

Pathway to Coping

Lesson 2



Goals and Objectives

- Goal: To become more hopeful and better able to cope
 - Explain the difference between coping and stress
 - Identify an example of emotion-focused or problem-focused coping
 - Describe a coping strategy you have used and how well it worked for you
 - Describe how you can be more positive as you prepare to cope



What is Coping?

- The way we think and behave to manage stress in our lives.
- Adaptive coping can be effective and successful to help us get through tough times in a healthy way.
- Our coping can be affected by things like being defensive and protecting our self-image.
- It takes strength for a person to work on coping skills and to ask for help when needed.
- Coping is thinking about the situation, what it means to you, and figuring out how to improve things.

What is Stress?

- Stress has a physical response - not just an emotional one.
- Situations may trigger “stress emotions”
 - Anger, anxiety, disgust
 - Guilt, shame, sadness
 - Envy, jealousy
- A person can choose to react with different emotions, based on their point of view, and how well they adapt
 - You could react with frustration instead of guilt, shame, or anxiety – It’s not as “paralyzing”

Discussion: Trying to Cope

- *Are these healthy ways to cope?*
- **Confronting** –
 - *I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.*
 - *I expressed anger to whoever caused the problem.*
- **Distancing** –
 - *I “made light of” the situation - refused to get serious.*
 - *I didn’t let it get to me, and I tried to forget it.*
- **Self-controlling** –
 - *I kept others from knowing how bad things were.*
 - *I tried not to act too fast.*

Trying to Cope (continued)

- **Seeking social support -**
 - *I talked to someone who could do something about the problem.*
 - *I asked a relative or friend for advice.*
- **Accepting responsibility -**
 - *I realized that I brought the problem on myself.*
 - *I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time.*
- **Escape-avoidance -**
 - *I avoided people, wishing the situation would go away.*



Trying to Cope (continued)

- **Planning and problem solving -**
 - *I knew what had to be done so I put in more effort.*
 - *I changed something so things would turn out all right.*
 - *I made a plan and followed it.*
- **Positive reappraisal (thinking about it in a different way)**
 - *I found new faith from the experience.*
 - *I changed and grew as a person in a good way.*

Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R.S. (1988). Manual for the ways of coping questionnaire. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.



Other Ways to Cope

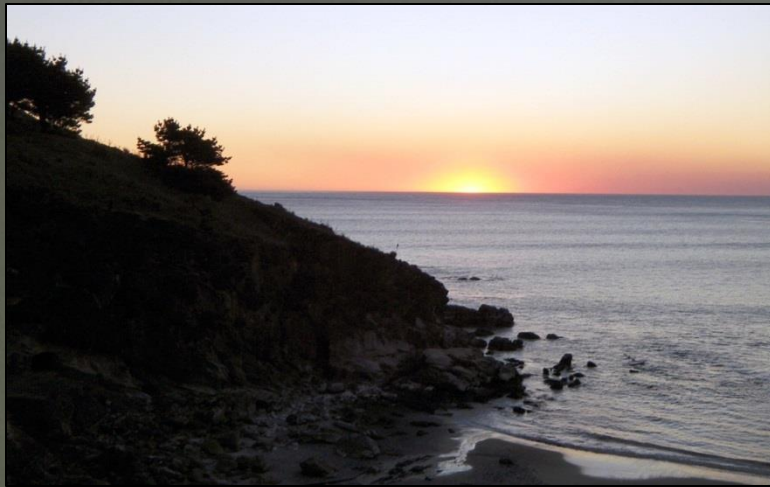
- People use a mix of coping strategies at different times.
- Coping takes personal strength and can involve faith.
- Spirituality and relaxation can make it easier to have insight and to solve problems.
- **Serenity Prayer:**
 - God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
 - Courage to change the things I can
 - And the wisdom to know the difference.

(This is also used as a motto in Alcoholics Anonymous)

Discussion: Your Coping Skills

- **You have already used many different coping skills** for problems, threats, or challenges you have faced.
- Sometimes your coping skills aren't quite enough when:
 - Your self-esteem has been threatened
 - There is a threat to health, functioning, or survival
 - You are feeling rejected, or an intense loss occurs
- *How can learning coping skills help your recovery?*
 - Learning more ways of coping can help decrease relapses and may prevent some future hospitalizations.

