

KNOW! Healthy Coping Skills for Stress and Anxiety

Most people experience feelings of stress and anxiety when faced with new, challenging, or uncomfortable situations. Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many pre-existing anxieties and added additional stressors to all of our lives. For kids and teens, adolescence can already be a turbulent time of dealing with new stressors. School demands, peer relationships, and life changes can escalate feelings of sadness, anger, and anxiety.

In today's challenging times, we need to practice healthy strategies for managing feelings and coping with stress. Coping skills help us manage the stressful situations that we face every day and the more significant difficult events that occur less often. It is never too early or too late to start building up healthy coping skills. Practicing healthy coping skills has many benefits, such as building confidence, increasing independence, and improving self-regulation. Unhealthy coping skills, such as substance use, avoiding people or situations, negative self-talk, and violence can be dangerous and lead to harm. With practice, healthy coping skills can become habitual and easier to use.

As we approach the often-stressful holiday season, now is a great time to check in with the young people in your life (and with yourself!) about practicing healthy coping strategies and developing additional skills to improve emotional wellness.

You can help young people develop and practice healthy coping skills by:

- Practicing healthy coping skills for yourself.
- Teaching new coping strategies when everyone is calm, instead of during a stressful situation.
- Trying many different coping skills and recognizing that there isn't one coping skill that will work in every situation or for all negative feelings.
- Offering various coping strategies as options and letting them explore what works best.
- Building coping skills into your daily routine.
 - Making practicing coping skills fun.

Use this list to find new coping strategies to practice and improve your emotional wellness!

Self-Soothing Coping Strategies

Self-soothing coping strategies help to manage stress and anxiety by providing comfort during uncomfortable emotions. To identify what helps you to self-soothe, think about the five senses and what is calming to you while you are in a neutral emotional state. Some examples of self-soothing behaviors include:

- Cuddling with a soft blanket or stuffed animal
- Squeezing a stress ball
- Listening to relaxing music
- Drinking cold water
- Looking at happy photos
- Taking a hot or cold shower
- Going on a run
- Lighting a scented candle
- Drinking warm tea
- Closing your eyes and listening to the sounds around you
- Doing yoga or stretching
- Practice [grounding your body and mind](#)

Distraction Coping Strategies

Distraction coping strategies help you to take your mind off overwhelming emotions. Healthy distraction coping skills include:

- Doing a puzzle
- Reading a book
- Coloring, drawing, or painting
- Knitting
- Playing with a fidget toy
- Crocheting
- Doing a crossword puzzle
- Watching a movie
- Playing an instrument
- Playing a game with family or friends

Emotional Awareness and Mindfulness Coping Strategies

Opposite action coping strategies involve doing something that is the opposite of your impulse and is consistent with positive emotions. Examples include:

- Writing your own affirmation
- Focusing on one thing you are grateful for

- Closing your eyes and thinking about something you are looking forward to
- Practicing [positive self-talk](#)
- Watching something funny or cheery

Emotional Awareness and Mindfulness Coping Strategies

Emotional awareness and mindfulness coping strategies help you to identify and express the emotions that you are experiencing. These strategies include:

- Writing about your thoughts or feelings in a journal
- Practicing [guided imagery](#)
- Sharing your feelings with someone you trust
- Using the [feelings wheel](#) to better understand what you are feeling
- [Meditating](#) or listening to relaxation recordings
- Practicing breathing exercises

Feel free to check out these resources!

- [Grounding Your Mind and Body](#)
- [Guided Imagery](#)
- [Coping Skills: Anxiety](#)
- [Nature Gazing Mindfulness Worksheet](#)
- [Clarifying Emotions Mindfulness Worksheet](#)
- [Positive Self-Talk Worksheet](#)
- [What is Positive Self-Talk?](#)
- [Feelings Wheel](#)

Sources

- [Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids](#)
- [Healthy Coping Skills for Anxiety, Depression, and Anger](#)
- [Coping with Stress](#)
- [Stress: Coping with Life's Stressors](#)
- [How to Help Children and Teens Manage their Stress](#)

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