

# A List of Coping Skills for Anger, Anxiety, and Depression

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## What Are Coping Skills and Strategies?

Coping strategies and skills are the reactions and behaviors one adopts to deal with difficult situations. Coping strategies come in many forms. Some are helpful and others are hurtful.

Humans tend to learn coping strategies from those they come into contact with while growing up. When a person learns and develops habits of negative coping skills, stressors become catastrophes and confidence in one's ability to cope is diminished.

Use this list of positive coping skills to identify new strategies to become more resilient in the face of challenges. Then look at the list of negative coping strategies to look for items to replace with more positive coping skills.

## Exercise Is an Excellent Coping Mechanism

A good workout can make you feel a lot better.

## Positive Coping Skills

Here's a list of coping skills that will help you when you are feeling strong emotions such as anger, anxiety, or depression. These activities are not likely to create more stress or problems, so these help you be more resilient and stress tolerant.

### Diversions

1. Write, draw, paint, photography
2. Play an instrument, sing, dance, act
3. Take a shower or a bath
4. Garden
5. [Take a walk](#), or go for a drive
6. Watch television or a movie
7. Watch cute kitten videos on YouTube
8. Play a game
9. Go shopping
10. Clean or organize your environment
11. Read
12. Take a break or vacation

### Social/Interpersonal (with others)

1. Talk to someone you trust
2. Set boundaries and say "no"
3. Write a note to someone you care about
4. [Be assertive](#)
5. Use humor
6. Spend time with friends and/or family
7. Serve someone in need
8. Care for or play with a pet
9. Role-play challenging situations with others
10. [Encourage others](#)

## **Cognitive (Of the Mind)**

1. Make a gratitude list
2. Brainstorm solutions
3. Lower your expectations of the situation
4. Keep an inspirational quote with you
5. Be flexible
6. Write a list of goals
7. Take a class
8. Act opposite of negative feelings
9. Write a list of pros and cons for decisions
10. Reward or pamper yourself when successful
11. Write a list of strengths
12. Accept a challenge with a positive attitude

## **Tension Releasers**

1. Exercise or play sports
2. Catharsis (yelling in the bathroom, punching a punching bag)
3. Cry
4. Laugh

## **Physical**

1. Get enough sleep
2. Eat healthy foods
3. Get into a good routine
4. Eat a little chocolate
5. Limit caffeine
6. Deep/slow breathing

## **Spiritual**

1. Pray or meditate
2. Enjoy nature
3. Get involved in a worthy cause

## **Limit Setting**

1. Drop some involvement
2. Prioritize important tasks
3. Use assertive communication
4. Schedule time for yourself

## **Yelling: Positive or Negative?**

As long as you're not yelling at someone else, a good yell might help release tension.

## **How Each Category of Coping Skills Helps**

**Diversions** are those coping skills that allow you to stop thinking about the stress inducing situation. Diversions aren't meant to be the final solution, but each can be useful in the basic goal of remaining safe.

As time goes on, move away from diversions and toward those skills that will build resiliency to the challenges that continue. Diversions are only useful if one can recognize warning signs when feeling overwhelming emotions.

**Social or interpersonal coping strategies** involve interactions with others. Scientific studies have proven the benefits of social support to counteract the effects of stress on DNA. Social supports can be useful for recognizing warning signs and providing assistance in difficult times.

**Cognitive coping skills** are those that involve using the mind and thought processes to influence the way one feels and behaves. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a type of treatment that helps people find ways of thinking that improve their mental responses to situations.

Learning to think in more rational ways can be done by recognizing and changing irrational thoughts. Ultimately, a person can become much more stress tolerant and ultimately improve behavioral outcomes.

**Tension releasing or cathartic coping strategies** involve acting on strong emotions in ways that are safe for oneself and others. Punching a pillow could be a way to release tensions in a safe way.

Be careful with cathartic responses because these tend to become habit forming and may translate to real life scenarios, so the child who practices punching a pillow may envision a person's face and end up actually punching that person's face when angry.

Physical process are directly tied to mental and emotional processes. A person's breathing rate can illicit a response from the sympathetic nervous system. Raising your voice can send signals to your brain that you are angry. In the same way, acting calmly in the face of difficulty can help send signals to your brain that everything is o.k.

**Exercise** is another thing that can help by producing endorphins, which are naturally occurring drugs that can create a calm or euphoric feeling.

**Praying, meditating, enjoying nature, or taking up a worthy cause** can affect a person on a spiritual level. Satisfying the need to feel worthwhile, connected, and at peace improve well-being at the core of a person. Spiritual well-being then exudes out of a person in attitudes and actions that are self-actualized. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we all need to feel a sense of purpose, but not everyone reaches that level.

**Limit setting** is a preventative measure to protect against overwhelming stress created by doing too much of something. Limits can be set for one's self or others. An example of setting a limit with others is learning to say "no" when you know you are too busy to help someone. Setting a limit for yourself could include dropping involvement in work activities that are not a good fit for your skills and focusing on those that you are efficient doing, which may mean having to be assertive with your boss about how you can help the most.

## **Drinking Alcohol Is Not a Good Coping Mechanism**

It might feel like it helps in the moment, but it's not a healthy solution in the long run.

Overindulging in anything (food, substance, etc.) may be an unhealthy and temporary fix.

## **Negative Coping Skills**

Here's a list of coping strategies that will cost you in the long run. These do more harm than good in most cases and can make life more stressful.

### **Diversions**

1. Procrastination
2. Abusing drugs or alcohol
3. Wasting time on unimportant tasks

## **Interpersonal (With Others)**

1. Blaming
2. Isolating/withdrawing
3. Mean or hostile joking
4. Gossiping
5. Criticizing others
6. Manipulating others
7. Refusing help from others
8. Lying to others
9. Sabotaging plans
10. Being late to appointments
11. Provoking violence from others
12. Enabling others to take advantage of you

## **Cognitive (of the Mind)**

1. Denying any problem
2. Stubbornness/inflexibility
3. All or nothing/black or white thinking
4. Catastrophizing
5. Overgeneralizing

## **Tension Releasers**

1. Tantrums
2. Throwing things at people
3. Hitting people
4. Yelling at others
5. Destroying property
6. Speeding or driving recklessly

## **Physical**

1. Suicide
2. Self harm
3. Developing illnesses

## **Intrapersonal**

1. Making fun of yourself
2. Self-sabotaging behaviors
3. Blaming yourself

## **Indulging**

1. Spending too much
2. Gambling
3. Eating too much
4. Setting dangerous fires
5. Continually crying

**Gambling is a poor coping mechanism and, for some, can lead to many other problems.**