

HUMAN RESOURCES ► WORK/LIFE BALANCE

# 5 Ways to Manage Change and Stress in the Workplace

BY SUSAN M. HEATHFIELD | Updated August 08, 2019

If you're experiencing stress at work and want to know what causes stress and its impact on workers, start by exploring where and how your [workplace stress](#) is coming from.

Once you understand the origin of your workplace stress, you can use these five suggestions to help change stress and manage it. Effective stress management is not easy and requires time and practice. But developing stress management skills is important for your overall health and well-being.

## 1. Control Time Allocation and Goals

Set realistic goals and time frames for completing work. Remember the Alice in Wonderland Syndrome from the book "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll? Alice is walking in the woods. She comes to a fork in the road. Not knowing which way to go, she asks the Cheshire Cat:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"  
"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat.  
"I don't much care where," said Alice.  
"Then it doesn't matter," said the cat.  
"—so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.  
"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

If some days you feel you're aimlessly walking down a long road, then set realistic goals for your day and year. Realistic goals will help you feel directed and in control. Goals also give you a yardstick against which you can measure every time commitment.

Scheduling more than you can handle is a great stressor. If you are feeling overburdened with some of your activities, learn to say, "no." Learn to eliminate any activities that you don't have to do and carefully consider any time-based commitments you make.

Use a smartphone or planner to schedule each goal and activity you need to accomplish, not just your appointments and meetings. If that report will take two hours to write, schedule the two hours just as you would schedule a meeting. If reading and responding to daily emails takes an hour per day, schedule time for that.

## 2. Reconsider All Meetings

An [effective meeting](#) serves an essential purpose—it is an opportunity to share information and/or to solve a critical problem. Meetings should only happen when an interaction is required. Meetings can work to your advantage, or they can weaken your effectiveness at work. If much of your time is spent attending ineffective, time-wasting meetings, you are limiting your ability to accomplish important objectives at work.

"The Wall Street Journal" quoted a study that estimated American [managers](#) could save 80 percent of the time they currently waste in meetings if they did two things: Start and end meetings on time and follow an [agenda](#).

## 3. You Can't Be All Things to All People—Control Your Time

Make time for the most important commitments and take some time to figure out what these commitments are. The basis of time management is the ability to control events. A study was done some years ago that revealed symphony conductors live the longest of any professionals. Looking into this longevity, researchers concluded that in no other occupation do people have such complete control over existing events.

In his book, "Time Power," Dr. Charles Hobbes suggests that there are five categories of events:

- Events you think you cannot control, and you can't.
- Events you think you cannot control, but you can.
- Events you think you can control, but you can't.
- Events you think you can control, but you don't.
- Events you think you can control, and you can.

There are two major issues pertaining to control:

- Each of you is really in control and in charge of more events than you generally like to acknowledge.
- Some things are uncontrollable. Trying to control that which is uncontrollable is a key cause of stress and unhappiness.

With the competing demands that exist for your time, you probably feel as if much of your day is not in your control. Not feeling in control is the enemy of time management and a major cause of stress in your daily lives, too.

## 4. Make Time Decisions Based on Analysis

Take a look at how you currently divide your time. Do you get the little, unimportant things completed first because they are easy and their completion makes you feel good? Or, do you focus your efforts on the things that will really make a difference for your organization and your life? Events and activities fall into one of four categories. You need to spend the majority of your time on items that fall into the last two categories.

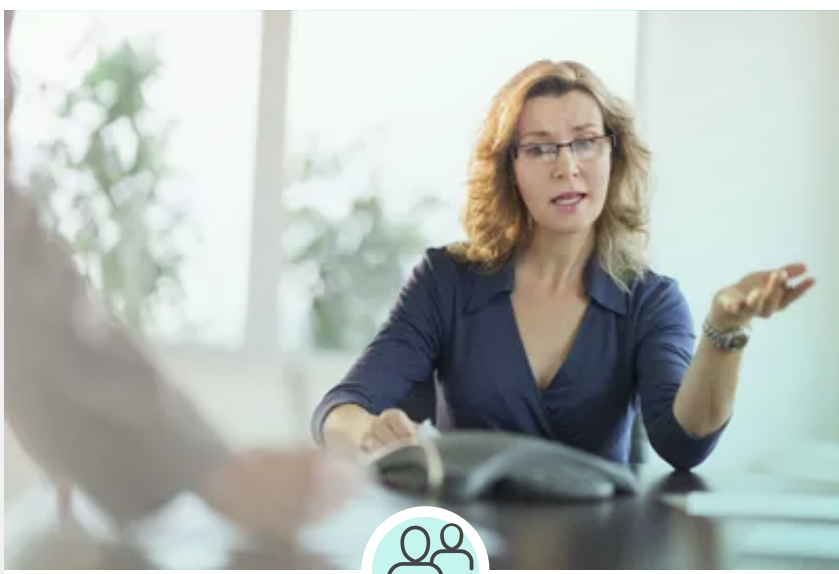
- Not Urgent and not important
- Urgent but not important
- Not Urgent but important
- Urgent and important

## 5. Manage Your Procrastination

If you are like most people, you procrastinate for three reasons:

- You don't know how to do the task.
- You don't like to do the task.
- You feel indecisive about how to approach the task.

