

Finding Balance

Stress management guide

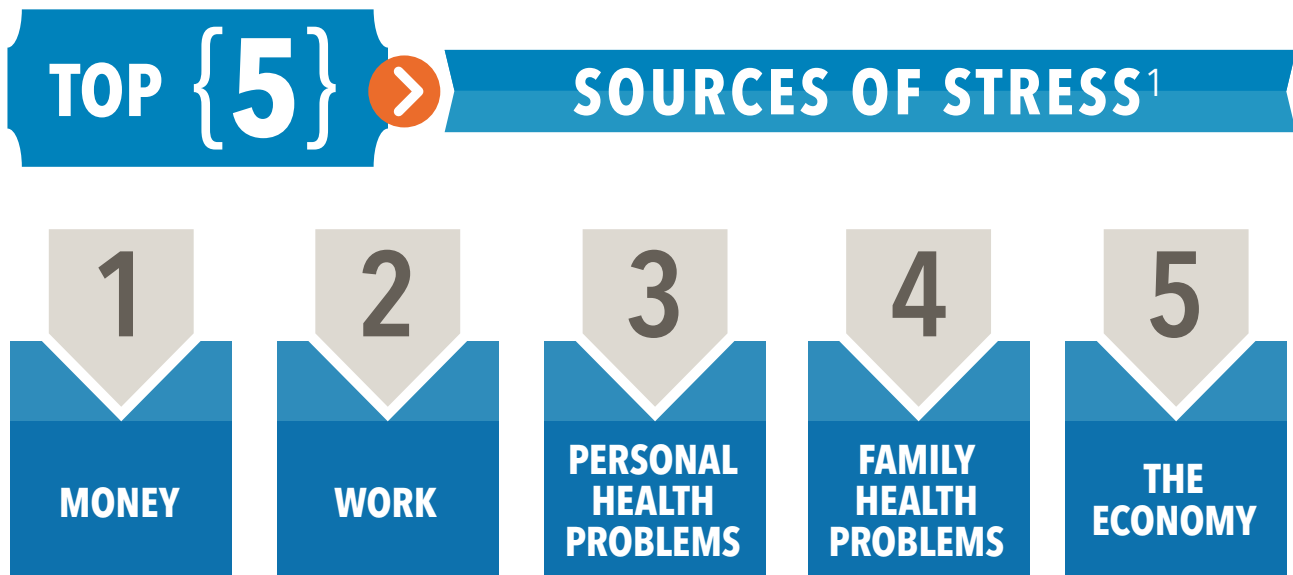


Finding balance and managing stress

Stress is a fact of life – but it doesn't have to interfere with your quality of life

Too much stress takes a toll on the body and the mind. The good news is that you can get ahead of stress by learning healthy ways to manage it. You can't control what stresses you out, but you can control how you react. That's the secret to mastering stress management.

What's stressing you out?



Everyone experiences stress in different ways and for different reasons, but there are some sources of stress that most everyone can identify with. No matter where it comes from, stress doesn't become a problem until there's too much of it.



