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.

**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).
- Helps slow or stop ‘dissociation’ (feeling numb, floaty or disconnected).

**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!

Find out more online at www.indigodaya.com
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...

Distraction
Absorb your mind in something else

Grounding
Get out of your head & into your body

Emotional Release
Let it out!

Self Love
Be kind to yourself.
Treat yourself like a treasured being.

Thought challenge
Be kind to yourself.
Treat yourself like a treasured being.

Access your higher self

Remember... Coping skills are a start, but not the end. Being able to cope with distress can be life-saving, but eventually you need to do the work to heal from the causes of distress.

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