

Building a coping **tool kit**

A box, a bag or a card full of things that remind you how to steady yourself

PURPOSE

This activity is designed to build resources to help clients move toward making healthier choices when they are coping with stress and adversity. The person can choose activities, objects, pictures, and quotes that will remind them about how to self-regulate, reach out for help, nurture themselves, or simply to help tolerate difficult experiences.

INSTRUCTIONS

If possible, provide access to some materials that could be incorporated into a small box or chest. Also, some reminders, such as quotes, photos, or websites, could be written on business cards that could be carried at all times. Materials used may include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Magazines; | ☐ Clay or Play-Doh; |
| ☐ Inspirational quotes; | ☐ Fidget toys; |
| ☐ Natural materials, such as feathers or stones; candies or chocolates; | ☐ Names and photos of support people; |
| ☐ Journals; | ☐ Pictures of pets, favourite places, or peaceful scenes; |
| ☐ Art materials, like crayons, markers, or paint; | ☐ Prompts for breathing exercises; |
| ☐ Helplines and crisis lines; | ☐ Music that is calming or uplifting; |
| ☐ Websites that provide helpful information; | ☐ Reminders of healthy activities they enjoy. |

Written for the helper, kept as written. The purpose and instructions above are the original's words, addressed to the counsellor. They apply to you directly: the kit is yours to assemble, and the materials list is a menu, not a requirement. Tick the ones that appeal.

WHAT A KIT IS FOR · ADDED, FROM THE FOUR JOBS NAMED IN THE PURPOSE

Self-regulate

Things that slow the body down: breathing prompts, a cold drink, something to hold, music.

Reach out for help

Names, numbers, a helpline card, a photo of someone who would want to know.

Nurture yourself

Comfort: soup, socks, a favourite book, a quote that is kind to you.

Tolerate the moment

Things that get you through the next twenty minutes without making it worse: fidget, candy, a picture of somewhere peaceful.

A good kit covers all four jobs. Most people's first draft is all comfort and no reaching out, or all distraction and no calming. Page 2 shows the original example; page 3 is yours; page 4 plans when you will open it.

The example kit

Building a coping tool kit example · the original's twelve items

PHOTO OF A GRANDMOTHER	PICTURE OF A CAMPFIRE	FUZZY SOCKS
FAVOURITE QUOTE	KIDS HELP PHONE LINE	FAVOURITE BOOK
GINGER ALE	BREATHING SQUARE	CHICKEN SOUP
FUZZY PEACH CANDIES	SNOWFLAKE	MY PET DOG

Reading the example. Notice how ordinary the items are, and how they spread across the four jobs: comfort (socks, soup), the senses (ginger ale, candies, a snowflake), connection (a grandmother, a pet, a help line), calming (the breathing square) and meaning (a quote, a book, a campfire). Nothing needs to be bought.

Kids Help Phone is a Canadian line; page 4 lists the equivalents to write on your own card.

My coping tool kit

Twelve cards · write or draw one item in each

What it is

What it is for

Where I will get it

What it is

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Where my kit will live: _____

Check: self-regulate ☐ reach out ☐ nurture ☐ tolerate the moment ☐ (each job covered by at least one card)

When I will open it

Plan and pocket card · added

Early signs that I am heading for a hard moment In my body, my thoughts, what I start doing or stop doing

The first thing I will reach for from the kit

If that has not helped within twenty minutes, I will

PEOPLE I CAN REACH OUT TO

Name	Number	Best time
Name	Number	Best time
Name	Number	Best time

Crisis lines (United States). 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org. Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741. In an emergency call 911. Add your local line, your clinic’s after-hours number, and, if you are in Canada, Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868, text CONNECT to 686868).

POCKET CARD · CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINE AND KEEP IN A WALLET OR PHONE CASE

MY COPING CARD

1. Breathe: in 4 · hold 4 · out 4 · hold 4

2. Reach: _____

3. Comfort: _____

4. Remember: _____

5. If it is an emergency: 988 / 911

MY COPING CARD

1. Breathe: in 4 · hold 4 · out 4 · hold 4

2. Reach: _____

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