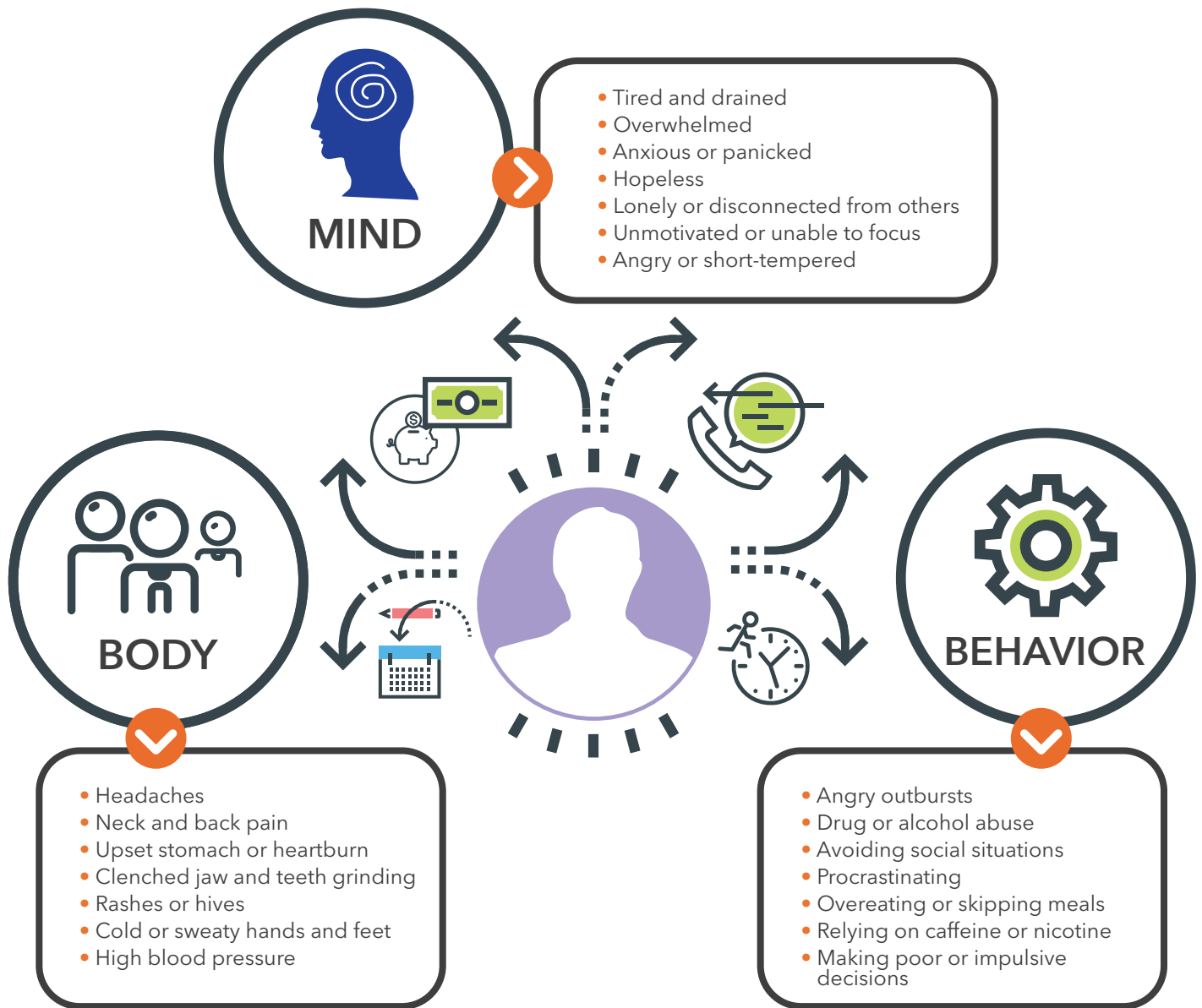
How stressed are you?

Take our [interactive stress assessment](#) to find out where you stand.

Effects of stress

Stress can impact your mind, body, and behavior.

Do any of these symptoms sound familiar? Stress could be to blame.

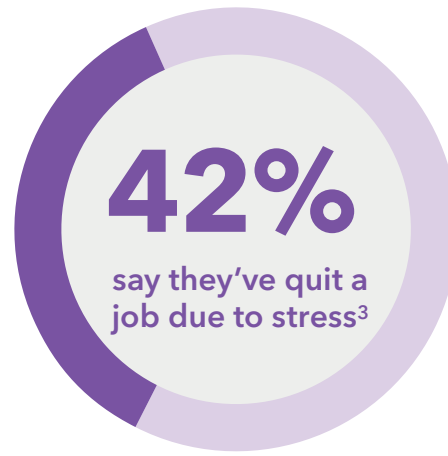


How stress works

For a scientific look at what stress does inside your body, [watch this animated video from TED-Ed.](#)

Stressed at work? You're in good company.

