

Finding Balance Workbook

Simple tools for a less stressed life

Welcome to your **Finding Balance** workbook

Stress is a fact of life. By participating in this program, you've taken an important step to start managing it better. These workbook activities are designed to help you see how stress affects you, and discover healthy ways to cope.

Each week, you'll receive an email with ideas and tips for addressing stress in your life. And each email points to a corresponding activity in this book. The goal is to find patterns in your behavior – and see where small changes can make big differences in the way you feel.

Here's what's included:



Surveys and quizzes

to help you find out where your stress comes from and how you deal with it.



Your stress journal

to jot down specific moments where you felt stressed, and track how you responded.



Your stress action plan

to set 1 simple, achievable goal for reducing stress.



Weekly activities

to help you learn more about different causes and symptoms of stress, and discover healthy ways to cope with it.



TIP

Getting the most from your workbook activities

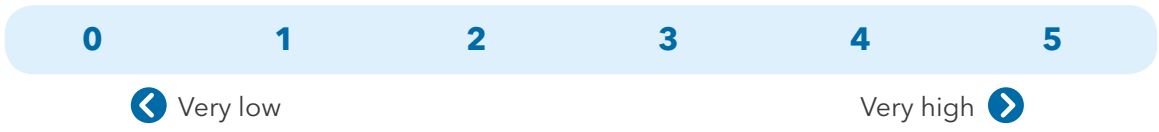
You'll get the best results if you answer questions as honestly as possible. Don't worry, your answers are just for you – you don't have to share them with anyone. The activities are designed to help you see how what you do affects how you feel – and that's the first step toward making healthier decisions.

Week 1

Getting started

What's your overall stress level right now?

Just estimate based on how you feel – there's no right or wrong answer.



Think of this number as a starting point. You'll get to rate your stress level a few times throughout the program, so you can see how the number changes. That's how you'll begin to see how what you do affects how you feel.



What are the big sources of stress in your life?

Take a minute to write them down. For many people, it's things like work, relationships, money, and health – but everyone experiences stress differently, for different reasons.

One of the big ideas we'll discuss in this program is that you can't always control the sources of your stress, but you can control how you react to stressful situations. For example, getting rid of all work-related stress is probably not an option. But you can learn healthy ways to stay ahead of it – like doing a 5-minute breathing exercise when you need to – to make busy days feel more manageable. That's the kind of healthy behavior we'll focus on in the coming weeks.

Week
2

Your stress journal

Last week, you rated your stress level and examined the causes of stress in your life. This week, let's get more specific. Think about a time recently when you felt particularly stressed, and fill in the blanks below.

1. I was stressed because:

2. My stress level was:

0
1
2
3
4
5

< Low
High >

3. Here's how I coped with my stress:

4. Afterward, I felt:

5. Was this a healthy way to deal with stress? If not, what might be a better option?



TIP

Getting the most from your stress journal

The more you write in your stress journal, the easier it will be to identify patterns you want to change. Try to add a new page to your journal at least once a week.





Week
3

Coping with stress and making an action plan

As we mentioned in Week 1, you can't always control the sources of your stress, but you can control how you react. So now that you've learned a bit about where your stress comes from, let's focus on how you respond to it.

In the chart below, you'll find both healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with stress. Which ones are you doing? Check all that apply. Add 2 check marks for things you do often or regularly. If you do something very rarely or never, leave it blank. Are there other things you do to cope with stress? Feel free to add them to the list.

 Healthy coping behaviors	 Unhealthy coping behaviors
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and eating nutritious meals	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping meals or eating poorly
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Exercising regularly	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding exercise
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining a healthy work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Working long hours or bringing work home
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Planning fun activities or short trips	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Not taking enough personal time
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Asking for help when you need it	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Holding feelings in or not asking for help
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on the positive	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on the negative
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Staying hydrated to keep energy up	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Using caffeine or nicotine when tired
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Meditating to relax and taking time to recharge	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Relying on alcohol to relax
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Staying on top of your to-do list	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Not taking care of important things
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Sticking to a budget	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Ignoring your budget
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



You might notice that sometimes the things you do to cope with your stress can end up causing you more stress. With that in mind, let's move on to your stress action plan. ➔

Week
3

Stress action plan

1. Look at your check marks on the previous page. Think about your healthy and unhealthy coping behaviors, and write down a goal for managing stress. It can be a healthy behavior you'd like to start doing or do more often, or an unhealthy one you want to avoid.

