

Coping

ABOUT COPING PREFERENCES

Coping is when we make an effort to solve a personal problem, especially one that causes us stress. Everyone has their own way of dealing with things, we tend to choose what comes easily and feels most natural to us. Often this is influenced by our personalities, interests, the things we are naturally good at and our previous experiences. Things people do to effectively cope with stress or deal with an emotion that isn't helpful include; addressing the problem head on and problem solving, relaxation, seeking fun, seeking help from others, changing thinking styles or personal beliefs and addressing lifestyle factors such as sleep, diet and exercise.

It pays to think about our coping ability from time to time, to ensure we are doing all we can to avoid being stressed or unhappy for long periods of time. Planning ahead when we are feeling relatively calm is also a really good idea as sometimes it can be difficult to make good decisions when we are highly stressed or upset.

In this activity, you will first have an opportunity to complete a short quiz to learn about your own coping styles. This quiz is just for yourself and you don't need to share your results with others if you don't want to. Next, you will think more specifically about how you cope a number of emotions that we can all have trouble with from time to time and come up with a plan for how you will manage the emotions if they arise in the future.



Ways of Coping Survey

Complete the following survey to understand more about how you respond when faced with a stressful situation. These answers are just for you to consider so be honest with yourself as you work through each item. We all have strengths and this tool is intended to help you find out what yours are.

When I am stressed or having a tough time, I try to deal with it by:	Never	Sometime	Always
1. Confided in someone I knew could help	0	1	2
2. Tried not to think about it	0	1	2
3. Cheered myself up by doing something fun or eating my favourite treat	0	1	2
4. Lay low and hoped things would 'blow over'	0	1	2
5. Slept more than usual	0	1	2
6. Tried to think about what was good in the situation	0	1	2
7. Asked others for advice	0	1	2
8. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem	0	1	2
9. Took my frustration out using music, sport or exercise	0	1	2
10. Changed something about myself so that I could deal with the situation better	0	1	2
11. Asked others for help in dealing with my problem	0	1	2
12. Put things into perspective	0	1	2
13. Tried to find out more so I could fix the problem	0	1	2
14. Changed how I thought about the situation	0	1	2
15. Pretended as though nothing was wrong	0	1	2
16. Made a plan and followed it	0	1	2
17. Spent more time with my friends and family	0	1	2
18. Accepted the next best thing to what I wanted.	0	1	2
19. Took deep breaths until I calmed down a little	0	1	2
20. Kept to myself more	0	1	2



Scoring Instructions:

Add up the numbers you circled for each item to find your coping style scores. You likely will score higher on one or two of the styles. A higher score for any coping strategy indicates that you tend to use this more often.

Seeking social support: 1, 7, 11, 17	-----
Dealing with Emotional Consequences: 3, 5, 9, 19	-----
Problem-Focussed: 8, 10, 13, 16	-----
Withdrawal: 2, 4, 15, 20	-----
Altering thoughts: 6, 12, 14, 18	-----

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Read on to learn more about your unique combination of coping preferences.

Seeking social support

Sometimes dealing with challenges requires a team effort. Using the social support networks you have around you such as your teachers, friends, family, community members or a counsellor can be a great strategy for dealing with stress. This can be especially true if we aren't even sure what is causing our stress or have never encountered the specific problem before. Seeking assistance from others allows us to feel less alone during difficult times, benefit from the expertise and perspectives of others as well as provide support and encouragement when things become tough. Occasionally just verbalising your problem to someone we trust can make the severity of a problem seem less.

Dealing with Emotional Consequences

Being able to make ourselves feel better in times of stress can sometimes be an important first step in being able to clear our heads enough to come up with a plan to cope. Sometimes when our emotions are too strong, they can overpower the thinking part of our brain, leaving us vulnerable to making poor choices. This style of coping in isolation however, is not related to longer term wellbeing and resilience. Dealing with the emotional consequences of stress is typically only a short term fix and needs to be coupled with other more specific coping strategies such as seeking social support or problem focussed-coping.

Problem-Focussed

Research has shown that for problems that are within our control, this type of coping is the most effective. Dealing with the problem directly, and working to eliminate the cause of stress is shown to be highly related to our ability to feel positive emotions most to the time and to "bounce back" when things get tough (resilience!). It is worth keeping in mind that not all things that cause us stress are within our control. When we are not able to have any influence over the cause of stress sometimes seeking out others or dealing with emotional consequences are the best option in terms of being able to be resilient.

If this is your typically used type of coping then this is good news – this a great asset in your tool kit! Don't forget to look into how other coping strategies like seeking social support,



altering thoughts and dealing with emotional consequences can make your task of dealing with a problem directly that little bit easier as well.

