

Six Styles of Coping Skills **Toolbox**

From the original “Six Styles of Coping Skills Toolbox.pdf” · 15 pages

What this is. The original handout (15 pages) reproduced page for page inside the house frame, unaltered, so that every word, line, table and illustration is exactly as its author set it. It replaces the September 2026 redesign of this file, which re-set the text and chopped it.

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PUTTING THOUGHTS ON TRIAL

ARE YOU LOOKING AT ALL OF THE EVIDENCE?



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PUT YOUR THOUGHTS ON TRIAL?

It can be difficult to think realistically when we are worried because worry tends to be accompanied by heightened emotions such as fear, stress, and anxiety. These emotions can fog our rational thinking and make it challenging to process information objectively.

When we are worried, our brains often go into a triggered "fight-or-flight" response, which prioritizes immediate survival over rational analysis. This can lead to distorted thinking, jumping to worst-case scenarios, and irrational fears.

Additionally, worry often stems from uncertainties and the fear of the unknown, making it hard to think objectively and consider alternative perspectives. Our minds may be preoccupied with the potential negative outcomes, and it becomes hard to focus on the present reality.

Putting your worried thoughts on trial involves examining them critically and challenging their accuracy and usefulness. Here are steps to help you do that:

1. Identify the thought: Start by recognizing the specific worried thought that is causing you distress. Write it down or say it aloud to bring it into your awareness.
2. Gather evidence: Look for evidence that supports or contradicts the worried thought. Ask yourself, "What evidence do I have to support this thought? What evidence do I have against it?" Be objective and look for facts rather than assumptions or emotions.
3. Challenge the thought: Analyze the validity of the worried thought by challenging it with logical questions. Some questions to ask yourself include:
 - "Is there another possible explanation for this situation?"
 - "What evidence would I need to believe this thought?"
 - "Is this thought based on facts or assumptions?"



Remember that challenging worried thoughts takes practice and can be a gradual process. Seek support from a therapist or counselor if needed, as they can provide guidance and tools to help you effectively challenge and manage your worried thoughts.



PUTTING THOUGHTS ON TRIAL

THE THOUGHT



What am I worrying about?

THE DEFENCE



Do I have any evidence that my thought could be true? - They must be facts.

THE PROSECUTION



Do I have any evidence that my thought could not be true? - They must be facts.

THE JUDGE'S VERDICT



When I look at all of the evidence, can I decide whether my thought is likely to come true or not?



PUTTING THOUGHTS ON TRIAL

THE THOUGHT



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When I look at all of the evidence, can I decide whether my thought is likely to come true or not?



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What specific evidence do I have that supports this worry?

Can I point to any past experiences where this worry has come true?

Have others experienced similar situations and had negative outcomes?

Are there any statistics or research studies that support this worry?



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are there any specific behaviors or actions that I've observed that support this worry?

Are there any concrete facts or events that directly align with this worry?

Have I received any feedback from others that confirms this worry?

Have I had any recurring or persistent thoughts related to this worry?



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do I have any physical sensations or bodily reactions that align with this worry?

Has this worry been validated by any trusted sources or authorities?

PERSONAL REFELCTION



OPPOSITE ACTION

All emotions activate us to respond, and the type of activation is biologically wired; they prepare us to act. The Opposite Action Skill involves doing precisely the opposite of what your emotions tell you to do.

For example, we often feel the urge to avoid or escape a situation when fearful. When angry, we quickly become defensive or lash out. When sad or depressed, we tend to withdraw, isolate, and become passive. With shame and guilt, we typically hide, avoid, or beg for forgiveness from others.

WHAT
HAPPENED?

IDENTIFY YOUR
EMOTIONS

IDENTIFY YOUR
NATURAL URGE

SHOULD I FOLLOW MY URGE?

NATURAL ACTION/URGE

OPPOSITE ACTION/URGE

OUTCOME

DID I NOTICE A DECREASE IN
MY EMOTIONS?

DID I NOTICE A DECREASE IN
MY EMOTIONS?

WOULD I ACT THE SAME WAY NEXT TIME?

WOULD I ACT THE SAME WAY NEXT TIME?

OPPOSITE ACTION

“IF YOUR EMOTIONS ARE DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD, TRY ACTING OPPOSITE”

NATURAL URGE

OPPOSITE

Anger gets us ready to attack/ It activates us to attack or defend.



Show kindness/concern or walk away.

Shame gets us ready to hide. It activates us isolate.



Raise your head up, give eye contact, shoulders back.

Fear gets us ready to run or hide. It activates us to escape danger.



Go towards it, stay involved in it, and build courage.

Depression gets us ready to be inactive. It activates us to avoid contact.



Get active

Disgust gets us ready to reject or distance ourselves.



Push through and get through situation.

Guilt gets us ready to repair violations. It activates us to forgive.



Apologize and mean what we say.

PROS AND CONS

The Pros and Cons skill can help individuals respond to difficult situations and feelings more effectively.

