



Coping Skills

Immediate / In-the-Moment Coping (when emotions spike)

- Slow belly breathing (inhale 4, exhale 6)
- Box breathing (4-4-4-4)
- Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste
- Splash cold water on your face
- Hold an ice cube or a cold object like a balled up frozen washcloth
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Grounding: describe your surroundings out loud
- Count backwards by 7s
- Put your feet firmly on the floor and press down
- Hand on chest and slow breaths
- Sit with your back against a wall
- Hum or sing softly
- Smell something strong (coffee, essential oil, citrus peel)
- Stretch your neck, shoulders, jaw
- Wrap up in a blanket
- Slow your movements deliberately
- Focus on a single object for 60 seconds

Cognitive / Thought-Based Coping

- Journaling (free-write without editing)
- Brain dump everything onto paper
- Challenge negative thoughts with evidence
- Reframe: "What would I tell a friend?"
- Write worries down, then schedule worry-time
- Make a pros and cons list
- Practice self-compassion statements
- Name the emotion specifically
- Reality-check assumptions
- Thought labeling – "this is anxiety talking"
- Write a letter you don't send (or eventually send)
- Gratitude list (even tiny things)



- Keep a thought log or mood log
- Practice acceptance instead of fixing – allowing instead of resisting
- Focus on what is within your control
- Use affirmations that feel believable
- Visualize a calm or safe place
- Limit rumination with a timer
-

Physical & Body-Based Coping

- Walking – especially outside
- Gentle stretching or yoga
- Strength training
- Dancing alone
- Running or cycling
- Swimming
- Tai chi or qigong
- Shaking out your body
- Foam rolling
- Massage (self or professional)
- Warm shower or bath
- Deep stretching before bed
- Gardening or yard work
- Cleaning or organizing
- Sports or recreational movement
- Posture check and reset
- Rest when your body asks

Creative & Expressive Coping

- Drawing or sketching
- Painting
- Writing poetry and stories
- Music - listening or playing
- Singing loudly or softly
- Crafting or DIY projects
- Coloring books



- Photography
- Scrapbooking
- Vision boards
- Cooking or baking creatively
- Journaling with prompts
- Acting or role-play
- Creative journaling
- Making playlists for moods
- Clay or sculpting
- Knitting or crocheting
- Creating problem-solving challenges

Social & Relational Coping

- Talking to a trusted person
- Texting someone safe
- Asking for a hug
- Spending time with pets
- Joining a support group
- Therapy or counseling
- Setting boundaries
- Saying “no” without over-explaining – no need to justify
- Saying “no” with boundaries such as “no I can’t today, but I can tomorrow” or “no, I can’t commit to 4 hours, but I can commit to 1 hour.”
- Practicing assertive communication
- Being around people without talking
- Sharing honestly – when ready
- Volunteering
- Playing games with friends
- Laughing together
- Reaching out instead of isolating
- Repairing a relationship
- Listening deeply to someone else

Mindfulness & Emotional Regulation

- Mindfulness meditation



- Body scan meditation
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Observing thoughts without judging
- Labeling emotions as they arise
- Practicing patience
- Sitting with discomfort briefly
- Emotional check-ins
- Acceptance practices
- Practicing non-reactivity
- Mantras or grounding phrases
- Slow mindful eating
- Mindful walking
- Breath awareness
- Noticing urges rise and fall
- Letting emotions pass naturally

Structure, Routine & Prevention

- Creating a daily routine
- Consistent sleep schedule
- Morning sunlight exposure
- Regular meals
- Limiting caffeine and alcohol
- Time blocking
- To-do lists – realistic ones
- Critical tasks list – 3-5 items of small, practical tasks to complete today
- Planning enjoyable activities
- Scheduling breaks – put it on your calendar
- Digital boundaries
- Reducing overstimulation
- Decluttering spaces
- Preparing for hard days
- Building wind-down rituals
- Regular check-ins with yourself and then giving yourself what you need
- Set small achievable goals



Self-Soothing & Comfort

- Holding a warm mug
- Weighted blanket
- Comfort shows and movies
- Reading
- Soft music or white noise
- Lighting candles
- Aromatherapy
- Cozy clothes – favorite hoodie or pair of socks
- Stuffed animals
- Gentle self-talk
- Creating a self-soothing kit
- Naps
- Watching nature
- Being kind to yourself on bad days

Long-Term Growth Coping

- Therapy or coaching
- Trauma-informed practices
- Building emotional literacy
- Learning coping skills intentionally
- Practicing self-compassion daily
- Developing hobbies
- Values clarification
- Setting life boundaries
- Journaling patterns over time
- Identifying triggers
- Building resilience skills
- Practicing forgiveness of yourself and others
- Learning distress tolerance skills
- Developing meaning or purpose
- Continuing education on mental health