Work deadlines are looming. You need to make plans for your upcoming anniversary. The kids have soccer practice at the same time, in different places. You haven’t seen your best friend in two months, and your mom has asked you to come over to help with some yard work....

If you’re like most people, you’re stretched a little too thin. You’re very familiar with stress – in fact, it’s probably a constant state for you. Most of us have a lot of commitments that we enjoy individually, but collectively, it can all get to be a bit too much.

What is stress?
Stress involves a relationship between the demands of your life and the emotional resources you have to meet these demands. Demands are usually things like your job or your family situation. Your health, general outlook on life, financial situation and social network will affect how deep your emotional reserves go. Once the demands exceed your resources, you start to feel stressed.(1)

The way you feel when you’re stressed—sweaty palms, racing heartbeat, upset stomach—is actually the way our bodies are geared to respond to physical dangers like predators and physical aggression, that humans faced more often in the past. Now our stressful situations can last for weeks or longer, rather than the minutes or hours involved in a physical threat. Your stress response system is in overdrive, and there are consequences for your health. The hormones that are released when you’re stressed can disrupt almost all your body’s processes, increasing your risk for heart disease, obesity, digestive problems, memory impairment, insomnia and depression, among other things.(2)

Resources
Maybe you feel fine. Maybe life is going well. But even happy events in your life can cause unhealthy levels of stress. To help you determine your risk level, take the stress assessment on the Mayo Clinic website, or do the Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale assessment, which shows your risk for stress-related health problems. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your doctor.

Top 10 most stressful life events for adults(3)
1. Death of your spouse
2. Divorce
3. Separation from your spouse
4. Serving time in prison
5. Death of a close family member
6. Personal injury or illness
7. Getting married
8. Getting fired
9. Marital reconciliation
10. Retirement
We’ll always have some level of stress in our lives. It’s important to have solid strategies for coping with stress so it doesn’t become overwhelming.

Take care of yourself.

Eat healthy snacks and meals, exercise, and make sure you get enough sleep. Spend time doing things you enjoy.

Lean on your support system.

Talk things through with friends and family members who can be constructive and positive.

Set limits.

Decline requests for your time or energy in a kind but firm way.

Ask for help.

Don’t be afraid to seek advice from a health care professional if your stress levels are greater than what you’re comfortable with. Sometimes other health conditions have symptoms similar to stress, so it’s important to make sure lingering symptoms aren’t a sign of something else.

We’ll always have some level of stress in our lives. It’s important to have solid strategies for coping with stress so it doesn’t become overwhelming.

1. Getting married
2. Unwed pregnancy (mother)
3. Death of a parent
4. Becoming disfigured
5. Divorce of parents
6. Unwed pregnancy (father)
7. Involvement with drugs or alcohol
8. Jail sentence of parent for more than a year
9. Separation of parents
10. Death of a sibling

Visit anthem.com for more ways to get healthy — and stay healthy.

Anthem. Health. Join In.”