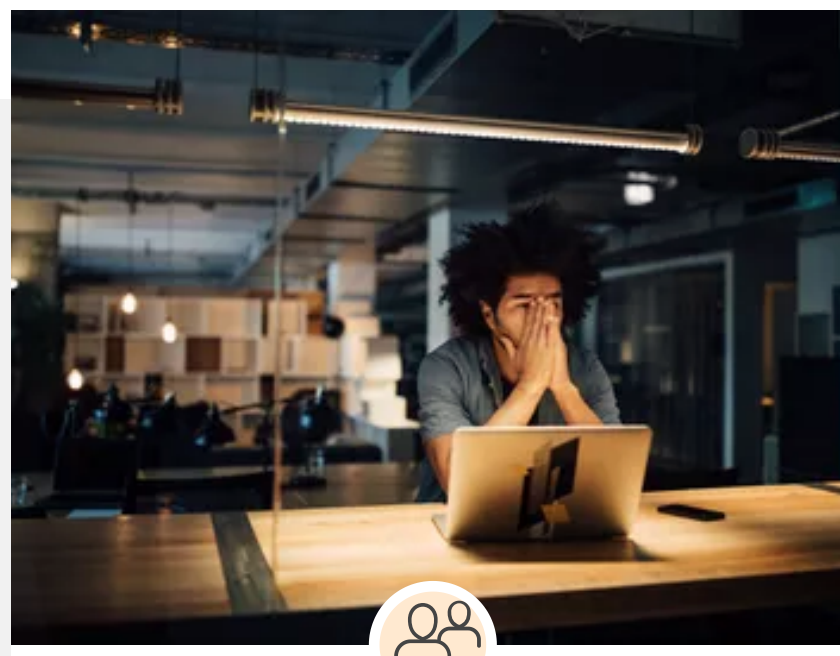
Deal with [procrastination](#) by breaking the large project into as many small, manageable, tasks as possible. Make a written list of every task. List the small tasks on your daily, prioritized To-Do List. Reward yourself upon completion. If you do procrastinate, you'll find that the task gets bigger and bigger and more insurmountable in your own mind.



