

Coping Skills

Tips & Resources



Dear M

It sounds like you are having a tough time right now. Reaching out for help shows that you are already using a positive (adaptive) way to handle your problems – as opposed to negative (maladaptive) ways that lead to harm, for example, denial or self-medication with drugs or alcohol.

Coping is not containing the pain for it to go away.
Coping is learning to dance with the pain until it leaves you.

Alana Hegerman

Coping Skills:

Definition

Coping skills help you regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in response to stress, trauma, or any other situation that taxes your regular coping capacity.

The good news is that you can strengthen your ability to cope by learning to identify triggers, having a set of go-to techniques, knowing when and how to use them effectively.

Coping Strategies

Psychologists have split coping strategies into three main groups:

1. Appraisal-Focused (Adaptive Cognitive) Strategies

These involve changing the way you think about (appraise) a stressful situation. The goal is to see stressors as temporary and an opportunity to grow.

Examples

- ✓ Asking “Is this absolutely true?”
- ✓ Reinterpreting the situation more positively.
- ✓ Finding humour in the situation.
- ✓ Breaking tasks down into smaller steps.
- ✓ Recalling times you handled past difficulties for confidence.

Warning! Reframing stress to generate positive emotions is not the same as living in la-la land. You still need to take responsibility for the situation.



*When life gives you lemons,
make lemonade.*

Elbert Hubbard

2. Adaptive Behavioural Coping Strategies

This refers to actively addressing the source of strain to change the situation for the better. Taking constructive, solution-focused actions to deal with problems and stressors should reduce your feelings of tension and helplessness.



Action Conquers Fear
Unknown

Examples

- 💡 **Information seeking** so that you understand the stressor and options better. Knowledge reduces uncertainty and empowers action.
- 💡 **Methodically solving a problem** by analysing it, generating solutions, weighing pros and cons, choosing options, and following through.
- 👥 **Reaching out to friends, mentors, coaches for instrumental support**, concrete advice, assistance, or resources to manage challenges in a tangible way.
- 🗣️ **Advocacy and assertiveness** (such as speaking up, asking for accommodations, mobilising help) to create change versus quietly accepting the situation.

Warning! While this approach takes you out of a victim mentality, it can backfire in situations that are uncontrollable. Be realistic about whether you really can make the problem go away.

3. Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies

These aim to take your turbulent emotions out of the equation rather than trying to solve the external problem itself. Learning to stay with unpleasant emotions as they ebb and flow rather than resisting or drowning in them defuses your reaction to stressors.



Examples

- 👁️ **Shifting your focus** away from the upsetting predicament onto something more pleasant to provide short-term relief.
- ✚️ **Distancing yourself from the source of tension** until you are in a better frame of mind to address the problem.
- 🧘 **Relaxation techniques** like deep breathing, meditation, yoga help calm the mind and body to counter the physical arousal and anxiety triggered by stress.
- 💬 **Expressing emotions** and catharsis acknowledges rather than avoids them. Screaming into a pillow, journaling, or immersing yourself in music.
- 👥 **Turning to others for moral support**, empathy, caring, reassurance, and validation in the face of difficulties.
- 🗣️ **Managing negative self-talk** by catching yourself when you criticise or beat yourself up and consciously shifting to more encouraging internal dialogues. This soothes emotions rather than amplifies them.
- ♥️ **Learning tolerance** lowers unrealistic expectations that your negative feelings should disappear instantly.

*Real bravery is
accepting your
emotions, the rest
is just noise.*

Brene Brown



Warning! Some emotion focused coping tools, like distraction or distancing, are only recommended for a short period of time. Used for extended periods, they are harmful.

In the Term

Coping is a process rather than an event. Once you have overcome acute stress, work on anticipating high-pressure conditions so that you can proactively reduce their impact on your wellbeing:



Research shows that one of the most important strategies for protecting yourself against stress is to maintain emotionally supportive relationships with others. They buffer you from the negative effects of stress.

01



Consider working with mental health coaches to process trauma, build communication skills, implement positive coping tools, and facilitate long-term healing.

02



Visualise handling tough situations successfully to build confidence and react positively under stress.

03



Take care of your overall lifestyle when encountering significant stress:

- ✓ Get enough good quality sleep.
- ✓ Eat healthily.
- ✓ Exercise regularly.
- ✓ Rest briefly during the day.
- ✓ Have some fun every day.
- ✓ Avoid caffeine and alcohol.

04



Be patient and persistent. Learning coping skills takes time and consistency before strategies feel natural and effective. Stick with the process.

05



God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference"

Are you interested in this month's Coaching Masterclass?

📅 **THURSDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY 2024.**

CLICK THIS LINK TO JOIN.



WHERE TO GET
HELP?

If you would like to connect or need someone to talk to, please contact one of the resources below.

DNA wellness – 0800 333 238 / please call me 071 681 1247

Your Human Resource Department

Your line manager

South African Anxiety and Depression Group: 0800 456 789 (24 hour helpline) or 011 234 4837

Suicidal Emergency contact us on 0800 567 567

Lifeline National counselling line 0861 322 322

Stop gender violence 0800 150 150

 **DNA**
wellness
MACSTEEL

Sponsored Employee Benefit

Please send your emails to hope@workforcehealthcare.co.za and a counsellor will respond directly to you.

MACSTEEL®

Pursuing Reinvention