Take a Mindfulness Break



- Sit comfortably in your chair and watch Ten Tips for Stress Management video (2:14 minutes) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOpZU320v5E>



Case Study: Coping

- John was the brother of a woman with AIDS. He was able to take care of her as she neared death, even with so many difficult tasks and stressors.
- He used his sense of humor to make her feel better and kept busy to avoid thinking about the situation very much. It gave him a badly needed sense of control.
- Of course he was very sad to be losing his only sister, but there was even more to it. He was afraid that he had AIDS, too. He had no appetite, and couldn't sleep because of anxiety and depression.
- *How could John begin to cope?*

Look Closely At Your Thoughts

- A – Ask “*Why am I feeling like this?*”
- C – Change irrational thoughts, and use positive thinking
- C – Cope – Think and plan *what can be done*. Or realize if there is nothing that can be done, *move on*
- A – Act – Do what has to be done to help the situation
 - Problem-solving
 - Use a relaxation technique or thought-stopping
 - Do something to distract yourself if it helps you feel better

Messina J. M. & Messina, C. M. (2010). The Alert System. Retrieved from Tools for Recovery at <http://jamesjmessina.com/seastoolsforrecovery/alertsystem.html>



How Can Coping Help You?

- Coping can get you through a tough time, and decrease:
 - Fear and anxiety
 - Depression or other mental illnesses
 - Chronic pain or headaches
 - High blood pressure
 - Stomach or bowel problems
 - Risk of colds, flu, and infections
 - Tiredness, sleep problems
 - Substance abuse
 - Family, relationship, job, or school problems



Examples of Coping

(You can add more to the list)

- **Recreational activities** – music, hobbies, movies, reading
- **Exercise** – walking, swimming, dancing, biking, etc.
- **Stress-reduction** – yoga, relaxation exercises, “fishing”
- **Mental relaxation** – meditation, visual imagery, centering
- **Spirituality** – prayer, reading holy book, having purpose, forgiveness, “Letting go and letting God”

Examples of Coping (continued)

- **Family life skills** – conflict resolution, esteem, togetherness
- **Working on relationships** – setting limits, networking, love
- **Education and insight** – new behavior patterns, attitudes
- **Problem solving** – manage time, planning, rational thinking
- **Using sense of humor** – lightening up, having fun, comedy

Two Major Functions of Coping

- **Problem-focused coping** –
 - To change the troubling situation by acting on yourself, your environment, or your situation
- **Emotion-focused coping** –
 - To change the way you view the stressful situation (giving it attention, or avoiding it)
 - You can change your personal meaning of what is happening (to make it seem less stressful or troubling)



Case Study: Coping

- John said, “I went to have an AIDS test. I found out I didn’t have AIDS.” (problem-focused coping)
- “I was blaming myself for my sister’s drug addiction, but now I know it was an irrational thought. It was her decision to use drugs after rehab.” (emotion-focused coping)
- “I asked the social worker what home health care services would be available if I can’t take care of her by myself anymore.” (problem-focused coping)
- “I learned some relaxation exercises to help me fall asleep at night.” (problem-focused coping)

Case Study: Coping

- John said, “Now I have been able to relax so I can think things through better. I realize that I am a good person, and I can get past some of the negative stuff in my head.” (emotion-focused coping)
- “Now that I’ve gotten more rest, I have more energy to focus on my sister. I will get the help we need to keep her comfortable.” (problem-focused coping)
- “It seems like things are not as dark anymore. Instead of feeling angry, I am grateful that I can be here for her when she needs me the most.” (emotion-focused coping)

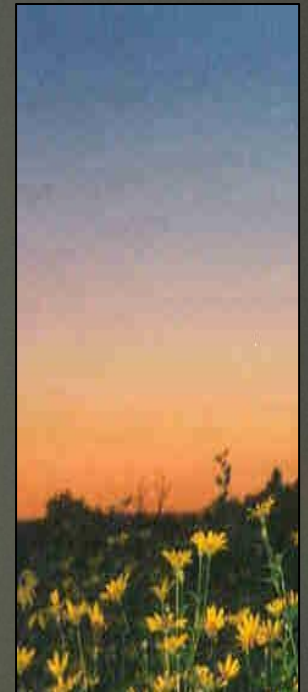


Discussion: Coping

- *Do you think John's actions and his education toward coping affected his sense of hope?*
 - *Yes, he was able to feel more calm and hopeful.*
- *Do you think everything got better for John?*
 - *No, he still had serious problems, stressors, and grief, but coping helped him to handle them much better.*
- *Discuss causes of your stress with someone on your healthcare team.*
- *Explore any irrational thoughts and make a plan.*

Conclusion

- Some people who try relaxation skills say they don't seem to work.
- But coping is more than stress relief - It includes your thinking, adapting to changes, and improving things.
- You can have control over how you view yourself and your situation.
- *Be kind to yourself – You deserve it.*
- Effective coping and hope can improve your physical and mental health during your recovery.



References

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