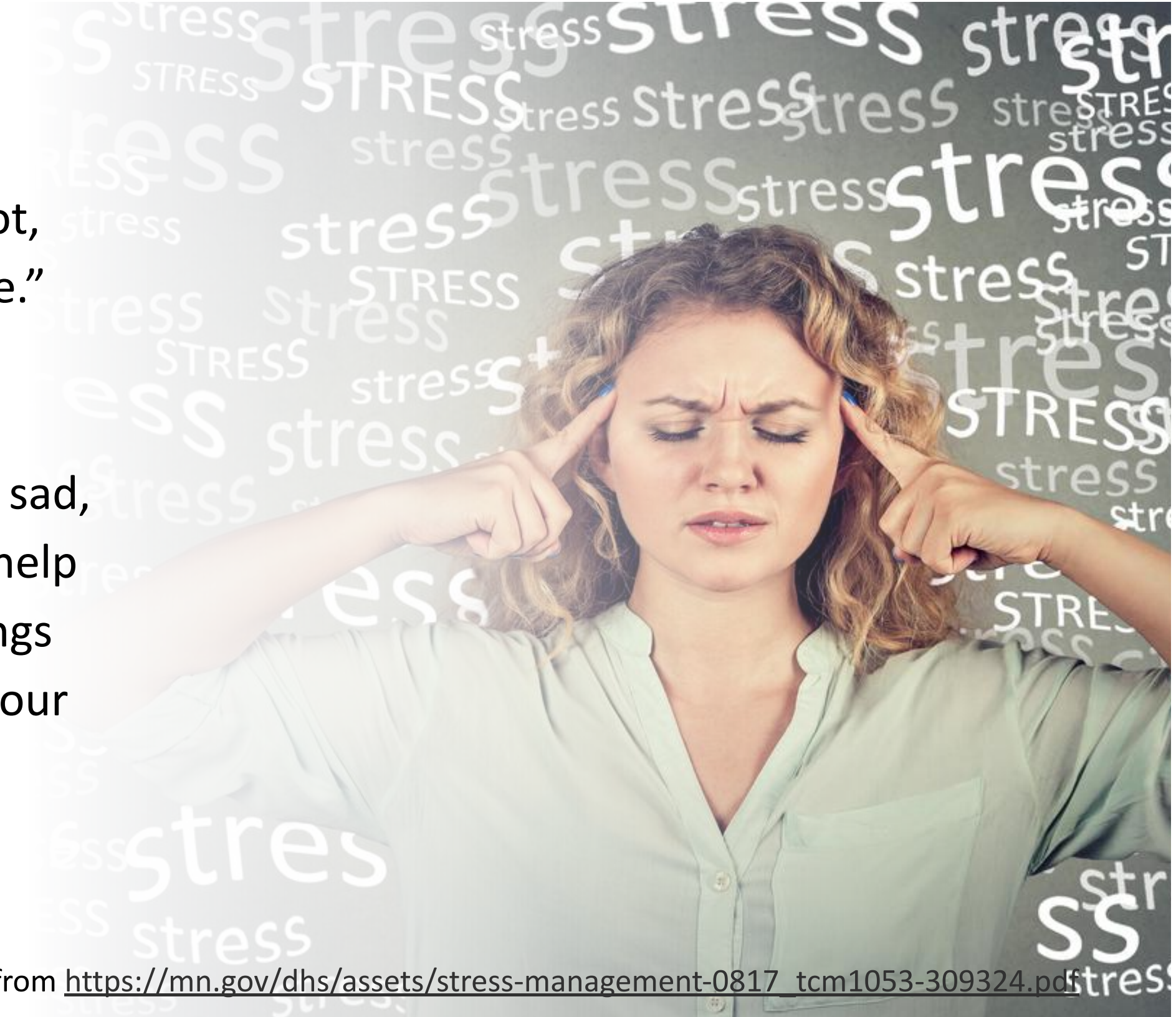