For example: I want to cut back on coffee and take up meditation.

2. How confident are you that you can complete your goal?

0
1
2
3
4
5
7
8
9
10

< Not confident
Very confident >

If your confidence level is less than 7, consider starting with a smaller, more achievable goal. Reach that goal first, and then work toward your original goal.

3. What specific actions will you take to accomplish your goal?

4. When will you start?




Hold on to this action plan. You'll return to it at the end of the program and use it to evaluate your progress. In the meantime, you'll get to try some different techniques to beat stress, and do some activities designed to help you discover what works for you. Congratulations on being proactive and taking the first steps toward a less stressed life!

Week
4

Relaxation

It might sound strange, but sometimes relaxation takes work. When stress levels rise, it can be difficult to quiet your mind, breathe, and relax – but that’s exactly what your body needs. Over the next few days, make it a point to practice relaxation. Meditation, breathing exercises, yoga poses – whatever you’d like to try. (Go back to this week’s email if you need ideas!) Spend a little time to figure out what works for you and establish some go-to relaxation techniques. Going forward, you can use them whenever you need to unwind.

 Did you make time to relax today?	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
What relaxation technique did you try?					
Rate your stress level before.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >
Rate your stress level after.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >

What do you notice? See any patterns?



Looking forward

If you think these techniques can help you manage stress, set some healthy relaxation goals for yourself going forward.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____


For example: Meditate for 5 minutes every night before bed. Focus on your breathing whenever you feel overwhelmed.

 Start a new relaxation page

Week
5

Money and stress

If you're stressed about money, you're not alone. Everyone's financial situation is unique, but knowing where your money goes can help you manage financial stress. You can't avoid expenses like rent and bills, but you can take a look at what you spend on other things – like coffee, or going out for lunch. Daily expenses can add up fast – so keep track of what you spend this week. See anything you'd rather save on than spend on?

 What did you spend money on today?	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
List non-essentials you bought and how much they cost.					
Daily total:					
Rate today's financial stress level.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >

What do you notice? See any patterns?



Looking forward

If you think changing your spending habits can help you keep financial stress under control, set some healthy goals to help you spend less and save more.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____


For example: Only go out for coffee once a week. Bring lunch from home on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.



Week
6

Nutrition and stress


A healthy, balanced diet can keep you energized, focused, and ready for anything. A poor diet can have the opposite effect, leaving you drained and making it easy for stress levels to rise. Examine the connection between what you're eating and how you're feeling. Take a look at what's on your plate, and see if making simple changes could help you stress less.

 Did you eat healthy today?	What did you eat today?	What did you drink today besides water?
<p>Day 1</p> <p><i>Continues on the next page</i></p>	<p>Breakfast:</p> <p>Lunch:</p> <p>Dinner:</p> <p>Snacks:</p>	<p>Coffee/energy drinks 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Soda 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Alcohol 0 1 2 3 4 more</p>
<p>Day 2</p> <p><i>Continues on the next page</i></p>	<p>Breakfast:</p> <p>Lunch:</p> <p>Dinner:</p> <p>Snacks:</p>	<p>Coffee/energy drinks 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Soda 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Alcohol 0 1 2 3 4 more</p>
<p>Day 3</p> <p><i>Continues on the next page</i></p>	<p>Breakfast:</p> <p>Lunch:</p> <p>Dinner:</p> <p>Snacks:</p>	<p>Coffee/energy drinks 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Soda 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Alcohol 0 1 2 3 4 more</p>
<p>Day 4</p> <p><i>Continues on the next page</i></p>	<p>Breakfast:</p> <p>Lunch:</p> <p>Dinner:</p> <p>Snacks:</p>	<p>Coffee/energy drinks 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Soda 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Alcohol 0 1 2 3 4 more</p>
<p>Day 5</p> <p><i>Continues on the next page</i></p>	<p>Breakfast:</p> <p>Lunch:</p> <p>Dinner:</p> <p>Snacks:</p>	<p>Coffee/energy drinks 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Soda 0 1 2 3 4 more</p> <p>Alcohol 0 1 2 3 4 more</p>

