



Handout

Essential Coping Skills

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No matter how mentally healthy, resilient, or happy we are, every one of us goes through times when we need to cope with something difficult.

That might mean watching a funny movie when you're sad, calling a friend to help you get through a breakup, or going out for a drink after a challenging workday.

Some of the ways we cope are healthy and build resilience, while others are ways to avoid dealing with a problem or are destructive.

There are nearly infinite ways to cope, and we all use the methods that suit our unique personalities and needs. An activity that causes stress in one individual might help another person cope.

However, It doesn't matter whether you cope like everyone else. The important thing is that you find effective coping methods and develop coping skills that will help you to thrive and build resilience.

In this handout (based on *Blake Flannery's* master list of coping methods and skills organized into categories) we hope that no matter what you need in a given moment, there is at least one activity listed that will help.

Diversions

- Write, draw, paint, photography
- Play an instrument, sing, dance, act
- Take a shower or a bath
- Garden
- Take a walk, or go for a drive
- Watch television or a movie
- Watch cute animal videos
- Play a game
- Go shopping
- Clean or organize your environment
- Read
- Take a break or vacation

Social / Interpersonal Coping

- Talk to someone you trust
- Set boundaries and say “no”
- Write a note to someone you care about
- Be assertive
- Use humour
- Spend time with friends and / or family
- Serve someone in need
- Care for or play with a pet

Cognitive Coping

- Make a gratitude list
- Brainstorm solutions
- Lower your expectations of the situation
- Keep an inspirational quote with you
- Be flexible
- Write a list of goals
- Take a class
- Act opposite of negative feelings
- Write a list of pros and cons for decisions
- Reward or pamper yourself when successful
- Write a list of your strengths
- Accept a challenge with a positive attitude

Tension Releasers

- Exercise or play sports
- Engage in catharsis (yelling into a pillow, punching a punching bag)
- Cry
- Laugh

Physical

- Get enough sleep
- Eat healthy foods
- Get into a good routine
- Eat a little chocolate
- Limit caffeine
- Limit alcohol
- Avoid drugs / overmedicating
- Practice deep / slow breathing

Spiritual

- Pray or meditate
- Enjoy nature
- Get involved in a worthy cause

Limit-Setting

- Drop some involvement
- Prioritize important tasks
- Use assertive communication
- Schedule time for yourself

Good Coping Skills

- Practicing meditation and relaxation techniques
- Having time to yourself
- Engaging in physical activity or exercise
- Reading
- Spending time with family
- Spending time with friends
- Finding humour
- Spending time on your hobbies
- Engaging in spirituality
- Spending quality time with your pets
- Spending time outdoors (every day)
- Getting a good night sleep
- Eating healthy

Negative Coping Skills

- Using drugs and/or drinking alcohol excessively
- Eating too much / not enough
- Engaging in self-mutilation
- Ignoring or bottling up feelings
- Taking sedatives and / or taking stimulants
- Working too much
- Avoiding your problems
- Being in denial