

Coping Skills



TAKE DEEP
BELLY BREATHS



SQUEEZE THEN
RELAX MUSCLES



THINK HAPPY
THOUGHTS



TAKE A BREAK
OR REST



CLOSE EYES AND
SLOWLY COUNT TO TEN



DRINK WATER



USE A
STRESS BALL



ASK FOR HELP



LISTEN TO
MUSIC



DRAW OR
COLOR

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Introducing coping skills

Coping skills are strategies we use to manage feelings and handle stress. Coping is not something we are born knowing how to do; it's something we learn how to do with practice. It's never too early or too late to start developing healthy coping skills, and teaching kids healthy coping strategies will help them become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

The coping skills listed on the front of this handout are meant to give kids some initial ideas for healthy ways to cope, but the options are limitless.

Tips to get started:

- **Define coping skills for kids.** Explain that a coping skill is something anyone can do to make themselves feel better and manage stress.
- **Introduce new skills when everyone is calm.** It is difficult to learn something new when we are anxious, tired, distracted or upset, so teach new coping skills when everyone is calm.
- **Try lots of different options.** What works one day (or in one situation) may not work the next, so it's helpful to have options to choose from.
- **Practice regularly.** Help kids become familiar with different coping skills so they feel comfortable using them when needed.
- **Be a positive role model.** Kids watch and learn how to cope from the adults around them. If they see you coping in healthy ways, they are more likely to do the same.

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Coping Skills

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As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy **coping skills** (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more **resilient** (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

Coping skills ideas

Everyone is different, and what works one day may not work the next. Encourage your child to try lots of different coping strategies to help them find what works best for them.

The options are limitless, but here are some ideas to get you started:

 Be active	 Find your calm	 Get creative	 Connect with others	 Shift your mindset
Put on music and dance	Take some deep breaths	Color, draw or paint	Cuddle or play with your pet	Think of something positive
Build with Legos or blocks	Listen to music or sing a song	Play with Play-Doh or sand	Read a book with someone	Focus on one thing you're grateful for
Do 10 jumping jacks	Close your eyes and count to 10 or backward from 100	Play an instrument	Play a game with a friend or family member	Identify your top three strengths
Run in place for 20 seconds	Take a quiet break or rest	Make up a song	Work with someone on a puzzle	Think about something you're looking forward to
Bounce a ball or play catch	Have a drink of cold water	Write about your thoughts or feelings	Write someone a letter	Focus on the present moment
Go for a walk, run or hike	Blow bubbles	Create a dance	Share your feelings with someone you trust	Think about something that makes you laugh
Squeeze a stress ball	Think of a calm, happy place	Write a poem	Ask for help	Practice reframes ("I didn't fail; I learned")
Do yoga or stretch	Look at pictures of a favorite memory	Make up a new game	Call a friend to catch up	Focus on what is in your control



Coping strategies are also helpful for adults. Practicing them is a great way to take care of yourself, be more present and model healthy ways to manage stress.

For more coping skills ideas, visit Strong4Life.com/coping

This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child.

Coping Skill Idea

Grounding Your Body and Mind

Grounding exercises can improve concentration, decrease anxiety and enhance decision-making and problem-solving skills. This is an exercise to help develop awareness and to focus the mind on the present moment. Use a gentle voice to prompt your child to pay attention to what's happening around her; this will allow her to stay in the present moment and stay calm.

How to practice grounding

- To help calm a busy mind, start by taking several slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.

- Next, use your 5 senses to notice the following:



5 things you can see around you. Maybe it's a book, a paintbrush or a chair. However near or far, big or small, name 5 things you can see right now.



4 things you can touch around you. Maybe it's your dog, your desk or your leg. However big or small, name 4 things you can touch and feel around you right now.



3 things you can hear around you. Maybe it's a ticking clock, a car alarm or a dog barking. Name 3 things you can hear right now.



2 things you can smell. Maybe it's the scent of soap or lotion on your hands, air freshener or freshly cut grass. Name 2 things you can smell right now.



1 thing you can taste. Maybe you taste the gum you are chewing or the snack you just ate. Name 1 thing you can taste.

- How does your body feel after completing this exercise? Are you relaxed? Is your mind calmer? Did your intense feelings decrease?

Remind your child that this coping skill can be used at any time, when she wants to calm down and refocus her mind and body. Ask your child when she thinks that this may be helpful for her; perhaps it is before a test or on the way to soccer practice.



PARENT TIP: *This exercise can be shortened depending on how much time you have. For example, if your child is nervous at the doctor's office, you may want to help him take a few deep breaths and then name 3 things he can see around him (but not address all 5 senses). Focusing his attention on that may make him less nervous about the doctor's appointment.*

How to make grounding fun!

- Take your child outside to try this exercise. Encourage her to pay attention to what is outside in the environment. What does she see? Hear? Feel? Smell?
- Remove 1 of the senses (sight). Ask her to close her eyes and pay attention to what she can hear, smell, taste and touch. Did things change once she had her eyes closed? Was it easier for her to hear noises that were quiet or farther away? Keep in mind that closing eyes can feel unsafe for some children. Never force them to close their eyes if they are uncomfortable.
- For those who need more specific instructions, ask her to look around and name 3 objects that are round, 2 things that are soft, 1 thing that makes noise, etc. You can come up with many options to help your child pay attention to the present moment!

Helpful Hint

It's difficult to learn things when we are anxious, angry or too distracted, so it is important to try new coping skills during a time when your child is calm instead of during a time of stress. A skill that works one day might not work the next, so encourage your child to try different strategies to help build her coping skills toolbox. Keep in mind that your child is watching and listening to you, so it's important that you practice with your child and role model using healthy coping skills to manage your own stress and emotions.