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KNOW! HOW TO BUILD COPING SKILLS TOGETHER

Most people feel stress and anxiety when faced with new, challenging, or uncomfortable situations. For young people, school pressure, changing friendships, and life transitions can intensify feelings of sadness, anger, or worry.

These everyday stressors can feel overwhelming, but they don't have to be. Healthy coping skills empower people of all ages to manage stress, navigate challenging situations, and build resilience. It's never too early or too late to build healthy coping strategies.

Practicing healthy coping skills regularly can lead to real benefits, like stronger self-confidence, increased independence, and improved emotional regulation. Unhealthy coping skills, such as substance use, withdrawing from others, negative self-talk, and violence, can be harmful and hard to break once they take hold.

That's why now is a great time to check in with the young people in your life (and with yourself!) about how you're coping and to explore new strategies together that support emotional wellness.

KNOW! YOUR ROLE IN SUPPORTING YOUTH

You can support youth in developing healthy coping skills by:

- **Modeling healthy coping skills yourself.** Kids learn by watching how the adults around them handle stress.
- **Introducing new coping strategies when things are calm.** Learning and practicing skills is easier when emotions aren't running high.
- **Recognizing that one size doesn't fit all.** Not every coping skill works for every person or emotion. Trying different tools helps youth discover what works best for them.
- **Making coping part of your daily routine.** Practicing regularly builds confidence and makes coping feel more natural.
- **Keeping it fun.** The more engaging and enjoyable the activity is, the more likely it will stick.

Use the list below to find new strategies you can try together and take a step toward building lifelong skills for emotional health.

KNOW! SELF-SOOTHING COPING SKILLS

Self-soothing coping strategies help us manage stress and anxiety by offering comfort during moments of emotional discomfort. A great way to discover what works for you is to reflect on your five senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell—and consider what you find calming when you're feeling at ease. Self-soothing behaviors can include:

- Looking at happy photos
- Listening to relaxing music
- Cuddling with a soft blanket or stuffed animal
- Drinking warm tea
- Lighting a scented candle

Togetherness Tip: Invite your child to join your self-soothing routine. Try saying, "When I get stressed, it helps me to listen to my favorite song. Do you want to listen to it together?"

KNOW! DISTRACTION COPING SKILLS

Distraction coping strategies help you take your mind off overwhelming emotions. Healthy distraction strategies aren't about ignoring your feelings, but rather about regulating your nervous system so your emotions don't feel so intense. Healthy distraction coping skills include:

- Reading a book
- Coloring, drawing, or painting
- Playing with a fidget toy
- Watching a movie
- Playing an instrument

Togetherness tip: Family game nights are a fun distraction that can help everyone cope with stress. Just one every few weeks can strengthen bonds and support emotional well-being.

KNOW! OPPOSITE ACTION COPING SKILLS

Opposite action coping strategies are about choosing to do the opposite of what your emotions tell you to do to turn down the volume of your emotions. Examples include:

- Instead of avoiding tasks, make a list of small things you can do in the short term
- Instead of withdrawing, reach out to a friend or loved one
- Instead of doing nothing all day, get active or engage in enjoyable activities

Togetherness Tip: Feelings like anger and irritation can activate us to lash out against others. Try regularly practicing acts of kindness with your young person, which can soften those strong emotions.

KNOW! EMOTIONAL AWARENESS COPING SKILLS

Emotional awareness coping skills help you identify and express the feelings you are experiencing. These strategies include:

- Writing about your thoughts or feelings in a journal
- Drawing a picture that represents how you feel
- Using an **emotions card** or **feelings wheel** to identify your current feelings

Togetherness Tip: Sharing your feelings with a trusted person can be comforting. Remind your young person that you are always there for them if they want to talk, no matter what.

RESOURCES

[10 Grounding Exercises for Kids to Manage Anxiety and Worries | Mental Health Center Kids](#)

[Guided Imagery for Kids | Mental Health Center Kids](#)

[Coping Skills: Anxiety | TherapistAid](#)

[Printable Emotion Faces | Therapist Aid](#)

[Using the Opposite Action Skill for Overwhelming Emotions | Mental Health Center Kids](#)

[Coping Skills Toolbox | Baldwin County Public Schools](#)

[The Feelings Wheel](#)

[Pediatric Coping Skills | Children's Hospital Colorado](#)

[Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids and Teens | Strong 4 Life](#)

SOURCES

[Self-Soothing for the Emotional Teen | Focus Forward](#)

[Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids and Teens | Strong 4 Life](#)

[Stress: Coping With Life's Stressors | Cleveland Clinic](#)

[How to help children and teens manage their stress | American Psychological Association](#)

[Pediatric Coping Skills | Children's Hospital Colorado](#)



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