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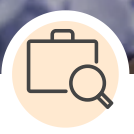
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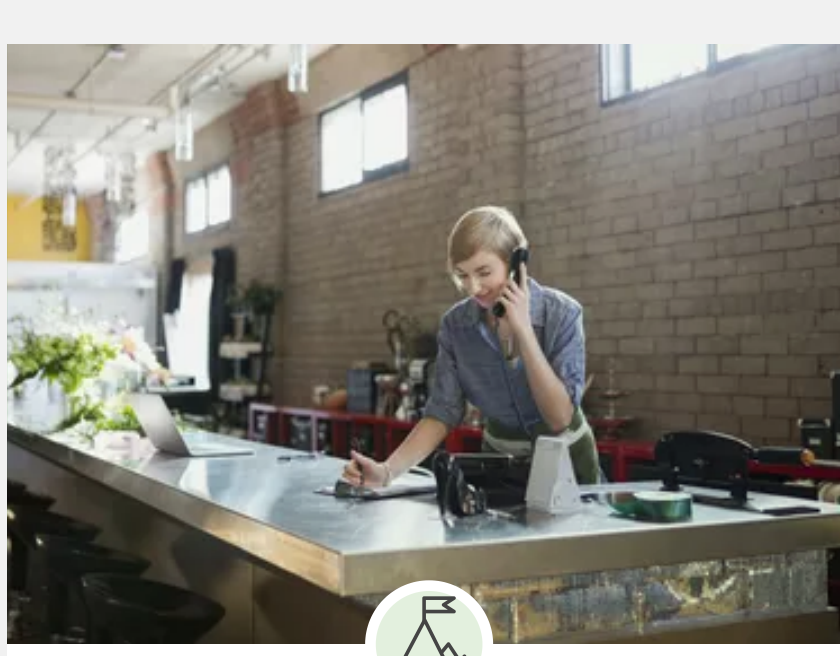
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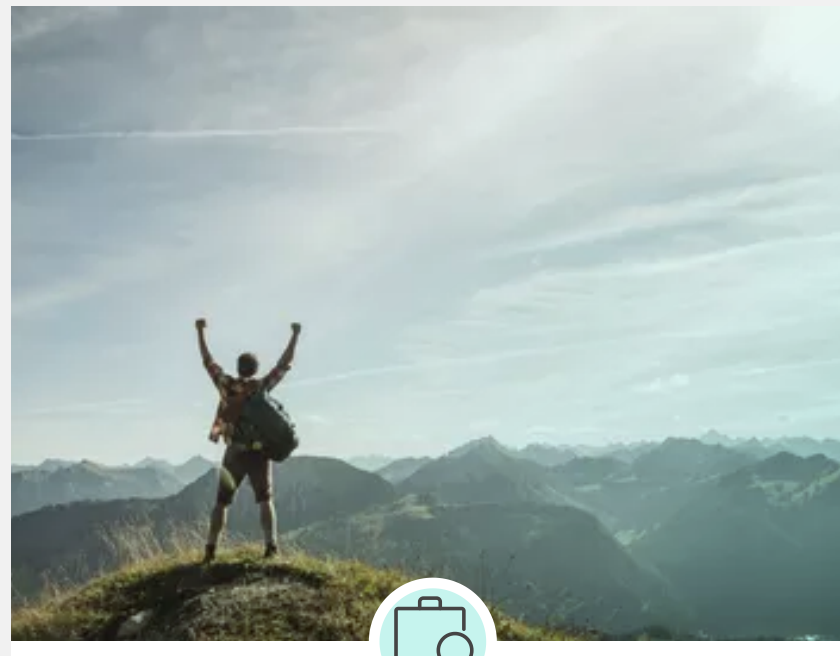
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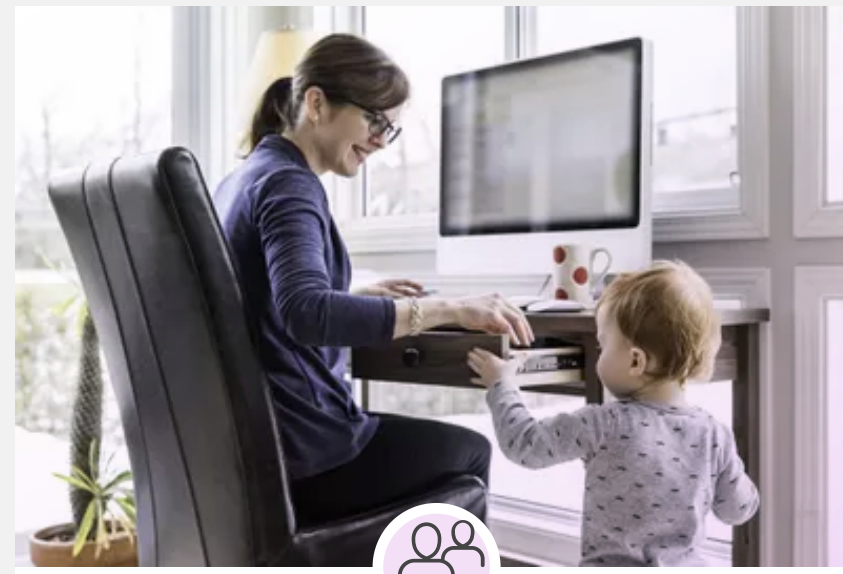
