

Coping Skills List

Nervous System Regulation

- Grounding exercises: 5-4-3-2-1 method
- Breathwork: Box breathing, belly breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Temperature change — cold water on hands/face
- Butterfly hug (bilateral tapping)
- Weighted blanket or pressure stimulation
- Sensory reset: hold ice, sour candy
- Rocking gently or swaying
- Physically orient: name objects around you (colors activity)
- Regulate with heat: warm bath/shower / cool shower reset
- Safe/Calm place visualization with senses

Cognitive / Thinking Skills

- HALT check-in (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)
- Positive affirmations
- Guided meditation video/audio
- Reframing self-talk (“What would I tell a friend?”)
- Make a list: “What I know is true right now”
- Container imagery for stressors
- Identify and challenge cognitive distortions
- Break tasks into small steps
- Create a coping plan or crisis plan

Creative Expression

- Draw, color, craft
- Scribble emotions out on paper
- Write: journal, poem, letter
- Play or write music
- DIY art (collage, paint-by-number)

Mind–Body & Emotional Release

- Yoga or movement type exercise
- Let yourself cry, scream, grunt — emotional release
- Dance to a song that matches your mood
- Shake it out — tension release
- Heart-focused breathing

Distraction & Engagement

- Watch a favorite show or movie

- Games, puzzles, sudoku, solitaire
- Read a book
- Clean/organize a small space
- Learn something new: free apps, tutorials

Sensory-Based Coping

- Fresh air — go outside, take a walk
- Aromatherapy: calming or invigorating scents
- Cozy textures: soft socks, warm blanket
- Taste strong flavors like sour or peppermint
- Listen to calming music or nature sounds
- Use fidgets or a stress ball

Connection & Support

- Reach out to a friend or trusted person
- Practice asking for help or comfort
- Connect with a therapist or support group
- Movement breaks — step away and breathe
- Call warmline or hotline when needed

Meaning & Values

- Gratitude practice — list 3 things you're thankful for
- Acts of kindness or service
- List personal strengths
- Spiritual practices (prayer, reflection)

How to Choose a Coping Skill

Identify how you're feeling: overwhelmed, numb, angry, anxious, shut down.

2 Match the coping skill to your state:

- Feeling anxious or activated → Try grounding or sensory regulation
- Feeling low energy or stuck → Try movement or connection
- Feeling overwhelmed by thoughts → Try cognitive skills or distraction

