



**Recent Life  
Events**  
QUESTIONNAIRE



# Recent Life Events

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Listed below are a number of events. Please read each item carefully and then indicate whether or not each event has happened to you in the past year.

Please tick the **YES** box if the event has occurred.

Please tick the 'still affects me' box if the event is still having an effect on your life

EVENT	YES	Still affects me
Have you had a serious illness or been seriously injured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has one of your immediate family * been seriously ill or injured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have any of your close friends or other close relatives been seriously ill or injured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have any of your immediate family died?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have any of your other close relatives or close friends died?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you separated from your partner (not including death)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had any serious problem with a close friend, neighbour or relative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you, or an immediate family member been subject to serious racial abuse, attack or /threats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you, or an immediate family member been subject to any abuse, attack, threat – perhaps due to you or someone close to you having a disability of any kind (i.e. a mental health problem, a learning disability or a physical problem)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you, or an immediate family member been subject to any other form of serious abuse, attack, or threat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you or your partner been unemployed or seeking work for more than one month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you or your partner been sacked from your job or made redundant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had any major financial difficulties (e.g. debts, difficulty paying bills)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you, or an immediate family member had any Police contact or been in a court appearance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you or an immediate member of your family been burgled or mugged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you or another individual who lives with you given birth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you or another individual who lives with you suffered from a miscarriage or had a stillbirth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you moved house (through choice)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you moved house (not through choice)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had any housing difficulties?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had any other significant event ( Please specify)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* immediate family includes: mother, father, sister, brother, partner, child

## GUIDANCE ON USING RECENT LIFE EVENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

### Background

1. Life events are usually short-lived but may have more enduring consequences.
2. They can be distinguished from 'chronic difficulties', such as poverty or persistently discordant relationships. However life events can be both an indicator of chronic difficulties, or a precipitant of them.
3. Life events affect individuals and families in different ways, so it is important to explore how they impact on the caregivers and the family. For example, the death of a grandparent may have a practical as well as an emotional impact on the family if they have helped to support and care for the children.
4. Negative life events such as divorce, death of someone close, physical illness and unemployment have the capacity to affect any family member, not just those directly involved. Losing a parent at a young age, particularly before 11, has been reported to independently influence wellbeing in both childhood and adult life.
5. Most negative life events can be seen as involving the experience of loss, or threat of loss, including the loss of self esteem. Some apparently positive events such as job promotion may act in this way.
6. An important issue is whether an event is felt to continue to exert a negative affect. This aspect has not always been included in questionnaires.

### The Questionnaire

7. This Life Events questionnaire has been developed from one devised by Brugha *et al* (1985), with 9 additional items.
8. The scale aims to look at recent life events, those occurring in the last 12 months and whether the respondent thinks they have a continuing influence. However, it can be used to evaluate events and impact over a longer period if desired.
9. It can contribute to a social history, or provide an opportunity to re-evaluate whether known events are continuing to exert an influence.

### Use

10. It is expected that it will be used mostly with main caregivers, but it could be of value with potential caregivers and separated parents.
11. In piloting it was found to be 'extremely' useful in both initial assessment and continuing work. It raised new issues on three out of every four occasions on which it was used.
12. With new families the questionnaire 'gave further insight into the carer's background'. It 'put into perspective the reasons why the mother was down'.
13. With respondents with whom workers were already familiar it revealed information not previously known. It identified issues that 'the family had not considered stressful or told me'. 'It highlighted issues that were and were not still having an effect'. One social worker reported that they were able to find out the 'carer's view of issues'.
14. It is clear that social workers should be prepared for what may emerge if this instrument is used.

### Administration

15. The scale should be given to the respondent, usually a main caregiver, after appropriate preparation. This will depend on whether the context is an assessment or a review.
16. It may be helpful to acknowledge that the worker appreciates that thinking about important family events may stir up painful memories.
17. The questionnaires take about 15 minutes to complete, but discussion can take considerably longer.
18. Although not used in this way in the piloting, it could form a valuable basis for a family discussion. This would require further preparation and negotiation.

## Scoring

19. The initial scoring is binary, 1 if the life event has happened, and 0 if it has not.
20. The number of events that the respondent considers are still affecting them is then counted.
21. In piloting respondents reported up to 17 events in the last year, of which up to 10 were still having an affect. The average number of events was between 7 & 8, of which about half were still considered by the caregiver to be affecting them.
22. The questionnaire does not have a cut off point. It is scored on the basis that the more life events the adult has been through, the higher the score, and therefore the **greater** the **likelihood** of some form of longer term impact on the adult, child and or family. This will be particularly so if the person considers the events still affect them.

## Reference

Brugha T, Bebington P, Tennant C and Hurry J (1985) The list of threatening experiences: A subset of 12 life events categories with considerable long-term contextual threat. *Psychological Medicine*. **15**: 189–194.