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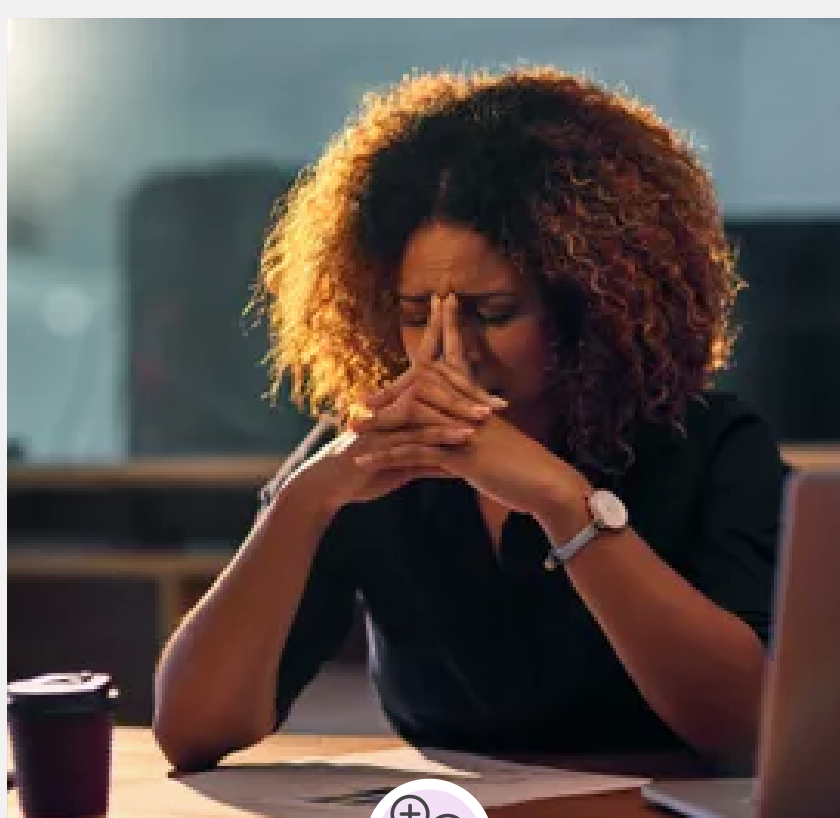
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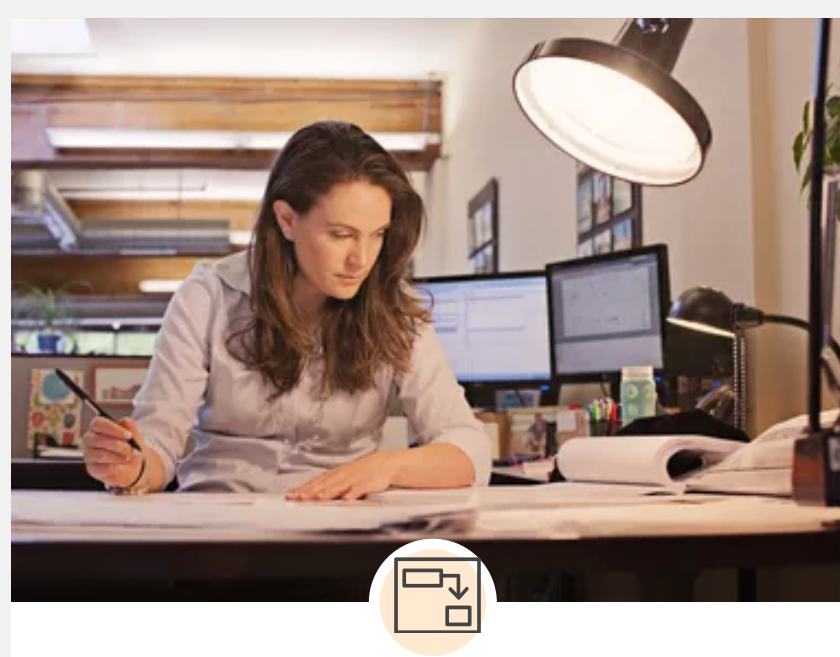
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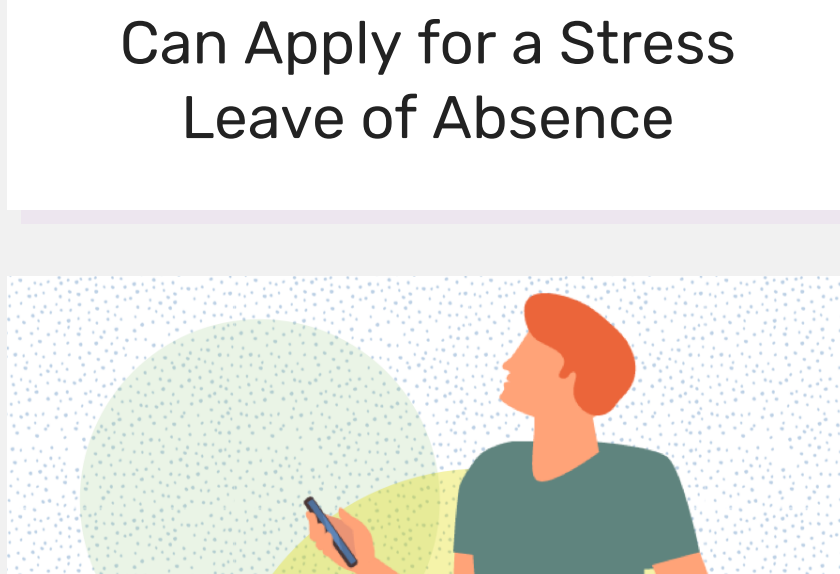
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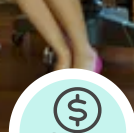
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