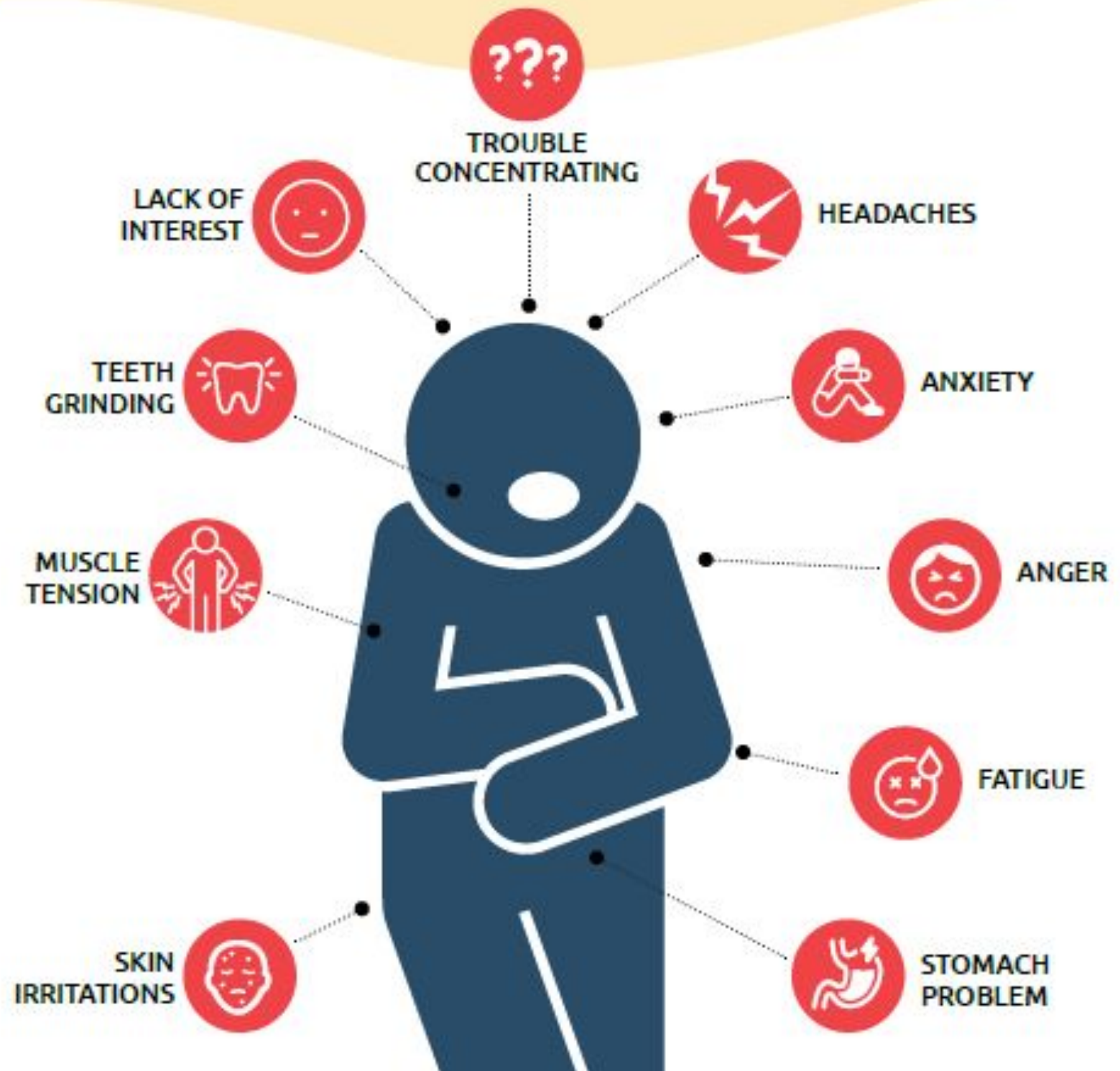


