconds? How much could they possibly be getting accomplished in any given day?

What can you do about it? You need to Miyagi that shit. Focus. One problem at a time, one part of that problem at a time. And most important: one solution to that problem at a time.

I'll show you how.

If you got mostly Bs...



SAD

What it looks like: Weeping, moping, rumpled clothes, running mascara, the scent of despair, and heaving breathless, heaving breaths. It can also lead to a condition I call Social Media Self Pity, which is tiring not only for you, but also for your friends and followers. Cut it out, Ted. Nobody wants to watch you have an emotional breakdown in Garfield memes.

Why it's bad: Listen, I've got absolutely nothing against a good cry. You're worried that your childhood home is going to be bulldozed by evil city planners or that your hamster, Ping-Pong, might not make it out of surgery? By all means, bawl it out. I do it all the time. Catharsis!

Just try not to, you know, wallow. When worrying becomes wallowing—letting sadness overtake you for long periods of time—you've got bigger problems. Ongoing sadness is EXHAUSTING. You'll get less and less productive. And all of that can lead to feeling depressed and giving up on dealing with your shit altogether.

But to be clear, being sad—even for a messy, depressing stretch—is one thing. Having clinical depression is another. If you think you might not be merely sad, but fully in the grip of depression, I urge you to seek help beyond the pages of a book written by a woman whose literal job is to come up with new ways to work “fuck” into a sentence. And don’t be ashamed about it.

What can you do about it? Patience, my pretties. We’re gonna get you up and out of bed sooner rather than later. It’s what Ping-Pong would have wanted.

If you got mostly Cs...



ANGRY

What it looks like: Apart from the yelling, screaming, and wishing poxes on people or setting fire to their prized possessions, those in the throes of anger experience unhealthy side effects such as rising blood pressure and body temperature, the desire to inflict physical violence and the injuries sustained upon doing so, splotchy faces, clenched jaws, and unsightly bulging neck tendons.

But an invisible—though no less damaging—result of an angry freakout is that it impedes good judgment. IT MAKES THINGS WORSE.

Why it's bad: In the age of smartphone cameras, every meltdown is a potential fifteen minutes of infamy. Do you want to wind up on the evening news spewing regrettable epithets or on Facebook Live destroying public property because you couldn't calm the fuck down? No, you do not.

What can you do about it? Well, you could take an anger-management class, but that doesn't sound very pleasant. I have a few stimulating alternatives I think you're going to like.

If you got mostly Ds...



AVOIDANCE

aka Ostrich Mode

What it looks like: The tricky thing about Ostrich Mode is that you may not even realize you're doing it, because "doing it" is quite literally "doing nothing." You're just ignoring or dismissing warnings and pretending like shit isn't happening. Nothing to see here, folks! Head firmly in the sand.

Sometimes the 'strich stands alone—if you're merely putting off a mundane chore, that's pure, unadulterated avoidance. Other times, ostriching is the result of having already succumbed to anxiety, sadness, and/or anger. In those moments it feels like your brain is a pot of boiling lobsters, and if you can just keep the lid tamped down tightly enough, maybe you'll never have to confront their silent screams.

Why it's bad: Un-dealt-with shit begets more shit. Ignoring a jury summons can lead to fines, a bench warrant, and a misdemeanor on your permanent record. Pretending like you haven't developed late-life lactose intolerance can lead to embarrassing dinner party fallout. And refusing to tend to that pesky wound you got while chopping down your Christmas tree may mean spending the New Year learning to operate a prosthetic hand better than you operate an ax. And while I concede that willfully ignoring whatever shit may be happening to you is a shrewd means of getting around having to deal with it—guess what?

If your worries have sent you into Ostrich Mode, you haven't actually escaped them. They'll be sitting right outside your hidey-hole the next time you lift your head. (Hi, guys. Touché.) Avoidance means NEVER, EVER SOLVING YOUR PROBLEM.

What can you do about it? Great question. Just by asking, you're already making progress.

If you got mostly Es...

Either you're deeply committed to lying to yourself, or you're actually in pretty good shape already, pal. Figure out which one it is and then either re-take the quiz or re-gift the journal to a friend. Sharing is caring!

And if you got a healthy mix of all the fucking letters...

Then you REALLY need this journal. And maybe a few spare pens. I have a feeling you're going to go through some ink.