Work is a fact of life. For most people, so is work-related stress. Sometimes stress at work can work in your favor – it can give you energy to meet a deadline, fuel creativity, and motivate you to take on new challenges. But too much stress is never good and can lead to burnout and job dissatisfaction.



Myths and facts about work and stress

Myth

- Multitasking gets things done faster.
- Working more hours means you'll get more done.
- It doesn't matter how you feel, as long as you get your work done.

VS

Fact

- Multitasking can reduce productivity by as much as 40%.⁴
- People who work 70 hours a week accomplish the same amount as people who work an average of 55 hours a week.⁵
- Happy employees are 12% more productive than their unhappy co-workers.⁶

Simple tips for a less stressed work life

Small changes in how you handle stress can make a big difference in how you feel from 9 to 5.



Take a break to breathe

When you're feeling overwhelmed, a few minutes of [deep breathing](#) can help. Breathe in for a count of 5, hold for 5, and exhale for 5. Repeat 15 times or until you start feeling more grounded and focused.



Get organized

Clutter sends signals to your brain that your work is never done. But an organized workspace can boost your focus, productivity, and creativity. If you don't use it, don't want it, or don't need it, don't keep it!



Walk away if you need to

Sometimes the best thing to do in a stressful situation with a coworker is to hit pause. Agree to revisit the discussion later. Then take a walk and clear your head.



The power hour: Tackle your to-do list in 4 steps

Try this popular technique for getting more done in less time.⁷ You'll be amazed by what you can do in an hour!

1

Make a list.

Take 5 minutes to write down everything you need to do today, even the smallest tasks. (Don't worry – the goal isn't to do all of them in an hour, just as many as possible. More on that later.)

2

Start small.

Tackle the easiest, quickest tasks – phone calls, emails, etc. – first. Do as many as you can as fast as you can. Cross them off your list as you go, and stop after 20 minutes.

3

Get focused.

Turn off your phone, exit your email, and focus on the highest priority item on your list. Spend the next 35 minutes working only on that task. No distractions!

4

Rest and recharge.

You're making progress. Take 5 minutes to sit back, clear your head, and renew your energy and focus.

Congratulations. You've just had a productive hour. Got another 60 minutes to spare? Grab your list and start the process again.



Stress and depression

Know the difference

Sometimes stress and depression have similar symptoms, but depression is far more serious. The Finding Balance program is designed to give you simple tools for managing stress, and help you learn healthy ways to cope with it. Treating depression requires more personalized care and attention.

If you think you might be depressed, talk to your doctor.

Visit kp.org/depression to take the [depression self-assessment](#) and find resources that can help.

¹ American Psychological Association (2016). *Stress in America: The impact of discrimination*. *Stress in America*™ Survey.

² 2014 Work Stress Survey, Nielsen (formerly Harris Interactive), April 9, 2014.

³ "Dangerously Stressful Work Environments Force Workers to Seek New Employment," Monster.com press release, April 16, 2014.

⁴ Peter Bregman, "How (and Why) to Stop Multitasking," May 20, 2010, *Harvard Business Review*, hbr.org/2010/05/how-and-why-to-stop-multitaski.html.

⁵ Jena McGregor, "Working More Than 55 Hours a Week is Bad for You – in Many Ways," August 24, 2015, *Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2015/08/24/working-more-than-55-hours-a-week-is-bad-for-you-in-many-ways/.

⁶ Andrew J. Oswald, Eugenio Proto, and Daniel Sgroi, "Happiness and Productivity," *Journal of Labor Economics*, 33, no. 4 (October 2015).

⁷ Peter Bregman, "A Practical Plan for When You Feel Overwhelmed," September 23, 2010, *Harvard Business Review*, hbr.org/2010/09/a-practical-plan-for-when-you-1.html.

Kaiser Permanente health plans around the country: Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., in Northern and Southern California and Hawaii • Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Colorado • Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Georgia, Inc., Nine Piedmont Center, 3495 Piedmont Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30305, 404-364-7000 • Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc., in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., 2101 E. Jefferson St., Rockville, MD 20852 • Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest, 500 NE Multnomah St., Suite 100, Portland, OR 97232