How are you feeling?

People ask this question a lot, and we often say we're "fine." But times have been tough lately, and feelings can be complicated. You might feel sad, worried, or stressed. It can help to think about the good things in your life and remember your strengths.



Where Do You Feel Stress?





How Can You Tell if Someone is Stressed?

Stress can look different for everyone. Watch for changes in how a person usually acts or responds to everyday problems.

Ask someone close to you to help you recognize when you might be stressed. It's helpful to know what is normal for each person since big or unusual events can be stressful for anyone!

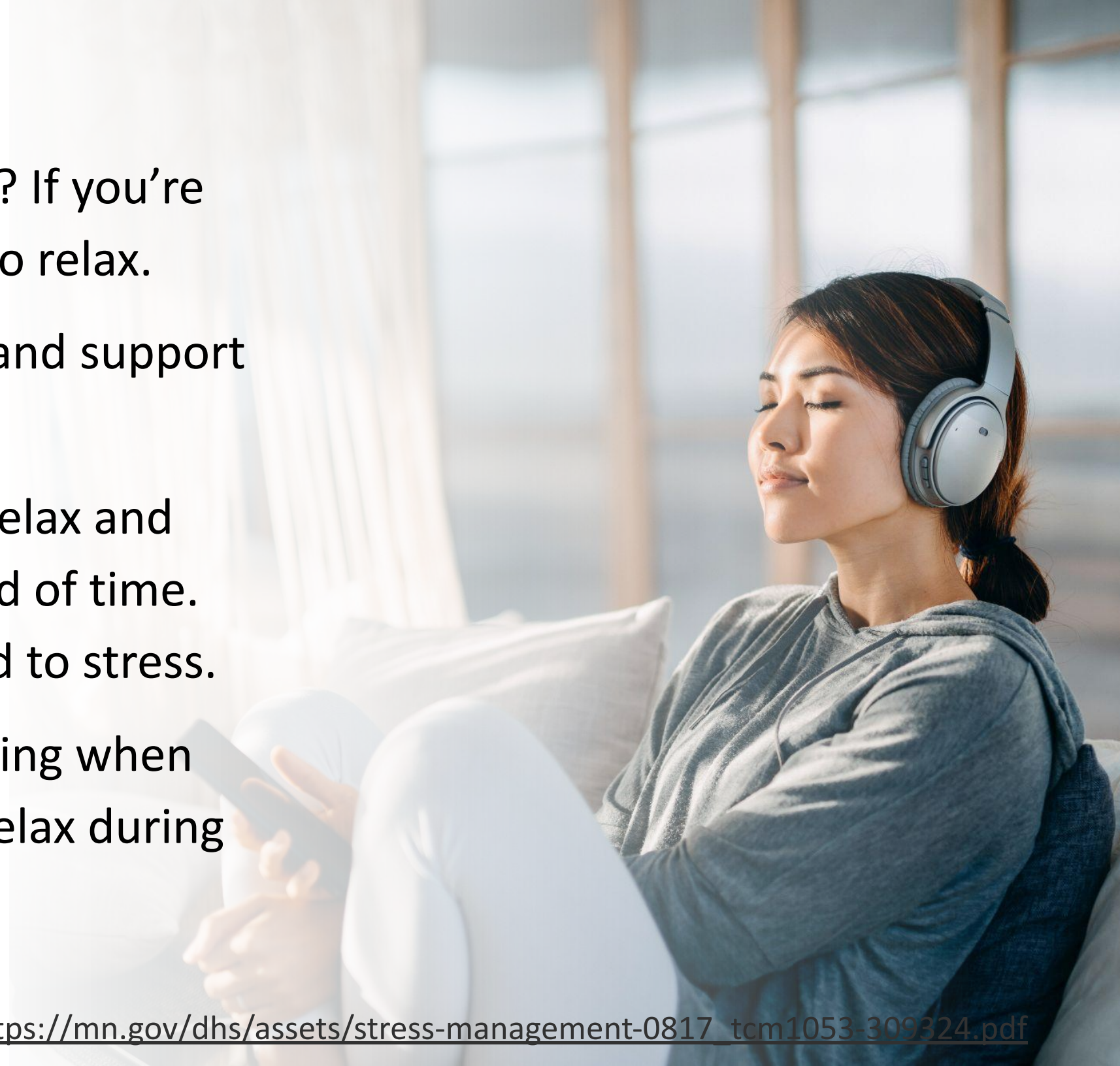
Relaxation Strategies

What do you do to handle stress? If you're unsure, try out some new ways to relax.

Your peers may need extra help and support to manage stress.

Help them find healthy ways to relax and plan for stressful situations ahead of time. Teach them new ways to respond to stress.

Give them feedback. Say something when you notice them taking time to relax during tough times





Deep Breathing

Teach someone to take slow, deep breaths. Breathe in for a count of 5 and out for a count of 5. Start by showing them how to do it.

Some people like to raise their hand while breathing in and lower it while breathing out, which can make it easier to follow. Others point to their mouth as they breathe in and out to remind themselves.

Even just a few moments of deep breathing can help someone feel calmer. It doesn't need to take a long time to work.

Visual Meditation

Find a picture or video of something calming. For example, a favorite place or an animal. A video of a fireplace, waterfall or ocean waves are often soothing for many people.

Think about or talk about why this picture makes you feel calm. For example:



Touching my cat's soft fur and hearing the sound of its purr relaxes me.

The smell of the ocean and the rhythm of the waves relaxes me.



Use senses like sound and touch to make it more relaxing.

Long Walks with Deep Breathing

Going for a walk can help calm nervous energy, especially for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Walking on a track or a circular path often works well.

