Coping Skills

Coping skills help us get through difficult times - they can give us an important break from mental and emotional distress, and sometimes they are literally life-saving.

Keep this list of coping skills handy for when you need it… folded up in your wallet or bag or post it up on the wall somewhere handy at home.

Make this list work for you

Use a highlighter pen to mark the skills that work best for you & add your own ideas over the page.

Distraction

Absorb your mind in something else

Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, computer games, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts.

Pros

Gives your heart & mind a break.

Great for short term relief.

Great to get through a crisis.

Cons

Can't do it for too long. Doesn't resolve any underlying issues. Meds can make it hard to concentrate.

Grounding

Get out of your head & into your body & the world

Use body & senses: smell fragrances, slowly taste food, notice the colours around you. Walk on the grass barefoot, squeeze clay or mud, do yoga, meditate, exercise.

Pros

Helps slow or stop 'dissociation' (feeling numb , floaty or disconnected).

Reduces physicality of anxiety.

Cons

Sometimes it's better to stay a bit dissociated (that's how your mind protects you).

Emotional Release

Let it out!

Yell, scream, run! Try a cold shower. Let yourself cry… and sob. Put on a funny DVD and let yourself laugh! Try boxing, popping balloons, or crank up some music & dance crazy!

Pros

Great for anger and fear.

Releases the pressure of overwhelming emotion.

Cons

Hard to do in every situation. Feels odd. Some people might think you're acting 'crazier'
(be selective with how & where you do this)

Self Love

Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, cook a special meal, clean your house (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, buy a small treat.

Pros

Become your own best friend, your own support worker.

Great for guilt or shame.

You deserve it!

Cons

Sometimes can feel really hard to do, or feel superficial (but it's not).

Thought challenge

Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts – what advice would you give them?

Pros

Can help to shift long-term, negative thinking habits.

Trying to be more logical can help reduce extreme emotion.

Cons

The more emotional you feel, the harder this is to do. In particular, feelings of shame can make this very hard.

Access your higher self

Help someone else, smile at strangers (see how many smiles you get back), pray, volunteer, do randomly kind things for others, pat dogs at the local park, join a cause

Pros

Reminds us that everyone has value and that purpose can be found in small as well as large things.

Cons

Don't get stuck trying to save everyone else and forget about you!

Your Personal Coping Skills List

Use this page to write your own list of coping skills. You might take some from my list, some that you already know, and others may still be out there for you to discover…

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Emotional Release

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Self Love

Thought challenge

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