



Coping Strategies for Supporting Yourself and Others



The following are just a few activities that can help alleviate some of the discomfort we all feel when faced with mentally and physically stressful situations. Developing various strategies can make a significant difference in how we see the situation and how we respond. Pick one of these activities to practice, and start building an effective toolbox of coping tips and tricks.

► Calming Strategies

- **Deep Breathing** – Focus on breathing from the diaphragm.
 - Blowing up a balloon.
 - For immediate visual feedback, place a beanbag or something similar on your belly while lying down, focus on the object moving up and down as you breathe.
 - Breathe It Out - Breathing deeply on the inhalation and exhale rapidly.
- **Sighing Away Stress** - When we sigh, we extend the outbreath, which is the opposite of the kind of breathing that occurs during the stress response.
- **The 7/11 Technique**
 - Breathe in to the (quick) inward count of 7 and out to the count of 11. The exact number does not matter, the point is that when the exhalation is longer than the inhalation the body relaxes – and the mind follows.
- **Breathing Visualization** (can be useful tip for children)
 - Blowing soup.
 - Square breathing.
 - Colour breathing.
- **4-7-8 Breathing** (slow breathing)
 - Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
 - Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose as you count to 4 in your head.
 - Hold your breath for a count of 7.
 - Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of 8.
- **Muscle Tense Release** - Focus on one muscle group at a time, squeezing and then contracting it for about 10 seconds, and then totally letting go of the muscle until it is loose and relaxed. The intention is about noticing the difference between how your body feels when you are tense and when you are relaxed.

► Soothing/Distracting Activities

- **5 senses self-soothing** – Engaging in any activity related to your 5 senses that feel pleasant and soothing, and/or bring some relief if you're in pain or experiencing difficult emotions
 - Engage in a creative exercise:
 - Art.
 - Textiles.
 - Engage in a focus activity:
 - Cards, board games, puzzles, Lego, and building models.

► Mindful Activities

- Mindful breathing activity.
- Mindful walking activity.
- Spend time in nature.
- Body Scan – Guided mindful activity.
- Guided meditations.
- Engage in Sensory Self-care Activities:
 - Cuddling up under a soft blanket or a pet.
 - Feeling the water on your skin during a hot bath or shower.
 - Lying down and listening to music with your eyes closed.
 - Having a small square of the most delicious chocolate.
 - Walking barefoot in the grass.

5-4-3-2-1 grounding activity: Engaging all 5 senses



5 things you see around you?



4 things you can touch or feel with your body (e.g., the chair on my back, feet on the floor, fingers on the table)?



3 things you hear?



2 things you smell or taste (or like to smell and taste)?



Take in 1 mindful breath.

► Self-Reflecting Activities

- **Journaling**
- **Mood Check-in** – Rate how you're feeling emotionally. You can use this technique in conjunction with journaling.
- **Gratitude Journal** - Involves identifying 3 to 5 things you're grateful for each day.
- **Opposite Action:** Doing something the opposite to your impulse that's consistent with positive emotion.
 - Affirmation or Inspiration – Statements or images.
 - Simply collect or create quotes/ images that can inspire, motivate, and shift your mood.
- **Quiet Reading**

Perspective Shifting:

1

Briefly describe the situation. Capture the most important details.

2

State your current perspective. Framing your view of the situation will always be about you, not the other person or people involved.

3

Develop three to five alternative perspectives. Try to have at least three alternatives. Ask a friend or colleague to help you if you get stuck. Avoid writing about actions you could take; those will come later after you have experienced the perspective for a time.

4

Choose one alternative perspective to use for the next week. What changes do you notice when you look at the situation through this new perspective?

► Energy Boosters and Stress Busters

- Engage in **ANY** type of physical exercise or activity.

