



COPING MECHANISM LIST

Long list of coping mechanisms but it is important to find the ones that work for you - not all will suit you.

Alternatives for when you're feeling angry or restless:

- Scribble on photos of people in magazines
- Have a pillow fight with the wall
- Scream very loudly
- Tear apart newspapers, photos, or magazines
- Go to the gym, dance, exercise
- Listen to music and sing along loudly
- Draw a picture of what is making you angry
- Beat up a stuffed toy
- Pop bubble wrap / balloons
- Splatter paint
- Scribble on a piece of paper until the whole page is black
- Filling a piece of paper with drawing cross hatches
- Throw darts at a dartboard
- Go for a run
- Write your feelings on paper then rip it up
- Use stress relievers
- Build a fort of pillows and then destroy it
- Flatten aluminum cans for recycling, seeing how fast you can go
- Break sticks
- Make yourself as comfortable as possible
- Stomp around in heavy shoes
- Play handball or tennis
- Yell at what you are breaking and tell it why you are angry, hurt, upset, etc.
- Buy a cheap plate and decorate it with markers, stickers, cut outs from magazines, words, images, whatever that expresses your pain and sadness and when you're done, smash it. (Please be careful when doing this)

Alternatives that will give you a sensation (other than pain):

- Hold ice in your hands, against your arm, or in your mouth
- Run your hands under freezing cold water
- Snap a rubber band or hair band against your wrist
- Clap your hands until it stings
- Wax your legs
- Splash your face with cold water
- Put PVA/Elmer's glue on your hands then peel it off
- Massage where you want to hurt yourself
- Take a hot shower/bath
- Jump up and down to get some sensation in your feet
- Write or paint on yourself
- Arm wrestle with a member of your family

Alternatives that will distract you or take up time:

- Say "I'll self-harm in fifteen minutes if I still want to" and keep going for periods of fifteen minutes until the urge fades
- Count up to ten getting louder until you are screaming
- Complete something you've been putting off
- Take up a new hobby
- Make a cup of tea
- Play solitaire
- Count up to 500 or 1000
- Surf the net
- Make as many words out of your full name as possible
- Count ceiling tiles or lights
- Search ridiculous things on the web
- Color coordinate your wardrobe
- Play with toys, such as a slinky
- Go to the park and play on the swings
- Call up an old friend
- Go "people watching"
- Do school work
- Play a musical instrument
- Watch TV or a movie
- Paint your nails
- Alphabetize your CDs or books
- Cook
- Do craftwork, ie, origami, knit or sew
- Doodle on sheets of paper
- Dress up or try on old clothes
- Play computer games or painting programs, such as photoshop
- Write out lyrics to your favorite song
- Play a sport
- Read a book/magazine
- Do a crossword
- Draw a comic strip
- Make a chain link out of paper counting the hours or days you've been self-harm free using pretty colored paper
- Nurture a plant
- Go shopping

- Memorize a poem with meaning
- Learn to swear in another language
- Look up words in a dictionary
- Go outside and watch the clouds roll by
- Make your own dance routine
- Trace your hand on a piece of paper; on your thumb, write something you like to look at; on your index finger, write something you like to touch; on your middle finger, write your favorite scent; on your ring finger, write something you like the taste of; on your pinky finger, write something you like to listen to; on your palm, write something you like about yourself
- Plan regular activities for your most difficult time of day
- Finish homework before it's due
- Take a break from mental processing
- Get out on your own, get away from the stress
- Make a scrapbook
- Color in a picture or coloring book.
- Make a phone list of people you can call for support. Allow yourself to use it.
- Pay attention to your breathing (breath slowly, in through your nose and out through your mouth)
- Pay attention to the rhythmic motions of your body (walking, stretching, etc.)
- Learn HALT signals (hungry, angry, lonely, tired)
- Choose a random object, like a paper clip, and try to list 30 different uses for it
- Pick a subject and research it on the web - alternatively, pick something to research and then keep clicking on links, trying to get as far away from the original topic as you can.
- Take a small step towards a goal you have.

Alternatives for when you're feeling guilty, sad, or lonely:

- Congratulate yourself on how far you have come
- Draw or paint
- Look at the sky
- Call a friend and ask for company
- Buy a cuddly toy
- Give someone a hug with a smile
- Put a face mask on
- Watch a favorite TV show or movie
- Remember a happy moment and relive it for a while in your head
- Treat yourself to some chocolate
- Try to imagine the future and plan things you want to do
- Look at things that are special to you
- Make sculptures
- Watch fish
- Play with a pet
- Have or give a massage
- If you're religious, read the bible or pray
- Light a candle and watch the flame (but please be careful)
- Allow yourself to cry; crying is a healthy release of emotion
- Accept a gift from a friend
- Carry tokens to remind you of peaceful comforting things/people
- Take a hot bath with bath oil or bubbles
- Curl up under a comforter with hot cocoa and a good book
- Make affirmation tapes inside you that are good, kind, gentle (Sometimes you can do this by writing down the negative thoughts and then physically re-writing them into positive messages)
- Make a tray of special treats and tuck yourself into bed with it and watch TV or read

Alternatives for when you're feeling panicky or scared:

- "See, hear and feel"- 5 things, then 4, then 3 and countdown to one which will make you focus on your surroundings and will calm you down
- Listen to soothing music; have a CD with motivational songs that you can listen to
- Meditate or do yoga
- Name all of your soft toys
- Hug a pillow or soft toy
- Do a "reality check list" – write down all the things you can list about where you are now (e.g. It is the 9th November 2004, I'm in a room and everything is going to be alright)
- With permission, give someone a hug
- Drink herbal tea
- Crunch ice
- Go for a walk if it's safe to do so
- Feel your pulse to prove you're alive
- Put your feet firmly on the floor
- Touch something familiar/safe.
- Lay on your back in bed comfortably (eyes closed), and breathe in for 4, hold for 2, out for 4, hold for 2. Make sure to fill your belly up with air, not your chest. If your shoulders are going up, keep working on it. When you're comfortable breathing, put your hand on your belly and rub up and down in time with your breathing. If your mind wanders to other things, move it back to focusing ONLY on the synchronized movement of your hand and breathing.

Alternatives to help you sort through your feelings:

- Phone a friend and talk to them
- Make a collage of how you feel
- Negotiate with yourself
- Identify what is hurting so bad that you need to express it in this way
- Write your feelings in a diary
- Free write (Write down whatever you're thinking at that moment, even if it doesn't make sense)
- Make lists of everything such as blessings in your life
- Make a notebook of song lyrics that you relate to
- Call a helpline
- Write a letter to someone telling them how you feel (but you don't have to send it if you decide not to)
- Start a grateful journal where every day you write down three: good things that happened/ things that you accomplished/ are grateful for/ made you smile. Make sure the journal is strictly for positive things. Then when you feel down you can go back and look at it