Walk with the person and practice deep breathing while walking.

Don't call it exercise.

When going for a walk think about how good and calming it feels.





Swimming or being in a pool can be a great way to relax.

Many pools have lifts to help people with disabilities get in and out. Just being in the water can feel calming, and doing gentle stretches in the water might help too.

Some people like to take a relaxing bath.

Listening to Music

Many people find listening to music relaxing. Set aside time to focus only on listening to music, instead of just having it play in the background.

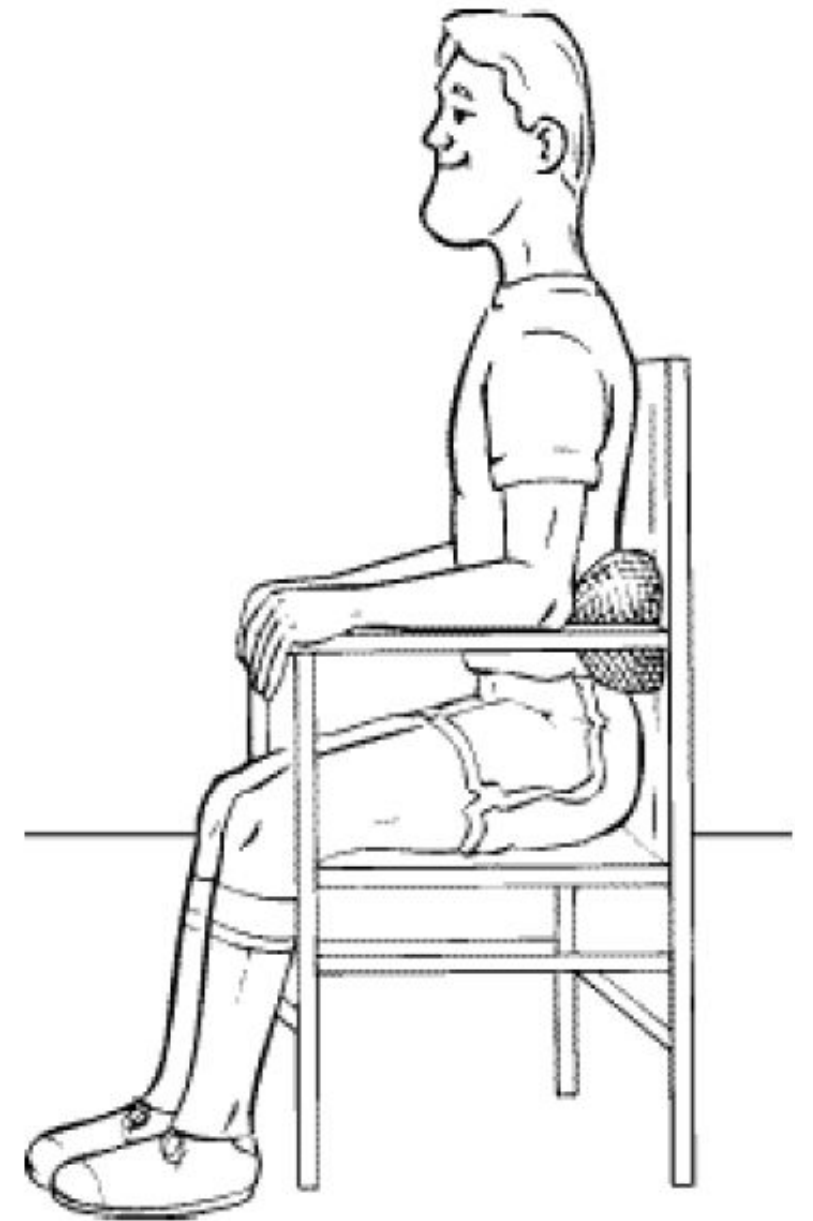
Different people find different types of music calming, so try out a few styles to see what works best. Music is helpful because it can take a person's mind off their worries.



Learning how to sit in a relaxed posture can help reduce stress. Follow these steps:

1. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
2. Bend your knees at a 90-degree angle.
3. Sit with your back straight.
4. Hold your shoulders straight to the side.
5. Keep your head balanced and pointed up.

You can combine this with other relaxing activities, like listening to music, for even more stress relief.





Muscle Relaxation

This exercise helps relax the body by **tightening and then releasing muscles, one at a time**. Start with the toes and work your way up to the head.

Use words that everyone can understand.

Be careful not to use this with someone who has muscle spasticity (tight muscles), as it might be hard for them to release the tension.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grfXR6FAsl8>