



Coping with a Crisis

This handout offers more than 100 tips about how to cope during a crisis or a hard time in your life.

Try some and use the ones that work well for you.

Distract Yourself

Doing an activity or thinking about something else may help. See if any of these tips work for you.

Other Thoughts

- Count to 10.
- Count how many colors are in a painting or some other object.
- Work puzzles.
- Watch TV.
- Read.

Opposite Emotions

Be sure what you try creates different emotions than the ones you are feeling:

- Read emotional books, stories, or old letters.
- Go to emotional movies – watch scary movies or comedies.
- Listen to emotional music, sacred music, marching songs, or songs like “I am Woman” by Helen Reddy.
- Read joke books.
- Listen to funny CDs.
- Go to a store and read funny greeting cards.

Intense Sensations

- Hold ice in your hand.
- Squeeze a rubber ball very hard.
- Stand under a very hard and hot shower.
- Listen to very loud music.

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- Have sex.
- Put a rubber band on your wrist – pull on it and then let go.

Activities

- Walk or do other exercise.
- Do one of your favorite hobbies.
- Clean the house.
- Go to events.
- Call or go see a friend.
- Play computer games or pinball.
- Work, play or watch sports.
- Go out for a meal, decaf coffee, or tea.
- Go fishing.
- Chop wood.
- Work in the garden.

Contributing

- Do volunteer work.
- Give something to someone else.
- Make something nice for someone else.
- Do a surprising, thoughtful thing.

Leaving

- Walk away from the situation for a while. Leave the situation mentally. Build an imaginary wall between yourself and the situation.

Blocking

- Refuse to think about the painful aspects of the situation.
- Put the pain on a shelf. Box it up and put it away for a while.

Self-Soothe

Encourage Yourself

- Cheerlead yourself. Repeat over and over: “I can stand it,” “It won’t last forever,” “I will make it out of this,” “I’m doing the best I can.”

Treat Yourself Gently and Kindly

- Take a bubble bath.
- Light candles.

- Put clean sheets on your bed.
- Treat yourself to a meal at your favorite restaurant.
- Have a soothing drink such as tea or hot chocolate (not alcohol).
- Call a friend or relative.

Create More Beauty in Your life

- Buy something you can afford for yourself, such as 1 flower.
- Make an area in a room pretty.
- Go to an art museum.

Soothe Yourself with Smells You Enjoy

- Use perfume, lotion, air spray, lemon oil, or potpourri.
- Boil cinnamon.
- Bake bread, cookies, pie, or cake.

Pray or Meditate

- Open your heart to a supreme being, greater wisdom, God, or your own wise self. Ask for strength to bear the pain in this moment. Turn things over to God or a higher being.

Look for Meanings

- Find some purpose, meaning, or value in the pain.
- Remember, listen to, and read about spiritual values.

Use Positive Thinking

- Focus on whatever positive aspects of a painful situation you can find. Repeat them over and over in your mind. Make lemonade out of lemons.

Use Comparison

- Compare yourself to people coping the same as you or less well than you. Compare yourself to those less fortunate than you.
- Watch soap operas.
- Read about disasters or others' suffering.

Change Your Body Responses

- Try progressive muscle relaxing.
- Listen to a relaxation tape.
- Exercise hard.
- Drink warm milk.
- Get a massage.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

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- Get in a tub filled with very cold or very warm water and stay in until the water is tepid.
- Breathe deeply.
- Half smile.
- Change your facial expression.

Use Imagery

- Imagine very relaxing scenes.
- Imagine everything going well.
- Imagine coping well.
- Make up a fantasy world that is calming and beautiful. Let your mind go with it.

Focus

- Focus your entire attention only on what you are doing right now. Keep yourself in the very moment you are in. Put your mind in the present.
- Focus all of your attention on physical sensations that go along with non-mental tasks such as walking, washing, or fixing something.

Think About the Pros and Cons

- Focus on long-term goals and the light at the end of the tunnel. Recall times when pain has ended.
- Think of the positive outcomes of tolerating the distress.
- Imagine how good you will feel if you achieve your goals, if you do not act on impulse.
- Think of all the negative outcomes of **NOT** tolerating your current distress. Think about what has happened in the past when you have acted on impulse to escape the moment.

This material is adapted from *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder* by Marsha Linehan, copyright The Guilford Press.

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