

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out my survey!

So, here is the handout I give most often to individual clients. I created it to be a source of ideas so we can have a wide variety of tools in our “coping toolbox”.

Many of us have a “go to” coping skill that may not always be available (like going for a run outside) or may not be helpful (compulsive eating) or perhaps it is just not great to do it every time you’re stressed (shopping, surfing the net, etc).

I have found it most helpful to figure out what we really need and then to ask what could meet that need more effectively? For example, if you are someone who uses food to cope, you may turn to the pantry whether you are sad, angry, bored, or anxious. The food may be a short term diversion or numbing escape, but the truth is, you were not really “hungry” for food. The food doesn’t meet your need in a way that will be truly satisfying. That is why no matter how many handfuls of chips, chocolate, or whatever, it may not feel like “enough” because you are not addressing the true need. If you are anxious, going on facebook may be a helpful distraction for awhile, but if there is a situation you need to resolve, avoidance often results in more anxiety in the long run.

So, I put coping skill ideas into different categories so you can get used to asking yourself, “What would be helpful here?” What do I really need? If you are new to asking yourself this question, this may be hard to answer, but just look at the list and see if any of the ideas seem doable in the moment. There will be times when you may choose something that is an old habit and not entirely healthy, but when that happens, I want you to say to yourself, “This is what feels helpful right now and I’m not going to beat myself up about it.” You may want to delay the old habit by trying to use 1 or 2 new things first, but be patient with yourself.

I wish you peace and much joy as you seek to care for yourself in a healthy way!

Warmly,
Michelle

75 + IDEAS FOR COPING SKILLS

Relaxation and comfort

Take a bath
Sit and drink tea
Watch a candle
Take a nap
Snuggle with a pet
Take deep breaths
Imagine a peaceful place
Be mindful: aware of the present
moment w/o judgement

Movement

Crank the music & dance
Yoga
Stretch
Take a new fitness class
Go for a walk
Run up and down the stairs
Do some push-ups or sit-ups

Support

Call a friend
Write a letter
Read through old cards
Look at pictures of loved ones
Ask for a hug
Go out with a friend
Check out a supportive website
Let a family member know how
they can help

Diversion

Read a book
Watch a movie
Browse an interesting magazine
Look up a new recipe
Plant something
Cook something new
Crossword puzzles
Download new music
Sudoku
Find a new craft to try

Humor

Smile Laugh
Watch a funny movie
Read funny cards at a store
Search youtube.com for “funny”

Have a pillow fight or play tag
Read a book of comics
Look up jokes online

Creative expression

Journal
List things to be grateful for
Paint
Color with crayons
Take some pictures
Make a collage
Draw your feelings
Sing or listen to music that
expresses your feelings
Write a poem
Play with play-doh or clay
Scrapbook

Productivity

List nagging unfinished tasks and
break them down into small steps
Organize something
Clean something
Collect things to give away
Rearrange or redecorate
Fix something
20 minutes of homework/ project
Chose 1 small thing

Service

Volunteer at a soup kitchen
Visit the MSPA-pet/walk
the animals
Bake something to give away
Pick out a card to send
Call a friend in need
Say a prayer for someone

Places to Go

beach park
bookstore
wooded path
your backyard
craft store
museum library
coffee shop with a friend
children’s playground-play!

Come up with your own ideas!!

Michelle Wilson, MA, LMHC 978 475-1775