



**Keystone Crisis Intervention Team**

## **Specific Coping Skills**

Defense mechanisms can sometimes lead to more problems than the emotional pain you are trying to avoid. It's important to realize most "coping skills" are temporary measures and should not become a permanent part of your behavior.

### **Four Square Breathing**

Take 4 seconds to breathe in through your nose – hold it for four seconds – take four seconds to breathe out – hold it for four seconds and start again till things calm down.

### **Deep Muscle Relaxation**

Uses a progressive tensing and relaxing of muscle groups starting with curling the toes up for three seconds then curling toes down for three seconds and so on for each muscle group. It helps you relax, focus on your muscles and burn away tension. Beware if someone is diabetic as this increases insulin levels.

### **Thought Stopping**

Yelling at yourself or using an equally safe intense physical sensation to stop a painful thought process gives you time to insert a pre-planned question or affirmation to help regain control over your thought processes. Snapping a rubberband, using smelling salts or other strong odor, drink a harmless yet awful tasting mix.

### **Journaling**

By recording your feelings and thoughts you can maintain control over them, help clarify them, give you a point of reference for the future, vent and express the feelings without having to share them with others. Use traditional writing or use a tape recording that you can play back later to yourself.

### **Mindfulness**

Defined as observing the pain and watching it without judgment. Try to "ground" the emotions by using your senses to create images of the emotion, smells of the emotion, sounds of the emotion. Observe what the emotion is doing to your body without being part of it.

### **Distraction**

This is a temporary way to escape the pain.

Television, an intense hobby or activity, exercise, music, video games can all be ways to get your mind on other things and get a temporary respite. Beware that this should only be temporary as it can become habit forming.

### **Guided Imagery**

Being able to control images in your mind is like a guided day dream. Try to get as many of the senses involved as possible. Imagine the smells, texture, sounds, temperature and colors of the scene. Make it intense enough to hold your interest but mild enough to not stimulate adrenalin.

### **Exercise**

A good work-out can burn off stress hormones, increase endorphins or bring your mind to a relaxed focus on your body.

### **Pets**

Pets have been proven to calm, lower blood pressure and distract.

### **Identify Cognitive Distortions**

Focusing on thoughts or emotions that are not in line with the facts can help to look at the situation, your emotions and yourself more realistically.

### **Relaxation Techniques**

Relaxation does not have to be productive. It should be pleasurable, intense enough to compete with the painful emotion, and strong enough to be totally engrossed by what you're doing.



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### **Self- Nurturing**

Being able to know what you need and how to pamper yourself can give you a needed respite or additional strength to deal with the bad times. A hot bath, special time alone, or a pleasurable experience can work wonders.

### **Spiritual Self-Care**

Spiritual self-care is the activity you engage in to nurture a sense of connection to a Higher Power and a meaning for your life.

### **Problem Solve**

Take steps to resolve or prevent stressful events. Even resolving something small can return a sense of control.

### **Humor**

Humor allows us to see the absurd side of things and not take life as seriously. It builds our immune system, strengthens our heart and helps us connect with people.

### **Meditation**

Meditation is a lot like prayer, relaxation & mindfulness. It incorporates the focusing of our energy and thoughts on some specific item. Trying to focus on breathing or a specific tone can be helpful.

### **Volunteering**

Giving of ourselves to help others increases our self-worth, gets us around other people and helps put things into perspective

### **Sharing (Venting)**

We are social creatures and the ability to share our pain and be accepted by others diminishes the pain. Venting with others helps us put substance to the pain and gives us a sense of power over it.

### **Letter to Yourself**

By writing a letter to yourself when you are healthy you can get extra strength during the rough times. It reminds you that you are not always feeling this bad.

### **Recording to Yourself**

Using the same concept as the letter making a recording when you are healthy also gives the extra strength that comes from hearing your own voice.

### **Positive Affirmations**

Positive Affirmations can provide a way of looking at a situation differently. Have some statements memorized or use small cards with written statements placed in places that you will see can provide needed support.

### **Art**

Find ways to express yourself in one of the arts.

### **Cognitive Restructuring**

This is the process of changing thoughts, beliefs or ideas that keep feeding the traumatic responses.

### **Color**

Coloring can help you to de-stress and relax and stimulates areas of the brain related to motor skills. Look on the internet for free coloring sheets.

### **Step Away**

Getting out of the house or office can help you relax and get your mind off things that may be causing you stress. Find a peaceful place and take some time to enjoy the view.