

Six Styles of Coping Skills

From the original “Six Styles of Coping Skills.pdf” · 7 pages

What this is. The original handout (7 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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DISTRACTION

DISTRACTION

The distraction coping skill is a technique that can be valuable in diverting our attention away from distressing thoughts or situations. The distraction coping skill involves intentionally redirecting your focus from anxiety-inducing or negative thoughts toward more positive and engaging activities. Engaging in alternative activities diverts your mind away from distressing emotions and helps you regain a calmer state of mind.

PROS

- Temporary relief: Distraction provides temporary relief from stress, anxiety, and overwhelming thoughts by shifting your attention elsewhere.
- Break the pattern: Disrupting negative thought cycles and ruminating patterns can provide a mental break and prevent further escalation of distress.
- Mood improvement: Engaging in enjoyable activities can trigger the release of endorphins and enhance your overall mood.
- Increasing resilience: By diverting your focus, you can build resilience and develop skills to detach from negative emotions.

CONS

- Temporary solution: Distraction does not address the root cause of the stress or negative emotions; it provides temporary relief without actively resolving the underlying issues.
- Avoidance potential: Relying solely on distraction coping can lead to avoiding or ignoring problems, preventing necessary growth and problem-solving.
 - Unsustainable in the long term: Prolonged use of distraction as the sole coping mechanism may hinder personal growth and perpetuate emotional avoidance.

WHEN TO IMPLEMENT:

- Intense emotions: When experiencing intense emotions such as anxiety, anger, or sadness, applying distraction techniques can help reduce their impact and restore emotional balance.
- Overwhelm and stress: During periods of extreme stress, allowing yourself a mental break through distractions can help prevent emotional burnout and enhance productivity.
- Preoccupied mind: When you find yourself stuck in negative thought processes or rumination, consciously choosing diversions can break the cycle and help redirect your focus.

EXAMPLES:

- Engaging in hobbies: Dedicate time to activities you enjoy, such as painting, gardening, playing musical instruments, or writing.
- Exercise: Physical activity releases endorphins and provides an outlet to channel stress and distract your mind from troubling thoughts.
- Social connection: Spend time with friends or loved ones, engaging in conversations, playing games, or participating in group activities.
- Reading or watching movies: Immerse yourself in captivating books or movies that detach you from stressors.
- Mindfulness: Practice mindfulness techniques or meditation, focusing on your breath, senses, and the present moment while letting go of intrusive thoughts.

GROUNDING AND MINDFULNESS

GROUNDING AND MINDFULNESS

Harnessing the power of grounding and mindfulness coping skills can help restore a sense of calm and clarity. Grounding and mindfulness are two interconnected coping skills that focus on bringing awareness to the present moment. Grounding involves using the physical senses to anchor oneself in the here and now, while mindfulness encourages non-judgmental acceptance of the present moment's thoughts and emotions.

PROS

- **Immediate Accessibility:** Unlike some coping techniques that may require specific tools or resources, grounding and mindfulness can be practiced anywhere and at any time. You can tap into these techniques whenever you need them, whether you're at home, work, or on the go. All it takes is a moment to redirect your attention to the present moment and engage your senses.

CONS

- **Initial difficulty:** It can be challenging to start incorporating grounding and mindfulness into your routine. It requires practice and patience.
- **Not a quick fix:** These coping skills may take time to yield noticeable effects. Consistency is key in experiencing long-term benefits.
- **Vulnerability:** Being present means acknowledging and exploring difficult emotions, which can make us feel vulnerable at times.

WHEN TO IMPLEMENT:

- **Anxious moments:** When feeling overwhelmed by anxious thoughts or sensations.
- **Challenging conversations:** Mindfulness can be effective in interpersonal situations, enabling you to remain present and attentive.
- **Busy or stressful periods:** Incorporating grounding and mindfulness throughout your day can help combat stress, improve focus, and enhance overall well-being.
- **Negative thought patterns:** Use mindfulness to observe negative thoughts without judgment, allowing them to arise and fade without getting entangled in them.

EXAMPLES:

- **5-4-3-2-1 Technique:** Notice and name five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. This technique engages the senses, grounding you in the present moment.
- **2. Body Scan:** Starting from your toes and moving up to your head, bring focused attention to each part of your body, noticing any physical sensations or tension.

THOUGHT CHALLENGING

THOUGHT CHALLENGING

Thought challenging, also known as cognitive restructuring, is a cognitive-behavioral technique that helps individuals identify and reframe unhelpful thoughts and beliefs. It helps examine the validity and accuracy of our automatic negative thoughts and replace them with more realistic and positive interpretations. Challenging distorted thinking patterns creates space for healthier and more productive thought patterns to take root.

