



IS YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM RUNNING THE SHOW?

A Self-Assessment for Anyone Who Has Learned to Carry a Lot

Gemstone Wellness · Chicago, IL · gemstonewellness.com

A note before you begin

This assessment is not a diagnostic tool. It is an invitation to get curious about your own experience — without judgment.

Many people who grew up navigating difficult environments, systemic harm, or identities that the world didn't make room for learned to function at a very high level — while quietly carrying more than most people realize. High functioning is not the same as healed. Busy is not the same as okay.

If you find yourself minimizing your responses — thinking "it wasn't that bad" or "other people have it worse" — please notice that. That thought is often part of the pattern we're looking at here.

This assessment was designed to be relevant across a wide range of lived experiences, including racial and systemic trauma, queer and trans identity, neurodivergent experience, and cultural backgrounds where seeking help carries stigma. You do not need to explain or justify your experience to anyone — including yourself — to take this seriously.

Part 1: Your Body's Signals

The nervous system communicates through the body first. These questions invite you to notice what your body might be telling you.

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| 1. | I often feel tension, tightness, or discomfort in my body — even when nothing "stressful" is happening.

<i>This might show up as jaw clenching, shoulder tension, stomach unease, or a general sense of bracing.</i> | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 2. | I have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up feeling rested. | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No |

3.	I sometimes feel physically exhausted even after adequate rest — like my body never fully "powers down."	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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4.	<p>I notice my heart racing, shallow breathing, or a sense of physical unease in situations others seem to handle easily.</p> <p><i>This can happen in crowded spaces, conflict, or even ordinary social settings.</i></p>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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5.	<p>I have a hard time feeling hunger, fullness, tiredness, or other physical cues until they become urgent.</p> <p><i>Many people who learned to override their needs early in life experience this.</i></p>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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What does your body do when you feel unsafe, overwhelmed, or unseen? Describe it in your own words.

Part 2: Emotional Patterns

These questions explore how emotions move — or don't move — through you.

6.	I often feel a low hum of anxiety, dread, or unease that I can't always explain or trace to a specific cause.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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7.	<p>I swing between feeling a lot — overwhelmed, flooded, reactive — and feeling very little, numb, or checked out.</p> <p><i>This is sometimes called the "window of tolerance" — we move outside it in both directions.</i></p>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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8.	<p>I find it difficult to feel joy, excitement, or pleasure even during good moments.</p> <p><i>This is not about being ungrateful — it's about a nervous system that has learned to stay vigilant.</i></p>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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9.	I tend to minimize or dismiss my own emotional responses — telling myself I shouldn't feel what I feel. <i>If cultural or family messages taught you that emotions are weakness, this is especially worth sitting with.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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10.	I feel responsible for the emotions of people around me and have a hard time separating their distress from my own.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
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When was the last time you felt genuinely at ease — not distracted, not "fine," but actually settled? What were the conditions?

Part 3: Relational Patterns

Our earliest relationships shape how safe connection feels. These questions explore how that shows up now.

11.	I feel hyperaware of other people's moods, tone, or energy — and find myself adjusting my behavior accordingly. <i>This is sometimes called hypervigilance, and it often developed as a survival strategy.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
12.	I have a hard time trusting that relationships are stable — I often wait for something to go wrong.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
13.	I frequently feel like I am "too much" or "not enough" in relationships. <i>This is especially common among queer, neurodivergent, and BIPOC individuals who received this message from systems and institutions, not just individuals.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
14.	I find it difficult to ask for help — or I feel shame, guilt, or anxiety when I do. <i>In many cultural contexts, asking for help is not modeled or rewarded. This question is not asking whether you should have asked for more help — it's asking what happens in your body when you consider it.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No
15.	I feel most comfortable in relationships where I am the caretaker, helper, or "the strong one."	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No

Think of a relationship where you feel — or felt — most yourself. What made that safety possible?

Part 4: Identity, Meaning & Systemic Experience

Nervous system dysregulation doesn't only come from personal history. Living in a world that was not designed for your body, identity, or community is its own form of chronic stress.

<p>16.</p>	<p>I carry ongoing stress related to my race, ethnicity, immigration status, or the safety of my community.</p> <p><i>Racial trauma and systemic stress are real, physiological, and cumulative. This is not "oversensitivity" — it is a logical response to a real environment.</i></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>17.</p>	<p>I experience — or have experienced — the stress of navigating spaces not designed for my gender identity, sexual orientation, or neurodivergent brain.</p> <p><i>The chronic effort of masking, code-switching, or advocating for your own basic dignity has a nervous system cost.</i></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>18.</p>	<p>I have been told — by family, culture, or community — that seeking therapy or mental health support is shameful, unnecessary, or a sign of weakness.</p> <p><i>We ask this because it shapes what we allow ourselves to feel, and whether we allow ourselves to get help.</i></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>I feel a sense of meaninglessness, disconnection, or spiritual emptiness that I haven't been able to name or resolve.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>20.</p>	<p>I am living a life that looks fine — or even successful — from the outside, while privately feeling lost, exhausted, or like something fundamental is missing.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> No</p>

Is there something you have been carrying — for a long time — that you have never said out loud to anyone? You don't have to write it here. But notice what comes up.



What Your Responses Might Mean

1–5 "Yes" or "Sometimes"

Your nervous system may be coping reasonably well, but there are patterns worth exploring — especially if they've been present for a long time.

6–12 "Yes" or "Sometimes"

There are likely patterns of dysregulation that are affecting your daily life, relationships, or sense of self — even if you've learned to work around them.

13–20 "Yes" or "Sometimes"

You may be carrying significant chronic stress, trauma, or systemic burden — and doing so largely alone. You deserve real, sustained support.

A note on minimizing:

If you answered "No" to most of these questions but something in you feels unsettled reading them — trust that. Many people who have experienced chronic stress, systemic harm, or early adversity have become very skilled at not registering their own pain. The absence of distress is not always the presence of wellness. Sometimes it means we learned, very early, not to feel it.

You don't have to keep figuring this out alone.

At Gemstone Wellness, we offer trauma-informed, identity-affirming therapy for people who are ready to understand themselves more fully — not just function better.

We specialize in trauma, nervous system healing, neurodivergent experiences, queer identity, and the ways systemic harm lives in the body.

gemstonewellness.com

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