Naturally, many people use pros and cons to assess situations and behavior, such as whether or not they should choose to proceed with something. However, the DBT pros and cons are a little different as this skill also assesses the pros and cons of tolerating vs. not tolerating distress (coping vs. not coping). For example, imagine that your natural urge or behavior was to verbally speak up and give your friend a piece of your mind because they said something very upsetting. The comment said upset you, and hurtful experiences and feelings from your past were re-triggered. Then, of course, you could yell and scream as usual, or you could sit with the uncomfortable feeling, ride the feeling wave, and talk yourself through some effective coping skills.

Thinking about the consequences of tolerating versus not tolerating this distress can help you make more positive choices that align with your long-term goals.

HOW TO DO IT

1 What is the urge or behavior that you are trying to avoid?

2 Examine the pros and cons of acting on the urge/behavior vs. not acting on it. Consider what had happened in the past when you acted on your urge.

3 Look at the advantages & disadvantages (or pros and cons) of each option. Consider your values and long-term goals.

PROS AND CONS

URGE OR DOING BEHAVIOR

PROS

ACTING ON BEHAVIOR

PROS OF ACTING ON URGES, GIVING UP, GIVING IN OR AVOIDING

- FEELING BETTER IN THE MOMENT
- RELEASE TENSION
- FEELING SOMETHING RATHER THAN NUMB
- FEEL COMFORT IN FAMILIARITY
- EASE ANXIETY

NOT ACTING ON BEHAVIOR

PROS OF RESISTING URGES, DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE,

- NO SCARS
- FEELING PROUD
- LEARN TO DEAL WITH EMOTIONS IN A MORE EFFECTIVE WAY

CONS

- AVOIDANCE OF DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS

- CAUSES DISTRESS TO LOVED ONES

- MIGHT ACCIDENTALLY HURT MYSELF REALLY BAD

- EMBARRASSMENT AND SELF-LOATHING

- NO INSTANT RELIEF

- FEELING OUT OF CONTROL

- FEELING HELPLESS

THE JUDGE'S VERDICT

Examine the advantages & disadvantages of each of the viable options.
What is the best thing to do?

"SELF-HARMING IS NOT WORTH IT AS IT DOESN'T FIX ANYTHING LONG TERM. INSTEAD I SHOULD TRY AND USE SOME MORE EFFICIENT COPING SKILLS."



PROS AND CONS

URGE OR DOING BEHAVIOR

PROS

ACTING ON BEHAVIOR

NOT ACTING ON BEHAVIOR

CONS

THE JUDGE’S VERDICT

Examine the advantages & disadvantages of each of the viable options.
What is the best thing to do?

SELF-SOOTHING SKILL

Self-sooth skill involves doing things that feel pleasant, comforting, and provide relief from stress or pain. It helps to pass the time without making things worse.

VISION

Stimulate your eyes. Go for a walk through the park. Cut out some interesting pictures from a magazine.
Look at some art.

HEARING

Go outside and listen to the birds, the wind, or even the waves at the beach. Listen to your favorite music or play an instrument.

SMELL

Light some candles or smell some essential oils. Cook your favorite meal. Go outside and smell the flowers or the fresh air.

TASTE

Eat something yummy. Take your time and focus on tasting every bit of flavor. Feel the different textures in your mouth.

TOUCH

Feel your favorite blanket and piece of fabric.
Pat your cat or dog, go outside, pick up different objects from the tree, and feel all the different textures.



WORST CASE SCENARIO

The fear (what am I anxious about?)

What is the worst case scenario?

What are the chances of that happening?
How likely is it?

If it does happen, what can you do to help yourself get through the situation?



BEST CASE SCENARIO

What is the best case scenario?

What are the chances of that happening?
How likely is it?

What can you do to try and make that happen?

What is the most likely scenario?



MINDFULNESS SCRIPT

Sit comfortably and breathe in and out slowly. This exercise aims to notice how each part of your body feels.

Start at the top of your head. Can you feel your hair? What does it feel like? Is it rubbing on your face? Have you got a hat on? Can you think of your hair tie?

Start to make your way down to your shoulders. Can you feel any tension in your shoulder area? Do you feel tight? Take a deep breath and try to loosen your shoulders and neck. Next, do a few neck stretches, turn your head to the left and slowly to the right.

Stand up straight. Place both feet shoulder-width apart.
Find your balance.

Slowly stretch your arms up high; imagine you are trying to touch the sky.

Stretch so high that you have to stand on your tippy toes.
Wriggle your fingertips and feel the stretch in your toes, calves, back, shoulders, arms, and fingers.

You can sit back down or lie down on the floor. Let go of every tension in your body.

Imagine yourself floating on a cloud.
Imagine a big white fluffy cloud floating above you.
You gently float up and land lightly on it.

I'd like you to imagine what it looks like.
What color is it?
What does it feel like?
What does it smell like? Does it smell like fresh air, marshmallows, or something entirely different?
What do you think it sounds like?
Can you hear anything in the sky, the wind, rain, or birds?
What is its shape?

This is your special cloud, where you feel safe, accessible, and peaceful.
Your cloud can drift and take you to any place that you wish to be.
Where do you want to go?
What things do you see as you float away?
Just rest in your cloud and enjoy the quiet and relaxation.

Relax for 10 seconds, and when you are ready, slowly bring your awareness to the present moment.