PROS

- Addresses the Root Cause: Thought challenging goes beyond managing symptoms and provides individuals with a chance to tackle the root cause of their negative emotions. By challenging distorted and unhelpful thoughts, we can directly address and modify the beliefs that might be triggering emotional distress.
- Promotes Long-term Change: With regular practice, thought challenging nurtures a pattern of more rational and balanced thinking.

CONS

- Cognitive Effort: Thought challenging requires effort and conscious awareness. It may initially feel uncomfortable or draining to actively challenge our long-held negative beliefs or automatic thoughts. Persistence and practice are crucial for establishing new and healthier thinking patterns.

WHEN TO IMPLEMENT:

- Anxious moments: When feeling overwhelmed by anxious thoughts or sensations.
- Thought challenging can be especially effective in situations where negative or irrational thoughts are causing emotional distress or interfering with daily functioning.
 - When experiencing anxiety or panic attacks.
 - When stuck in negative self-talk or self-doubt patterns.
 - When struggling with distorted thinking in relationships.
 - When facing challenges at work or school.
 - When feeling overwhelmed by catastrophic thoughts or excessive worry.

EXAMPLE:

Automatic Negative Thoughts about a Work Presentation

Original Thought: "I am going to mess up the presentation. Everyone will think I am incompetent."

Challenged Thought: "I have prepared extensively for this presentation, and I have valuable insights to share. I am capable of delivering the presentation effectively."

Alternative Positive Thought: "I am feeling confident and well-prepared. I will do my best and present my ideas with clarity and conviction."

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Emotional awareness refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and acknowledge our own emotions and the underlying factors that trigger them. It involves cultivating self-compassion, non-judgment, and a proactive approach to emotional well-being. By developing emotional awareness, we empower ourselves to respond to our emotions in a more constructive and balanced manner.

PROS

- Improved Self-understanding: Emotional awareness allows us to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves. By acknowledging and exploring our emotions, we gain insights into our needs, values, and triggers. This self-awareness helps in making more informed decisions, managing challenging situations, and fostering personal growth.
- With emotional awareness, we become more skilled at recognizing our emotional states and understanding how they influence our thoughts, behaviors, and relationships.

CONS

- Overwhelm: Initially, delving into emotions and exploring underlying triggers may feel overwhelming. It is essential to take the journey towards emotional awareness at a comfortable pace. Seeking support from a therapist or trusted individuals may be beneficial during this process.

WHEN TO IMPLEMENT:

- Emotional awareness can be advantageous in various situations. Here are a few instances where it can be particularly helpful:
 - During moments of high stress or anxiety
 - When experiencing intense or conflicting emotions
 - When facing difficult decisions or life transitions
 - In times of conflict or misunderstandings within relationships
 - When seeking personal growth and self-reflection

EXAMPLE:

Situation: Feeling overwhelmed at work

Emotional Awareness Process:

- Take a moment to pause and check in with yourself.
- Identify the emotions present, such as stress, frustration, or anxiety.
- Acknowledge and label each emotion without judgment.
- Reflect on the underlying reasons contributing to these emotions (e.g., workload, deadlines).
- Through this awareness, determine appropriate coping strategies or necessary self-care actions.

OPPOSITE ACTION

OPPOSITE ACTION

Opposite Action involves intentionally acting in a manner contradictory to the impulse associated with a particular emotion. It acknowledges the undeniable link between emotions, thoughts, and actions, enabling individuals to break free from the patterns that exacerbate distress or perpetuate negative cycles. As a result, opposite action helps promote emotional regulation and fosters adaptive coping mechanisms.

PROS

- Empowers Emotional Regulation: Unlike many coping strategies that aim to suppress emotions, opposite action empowers individuals to navigate their emotions by acknowledging them and responding in a more balanced way. By regulating emotions, the individual gains control and avoids impulsive or destructive behaviors that may worsen the situation.
- This coping skill helps in avoiding hasty decisions driven solely by emotional impulses, allowing for more rational and thoughtful decision-making.

CONS

- Initial Discomfort: Initially, acting opposite to impulses linked to intense emotions may feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable. However, as individuals consistently practice this coping skill, discomfort typically lessens, leading to a greater sense of empowerment and emotional well-being.

