

negative coping behaviors and positive coping skills

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for you to know

Some ways of coping with pain and stress are healthy and helpful, while others are unhealthy and harmful. People who tend to rely on self-harming behaviors, thoughts, and feelings often cope by doing things that are unhelpful, thinking it will solve their problems or make them feel better—because that is what they know. Unfortunately, they find afterward that this generally makes them feel worse overall. Learning new positive skills to cope can help you fight back tendencies to turn to negative coping behaviors. A *negative coping behavior* is something people turn to and engage in that might appear to help the problem or pain, but it doesn't. That is why it is called a behavior and not a skill: because it is not useful in solving problems or easing pains.

Positive coping skills are actions you can engage in that can ease your problems and pain and hopefully make you feel better.

negative coping behaviors

Negative coping behaviors include the following:

- Alcohol use and abuse
- Drug use and abuse (including improper use of prescription drugs)
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Stealing
- Hoarding
- Hanging out with people who are unhealthy or toxic for you

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- Getting into fights
- Drinking a lot of caffeine or energy drinks
- Isolating yourself by staying in your room
- Turning down plans
- Spending less time with people who nourish or support you
- Not doing things you used to like
- Smoking cigarettes or vaping
- Cutting or burning yourself
- Having unprotected sex
- Overeating; bingeing
- Undereating; restricting or withholding food
- Making yourself vomit after eating; purging
- Exercising excessively
- Spending too much time distracting yourself online or on your phone

Circle any of the negative coping behaviors you are or have been engaging in.

Consider what emotions, pain, or discomfort you may have been trying to cover up with these negative coping behaviors. Use the journal pages in the back of the book to write about any thoughts, feelings, or aha moments that arise from reflecting on these negative coping behaviors. Remember, there is no need to blame yourself or feel shame. This process is to help you be more aware, to learn, and to grow.

mindful takeaway in the moment People often try to deal with pain by doing things that make them feel worse—negative coping behaviors. It's important to gain awareness of the ways in which you try to cope with pain and to replace negative coping behaviors with positive coping skills.

positive coping skills

Positive coping skills include the following:

- Writing/journaling
- Playing or listening to music
- Drawing/arts and crafts
- Taking a bath
- Playing a sport
- Dancing
- Mindfulness practice
- Talking to or spending time with friends or family
- Going on a walk or hike
- Spending time in nature
- Spending time with an animal
- Taking a dog for a walk
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Circle any of these you have engaged in over the past two months or could start to do.
On the blank lines, add others you can think of.

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How can learning about these positive coping skills help you better listen to or manage the distressful feelings or emotional pains you experience?

Pick one or more of these skills that you can do the next time you feel stressed, are in physical or emotional pain, or feel triggered to self-harm. Write it (them) down here.