Withdrawal

Occasionally, dealing with stress by taking a step back from our usual life can allow us a chance to look at a problem objectively or to have a rest from things when they get tough. This strategy is not very adaptive in the long term and ignoring our problems over longer periods of time is not recommended. Spending extended periods of time withdrawing from others, especially when under stress can be detrimental to our wellbeing, relationships, physical health and can lead to burnout. If withdrawal is your first choice for coping strategy, try to practice using some of the other skills you have learnt in this program. Speak to your teacher if you need help in practicing these new skills further.

Altering thoughts

Changing the way we *think* about a problem or situation is a very powerful way to alter how we *feel* about it. The simple act of trying to see a problem from a different, more positive perspective can drastically change the size of the challenge before us. Checking if our perspective or inner thoughts are helping or hindering us in times of stress is a skill that requires practice – the more do you do this the more natural it will become.

On occasions when our thoughts about a stressor are indeed appropriate and the challenge before us is indeed great – this can signal that it is time to use other skills in our resilience tool kit. This can include seeking out others for support or help or engaging in problem-focused coping strategies.



Coping Preferences

Sometimes, I feel angry when:

Place a tick next to your chosen preferences. Then, take some time to personalise your choice by thinking about how this would work for you and make some notes for yourself in the plans column.

Anger	✓	Plans
Breathe deeply	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Exercise to let off steam	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Vent/Talk to someone	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Listen to or play music	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Walk away	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lie down and relax	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Punch a pillow	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Tell yourself something helpful (e.g. it's ok)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Close your eyes and picture a calmer place	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Draw, paint or write about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (write down your idea)	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Coping Preferences

Sometimes, I feel sadness when:

Sadness	✓	Plans
Talk to friends or family	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Play with a pet	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Watch a favourite tv. show/movie	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Listen to or play music	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Draw, paint or write about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Organise to spend time with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do something nice for someone else	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eat food that is good for you	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Get a hug from a friend or loved one	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speak to a counsellor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (write down your idea)	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Coping Preferences

Sometimes, I feel worried or anxious when:

Anxiety	✓	Plans
Breathe deeply	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Think positively	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Distract yourself - worries love your attention!	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Talk to a trusted friend or loved one about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speak to a counsellor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Get enough sleep (8 hours at least!)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use Mindfulness tools (e.g. Smiling Mind Ap.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Try not to always avoid things that make you anxious – this can make your worries seem much worse than they are. Make a plan and get help from friends and family to help you to be brave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (write your idea down)	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Coping Preferences

Sometimes, I feel loneliness when:

Loneliness	✓	Plans
Make a list of people who support you		
Spend time relaxing with family and friends		
Join a club that you are interested in at school (or online)		
Play/ join a team sport		
Volunteer at a community organisation		
Phone a friend or loved one		
Spend time with a pet		
Stay off social media (unless it is helping)		
Organise to meet up with friends		
Get to know someone you don't know well		
Other (write down your idea)		



Coping Preferences

Sometimes, I feel disappointment when:

Disappointment	✓	Plans
Replace negative thoughts with positive ones		
Congratulate yourself when you have tried hard		
Don't take things personally		
Try again next time		
Think about trying another approach		
Ask if you are being too hard on yourself		
How big a deal is it? Will you still be disappointed tomorrow? Next week? Next month?		
Take a moment to feel disappointed then distract yourself		
Talk about the disappointment with someone		
Other (write down your idea)		



Use the table below to spend some time doing some forward planning! List some anticipated challenges in the box on the left hand side of the table, and try to match suitable coping ideas you can easily put into place to help you work through this challenge. Refer back to the work you have just completed for ideas if you need to.

STRESSOR OR CHALLENGE	ACTION PLAN

If you are frequently experiencing strong, unpleasant or unhelpful emotions, it can be a good idea to seek additional support to help change this. If you think this is a problem for you, consider discussing it with a member of your household or get in touch with the following services.

If you feel you need further help please contact the school counsellor, Jenelle Hooson, through your homeroom teacher. Or you can ask your parents to contact your homeroom teacher or the assistant principal, Mr Pilgrim, to talk about meeting with Jenelle.

Here are some other support options specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25:

- [Need to Talk?](#) Free call or text 1737 any time to speak to a trained counsellor, for any reason.
- [Youthline](#): 0800 376 633 (24/7), or free text 234 (8am-12am), or email talk@youthline.co.nz
- [What's Up](#): online chat (7pm-10pm) or 0800 WHATSUP / 0800 9428 787 children's helpline (12pm-11pm weekdays, 3pm-11pm weekends)
- [Kidslines](#) (ages 5-18): 0800 543 754 (24/7 but between 4pm and 9pm calls are answered by a Kidslines Buddy, specially-trained year 12 and 13 students)

