



## COPING STRATEGIES FOR UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, & EXPERIENCES

**Instructions:** Place a  next to each strategy that you know about and are using, an **X** next to each strategy that you know about but are not using, and a **?** next to each item that you don't know much about.

**Affiliation:** Turning to others for help or support without making them responsible for you.

- Ask a trusted friend or mentor for advice or feedback
- Attend a class on a helpful subject area
- Attend a support group
- Find someone who has what you want and spend time with them
- Go on an outing with a supportive person
- Groom a pet or animal
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone or "skype" a friend, colleague, mentor, or trusted loved one
- Pray to a higher power
- Pray with someone
- Take your pet for a walk
- Visit a counselor

**Altruism:** Dedicating yourself to helping others without overextending yourself.

- Choose one pleasant thing to do for a loved one each day
- Choose one good deed a day and follow through with it
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Mentor someone
- Refer someone to counseling
- Tutor someone
- Volunteer

**Anticipation:** Thinking ahead and preparing for emotional conflict or stressors.

- Change something in your surroundings to help you
- Create a list of things you can do to prepare for a situation
- Create a relapse prevention plan
- Create a stress management plan
- Get a good night's rest; research sleep improvement strategies if needed
- Give your body the nutrients it needs (healthy eating)
- Identify your options
- Identify the pros and cons for each option
- Pause, take a few deep breaths, and think before you react
- Post affirmations or healthy thoughts in strategic places at work or home

- Practice feng shui
- Reorganize your home or work space
- Research different strategies
- Surround yourself with pleasant scents (aromatherapy)
- Think about your goal(s) and how to get there
- Use a planner or organizer to keep track of things
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Humor:** Emphasizing the amusing ironic aspects of a conflict or stressor.

- Attend a local comedian's show
- Intentionally smile or laugh
- Read a funny book or article
- Read the Sunday comics
- Talk to someone who you tend to laugh with
- Watch a funny movie or sitcom
- Write about the humorous aspects of your experience
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Self-Assertion:** Expressing your feelings and thoughts directly in a way that is not coercive or manipulative.

- Attend a seminar or workshop on relationships
- Learn and practice healthy communication skills
- Prepare an outline of every thought you wish to share
- Research "I-statements" online
- Talk to someone you are upset with in a calm voice
- Tell someone what you want and need
- Think about what you want to say and practice it with a friend or in front of a mirror
- Use systematic desensitization
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Self-Observation:** Reflecting on your own thoughts, feelings, motivation, and behavior, and responding appropriately.

- Ask yourself what you are feeling
- Ask yourself why you are doing something
- Conduct a "chain analysis" about a disturbing experience
- Create a list of all the ways that you can look at the situation
- Practice extemporaneous writing
- Identify all the other possible explanations for your behavior or someone else's
- Journal about your thoughts and feelings
- Meditate on your thoughts, feelings, and sensations in your body
- Picture the unpleasant thought or feeling as a wave, watching it come and then go
- Research and experiment with biofeedback strategies

- Review a list of “cognitive distortions” and decide if you are using any of them
- Review a list of feelings and choose all the ones that describe what you are experiencing
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Write down all the thoughts that are running through your mind

**Sublimation:** Channeling potentially maladaptive feelings or impulses into socially acceptable behavior.

- Create a work of art
- Clean something
- Exercise
- Get involved in a related cause you can support
- Go for a bike ride
- Go for a walk or run
- Go swimming
- Invest in something healthy
- Join an exercise class or club
- Join a gym
- Participate in hypnotherapy or self-hypnosis
- Play a sport
- Practice deep breathing
- Practice more deep breathing!
- Practice guided imagery
- Practice progressive muscle relaxation
- Practice tai chi
- Practice yoga
- Read self-help books or materials (bibliotherapy)
- Spend time in a bubble bath or hot tub or tube down a river (hydrotherapy)
- Squeeze a stress ball or use Chinese stress balls
- Visit a nature trail or go hiking
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Suppression:** Intentionally avoiding thinking about disturbing problems, wishes, feelings, or experiences.

- Avoid spending time with people you don't think are healthy for you to be around
- Create a plan to avoid or deal with triggers
- Distract yourself with gardening or yardwork
- Distract yourself with a good book, poem, or article
- Distract yourself with a good movie
- Distract yourself with a healthy video game or board game
- Distract yourself with an outing with friends or family
- Get a massage
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Go fishing
- Intentionally shift your mind to something else
- Listen to music
- Make a list of helpful thoughts and focus on them
- Pick up a new hobby to occupy yourself
- Practice “thought stopping”
- Recite a list of positive affirmations
- Recite the serenity prayer
- Remove yourself from an unhealthy situation
- Take a time-out
- Write down unhelpful thoughts and then rewrite healthier versions of them