

PTSD Coping Skills Handout

Below are eight different coping skills and strategies you can use whenever you're being distressed by your trauma and PTSD. Feel free to add them to your current roster of coping mechanisms if they worked well for you.

1. PRACTICE THE 4-7-8 BREATHING METHOD.

To practice this breathing method, do the following steps:

- Lie down or sit down.
- Put one hand on your chest and the other one on your belly.
- Take a deep breath from your belly, slowly.
- Count to 4 while taking a deep breath.
- Hold your breath and count mentally from 1 to 7.
- Exhale slowly while counting mentally from 1 to 8.
- Repeat all of the above for 3 to 7 times or however much you want until you feel relaxed.

Did this work for you? Yes No

2. DO THESE GROUNDING TECHNIQUES.

Grounding is one way to make you focused on the present moment using your senses.

- 54321 Method: Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- Backwards Counting: Count backwards from 100 to 0.
- Describe Your Immediate Surroundings: Describe the current environment you're at to yourself in full detail

Did this work for you? Yes No

3. GO ON A MINDFULNESS WALK.

A mindfulness walk brings the act of mindfulness to walking. Go outside and take a walk (how long is up to you). Hopefully, the weather is cool. While walking, please do the following:

- Focus on your surroundings and your footsteps.
- Think to yourself: What do I see around me? Describe them to yourself mentally in full detail.
- Think to yourself: What do I hear around me? Describe them to yourself mentally in full detail.
- Think to yourself: What's the weather like? Describe it to yourself mentally in full detail.

Did this work for you? Yes No

4. GUIDED IMAGERY EXERCISE.

Get in a comfortable position and imagine a peaceful place where you're happy. Describe what this place looks like, what's inside it, etc. Write it down in full detail below.

Did this work for you? Yes No

5. THE CONTAINER EXERCISE.

Follow these directives below in your imagination:

- What is a distressing thought you've had recently? Tell it to yourself.
- Conjure a container that can fit all the distressing things in your life.
- Picture yourself turning all of these distressing things into images or objects.
- Put these images and objects inside the container and close it tight.
- Leave it inside a place you don't intend to open anytime soon or for the rest of your life.

Do these whenever you are distressed by intrusive thoughts or feelings. A variation of this is to turn aspects of the distressing, intrusive thoughts or feelings into images or objects instead of ALL the distressing things in your life, especially if these thoughts and feelings are recurring.

Did this work for you? Yes No

6. PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION.

To practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation, please do the following:

- Lie down or sit down, then relax your whole body.
- Take five deep, slow breaths.
- Lift your toes upward and hold it for five seconds, then let go.
- Pull your toes downward and hold it for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Tense your calf muscles for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Move your knees towards each other, then hold your position for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Squeeze your thigh muscles, hold your squeezing for five seconds, and then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Clench your hands and hold it for five seconds, then unclench them.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Tense your arms and hold the tension for five seconds, then untense your arms.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Squeeze your buttocks and hold your squeezing for five seconds, then unsqueeze them.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Contract your abdominal muscles and hold the contraction for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Inhale and tighten your chest, hold your tightening for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Raise your shoulders to your ears, maintain the position for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Purse your lips together and keep it pursed for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Open your mouth wide and keep it open for five seconds, then close it.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Close your eyes tightly, keep them closed for five seconds, then open them.
- Relax for 10 seconds.
- Lift your eyebrows and lift them for five seconds, then let go.
- Relax for 10 seconds.

Did this work for you? Yes No

7. SELF-COMPASSION TALK.

Take a deep breath and show compassion to yourself by doing the following:

- Tell yourself that this moment of suffering is just a moment in your life.
- Tell yourself that your life is not made up of these moments, which are fleeting.
- Tell yourself you're not the only one suffering the way you are.
- Tell yourself you're not alone in your suffering.
- Be kind to yourself and talk about the things you like about yourself. This is to remind yourself that your suffering does not define you.

Did this work for you? Yes No

8. JOURNALING.

Keep a journal with you. Write about your day. If you've dealt with problems because of your PTSD, discuss them in detail. By unpacking what you feel, you might gain insight about yourself and find ways to counter the horrible feelings you have.

This is optional, but you can write one entry below:

Did this work for you? Yes No