WHEN TO IMPLEMENT:

- Opposite action can be beneficial in various scenarios. Here are a few instances where it can be particularly effective:
 - When experiencing intense anger or frustration
 - When combating anxious thoughts or behaviors
 - When dealing with overwhelming sadness or grief
 - When trying to break free from negative thought patterns or self-destructive habits
 - When seeking to assert oneself despite feelings of insecurity

EXAMPLE:

Situation: Feeling anxious about public speaking.

Opposite Action Process:

- Identify anxiety-driven behaviors: avoiding public speaking opportunities, excessive worry, or physical symptoms.
- Recognize desired outcomes: building confidence, developing public speaking skills, and sharing ideas effectively.
- Act opposite to anxious urges: actively seek public speaking opportunities, practice relaxation techniques, rationalize irrational thoughts, and engage in deep breathing exercises.
- Repeat opposite actions consistently to challenge and gradually overcome anxiety.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social interaction as a coping skill involves actively seeking or engaging in meaningful connections with others to alleviate stress, ease emotional burdens, and gain support. It is rooted in the belief that human connection is pivotal for emotional regulation, personal growth, and fostering positive mental health outcomes.

PROS

- **Emotional Support and Validation:** Connecting with others during difficult times creates a network of emotional support. Sharing and expressing feelings can provide validation and a sense of belonging, reducing isolation and promoting healing.
- **Perspective and New Insights:** Intimate discussions and conversations with trusted individuals offer fresh perspectives, insights, and alternative viewpoints. This broader range of outlooks can help reframe problems, find new solutions, and challenge negative thinking patterns.

CONS

- **Reliance on Others:** Depending solely on others for coping support can strain relationships and potentially lead to disappointment if expectations are not met. It is essential to develop a balance between seeking external support and fostering resilience within oneself.
- **Lack of Availability:** At times, suitable social connections or a supportive network may be scarce, whether due to geographical limitations, periods of isolation, or a lack of understanding from others. In such cases, alternative coping strategies may need to be explored.

WHEN TO IMPLEMENT:

- **High-Stress Situations:** Engaging with supportive individuals during demanding periods, such as work-related stress, exams, or personal life challenges can provide reassurance, problem-solving insights, and overall emotional relief.
- **Times of Loss or Grief:** Connecting with loved ones, support groups, or therapists during times of loss or grief can help process emotions, gain perspective, and find comfort in shared experiences.

EXAMPLE:

Talking to a Trusted Friend: When feeling overwhelmed by stress at work, discussing the situation and seeking advice from a trusted friend can help you gain perspective and receive emotional support.

Attending Support Groups: Joining a support group for individuals facing similar challenges, such as addiction recovery or chronic illness, offers the chance for connection, shared experiences, and learning from others who have overcome or are dealing with similar circumstances.

HEALTHY COPING SKILLS CHEAT SHEET

Distraction

Redirecting your attention towards a positive and engaging activity can offer much-needed respite. Discover effective ways to utilize distraction as a coping strategy.

EXAMPLES:

- Distraction from distressing feelings.
- Find objects of certain colors.
- Count backwards from 100
- Name as many things as you can from a category - Food, famous people, places, or animals.

Grounding/Mindfulness

When untamed thoughts and worries govern our minds, cultivating mindfulness allows us to embrace the present moment with acceptance and non-judgment.

EXAMPLES:

- Becoming more present in the moment.
- 5,4,3,2,1 senses - focus on your senses.
- Deep Breathing exercises.
- Sensations - Splash cold water on the face, and hold ice.

Thought Challenging

Thought challenging is a valuable technique that empowers individuals to question and reframe anxious thoughts. Identify negative thinking patterns and replace them with rational positive ones.

EXAMPLES:

- The worst-case scenario.
- Pros and cons exercise
- Put thoughts on Trial and find the evidence.
- Reflect on past experiences and what coping skills were used.

Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness serves as a powerful tool for managing anxiety, enabling individuals to recognize and understand their emotions at a deeper level.

EXAMPLES:

- Become aware of expressing emotions.
- Naming emotions with an emotional chart.
- Expressing feelings - worry time, worry jar.
- Linking the mind-body connection.

Opposite Action

Acknowledge and take steps to counteract anxious urges. By consciously engaging in behaviors that contradict anxious impulses, one can challenge anxiety's grip and regain control.

EXAMPLES:

- Do the opposite of how you feel.
- Read positive affirmations.
- Listen to happy or calming music if you are sad or distressed.
- Give a hug if you're feeling angry.

Social Interaction

Social interaction allows individuals to build a support network, providing a sense of belonging and connection with others who may be experiencing similar challenges

EXAMPLES:

- Keep social to help prevent anxiety.
- Volunteer
- Join a club
- Team sport
- Utilize social media