

## **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 backward by 7s
- Put your feet firmly on the floor and press down
- Hand on chest + 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/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’s in your control
  - Use affirmations that feel believable
  - Visualize a calm or safe place
  - Limit rumination with a timer
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### **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 + reset
  - Rest when your body asks
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### **Creative & Expressive Coping**

- Drawing or sketching
- Painting
- Writing poetry or 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
  - Creative problem-solving challenges
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### **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
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## **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

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## **Structure, Routine & Prevention**

- Creating a daily routine
- Consistent sleep schedule
- Morning sunlight exposure
- Regular meals
- Limiting caffeine/alcohol
- Time blocking

- To-do lists (realistic ones)
  - Critical tasks lists – 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
  - Setting small achievable goals
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### **Self-Soothing & Comfort**

- Holding a warm mug
- Weighted blanket
- Comfort shows or movies
- Reading
- Soft music or white noise
- Lighting candles
- Aromatherapy
- Cozy clothes – e.g. favorite hoodie or pair of socks
- Stuffed animals
- Gentle self-talk
- Creating a self-soothing kit
- Naps (when appropriate)

- Watching nature
  - Being kind to yourself on bad days
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### 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 (self & others)
- Learning distress tolerance skills
- Developing meaning or purpose
- Continuing education on mental health