 Start a new nutrition page 1

Week **6**

Nutrition and stress, *continued*

 Assess and rate	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Overall, did you eat healthy today?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Rate today's stress level.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >

What do you notice? See any patterns?

 **Looking forward**

If you think eating healthy helps you keep stress in check, set some healthy eating goals for yourself going forward.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____


For example: Stop skipping breakfast. Spend time on Sundays making healthy meals for the week ahead.

 Start a new nutrition page 2

Week **7**

Exercise and stress

Exercise is a natural stress reliever. If you work out regularly and already feel the physical and mental benefits, you might notice that your stress levels surge if you skip the gym. If you don't exercise, now is a perfect time to start – and see how keeping fit can help you keep stress under control. Remember to start small if you need to – think a 20-minute walk, not 2 hours at the gym. Track your activity level this week, and discover the connection between exercise and stress.

 Did you break a sweat today?	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Did you exercise today?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
What did you do?					
For how long?					
Rate today's energy level	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >
Rate today's stress level.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >

What do you notice? See any patterns?



Looking forward

If you noticed that exercise helps you keep stress in check, set some healthy fitness goals for yourself going forward.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For example: Walk 30 minutes, 3 times per week. Play basketball every Saturday.



Rate your progress



Congratulations!

You've reached the end of the Finding Balance program.

Over these 8 weeks, you've explored the connection between stress and relaxation, financial issues, diet, and exercise. Hopefully, you've made some discoveries about how what you do affects how you feel. Take a moment to look back and reflect on what worked for you.

1. What was your goal from your action plan in Week 3?

2. Describe your progress toward that goal:

3. What obstacles did you encounter?

4. How did you (or can you) work through those obstacles?

5. What are your key takeaways from the program?

6. What was your overall stress level from Week 1?

0 1 2 3 4 5

< Very low Very high >

7. What is your overall stress level now?

0 1 2 3 4 5

< Very low Very high >

Simply participating in this program – taking a look at how stress affects you, examining the healthy and unhealthy ways you cope with it, and trying some healthy new coping behaviors – was a meaningful step toward addressing stress in your life. **Keep up the great work!**



Want to keep going?

If you'd like to continue making and measuring your progress, keep going!

You can find Stress Journal pages and blank copies of the relaxation, financial, nutrition, and exercise activities here.



Relaxation



Money



Nutrition



Exercise



Stress Journal

Stress and depression

Know the difference

Sometimes stress and depression have similar symptoms, but depression is far more serious. 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.

Your stress journal

Think about a time recently when you felt particularly stressed, and fill in the blanks below.

1. I was stressed because:

2. My stress level was:

0 1 2 3 4 5

< Low High >

3. Here's how I coped with my stress:

4. Afterward, I felt:

5. Was this a healthy way to deal with stress? If not, what might be a better option?



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Getting the most from your stress journal

The more you write in your stress journal, the easier it will be to identify patterns you want to change. Try to add a new page to your journal at least once a week.



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 Start a new nutrition page 1

Nutrition and stress, *continued*

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Rate today's stress level.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >

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What did you do?					
For how long?					
Rate today's energy level	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >
Rate today's stress level.	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >	1 2 3 4 5 < low high >

What do you notice? See any patterns?



Looking forward

If you noticed that exercise helps you keep stress in check, set some healthy fitness goals for yourself going forward.

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