

# COPING STRATEGIES

When trying to cope with overwhelming feelings and emotions, we can develop coping strategies that may not always be healthy and can potentially be harmful. We might do this to express emotional pain, to numb emotional pain, to feel something different or to regain a sense of control. Think about what you do to help you cope and how that coping strategy works for you. Considering this will make it easier to think of alternatives that may be safer and offer the same relief.

# TO REGAIN FEELING

- Eat something sour or bitter - try lemons, limes or fizzy sour sweets
- Try the '5,4,3,2,1, technique' to regain some focus. Think of 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell and 1 you can taste
- Hold something cold or warm and focus on the feeling of the sensation on your skin
- Focus on your breathing - think about the cool air entering your nostrils and the sensation of your chest rising and falling
- Slap a hard surface
- Play with putty, blue tack or modelling clay
- Cover your hands in glue, wait for it to dry and then peel it off
- Give yourself a hand and foot massage
- Spend time with your pet - stroke them or groom them
- Give someone a compliment - see if you can make someone smile



# TO FEEL IN CONTROL

- Make a to-do list and break your day into small manageable chunks
- Look around the room and find something to touch or smell. If there's someone at home, call out to them and listen for their response
- Do a task where you usually feel in control. This can help you gain a sense of achievement - try cleaning, researching your favourite music artist or someone you admire, word searches or computer games
- Reflect on the last 7 days and write down things you have achieved, people you have seen and moments you feel happy
- Say the alphabet out loud or count out loud to 100
- Build something using Lego if you have any, or build a fort/den using things around you

# EMOTIONAL RELEASE

- Shout or scream, out loud if there's no one around or into a pillow to muffle the sound
- Punch a punchbag or pillow if you don't have one
- Join a combat style exercise class or martial arts class
- Throw eggs or ice cubes at an outside wall and watch them smash
- Keep your recycling to one side and spend time flattening cartons, containers and boxes
- Watch something you know will make you laugh
- Buy a roll of bubble wrap and pop it or stamp on it
- Ball up a newspaper or magazine, sheet by sheet

# TO EXPRESS OR COMMUNICATE

- Write down how you are feeling - arrange the emotions into lyrics or poetry or write a story about yourself in the third person
- Write a letter with the aim to help others understand how you are feeling - give it to someone if you feel confident enough to share it
- Put a blindfold on and draw whatever comes into your mind
- Make yourself a mood chart or a mood diary to keep track of how you are feeling. Keep it on your bedroom door to let those close to you understand how you are
- Write down negative feelings and thoughts and challenge them - what makes them seem true? Why might they be false? If one of your friends or family members had these thoughts, what advice would you give them? What would you say to cheer them up?



When trying out new coping strategies make sure you are safe. For example, ensure you have no allergies to any food/materials suggested and that you clean and tidy up to prevent any hazardous accidents, for yourself and others.

These coping strategies are a starting point to help you consider what may be helpful to try short-term.

If you would like to learn more about getting help long-term, speak to your GP, family and friends or a suicide prevention adviser at HOPELINEUK.

**HOPELINEUK**

**Call:** 0800 068 4141

**Text:** 07860 039 967

**Email:** [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

**Opening hours**

9am - midnight, every day of the  
year

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)