

Holmes T H & Rahe R H. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale. *J. Psychosom. Res.* 11:213-18, 1967.
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The Social Readjustment Rating Scale was composed of 43 life events derived from clinical studies. The technique of subjective magnitude estimation was applied to generate the amount of change in adjustment required by each item. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited in over 1,015 publications since 1967.]

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"In 1963 at the University of Washington, Eugene Galanter, who was chairman of the department of psychology and a former student of the late S.S. Stevens, delivered a seminar on psychologic scaling to the faculty of the department of psychiatry. He spent considerable time talking about the technique of subjective magnitude estimation. At this point we already had the Schedule of Recent Experience (SRE), comprised of a series of life change events which correlated with the time of onset of illness.^{1,2} The idea immediately took form to apply the objective magnitude estimation technique to these items. Richard H. Rahe, a psychiatric resident in my laboratory, collaborated with me. We constructed a questionnaire for assigning a magnitude of change to each of 43 items which had been revised from the original listing. These items included death of spouse, divorce, trouble with the boss,

change in sleeping habits, retirement, and vacation. Marriage as a social event was used as the module to which each of the other 42 life events was compared. The means of each item, derived from the responses of 394 subjects, were arranged in rank order and constituted the Social Readjustment Rating Scale.

"In November 1966 this article was rejected by the editor of *Psychosomatic Medicine*. It was then submitted to the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, was promptly accepted by the editor, Denis Leigh, and appeared in that journal in 1967.

"The designation of 'life change events' as a Medical Subject Headings term used by MEDLARS signaled its coming of age as a research field. For a decade, life change events research had been indexed under the more general heading of 'stress, psychological.' But in 1977 the National Library of Medicine recognized the need for a separate index term to accommodate the growing number of publications and to facilitate information retrieval in the future. That expectation of continued research and interest in the field is well founded, judging from our own experience. The fact that inquiries come from researchers in non-medical as well as medical disciplines is additional testimony to the growth and expansion of the field.

"As with the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, the publication of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale came at just the right time. The critical notions contained in *The Origin of Species* had existed for at least a generation. Darwin brought it all together in his brilliant treatise. The critical themes in the Social Readjustment Rating Scale have been much in evidence for the past 50 years. The scale achieved a major breakthrough and brought together in one dynamic formulation the essence of a fragmented area of science. Certainly the Social Readjustment Rating Scale is an *idea* whose time has come."³

1. Hawkins N G, Davies R & Holmes T H. Evidence of psychosocial factors in the development of pulmonary tuberculosis. *Amer. Rev. Tuberc. Pulmonary Dis.* 75:768-80, 1957.
2. Rahe R H, Meyer M, Smith M, Kjaer G & Holmes T H. Social stress and illness onset. *J. Psychosom. Res.* 8:35-44, 1964.
3. Petrich J, Hart C A & Holmes T H. Recent life events and illness onset. (Day S B, ed.) *Life stress*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982. p. 109-20.