



# Coping Skills

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## Ways of Coping with Trauma while the abuse is going on and after

**Avoidance:** They will just ignore or avoid it

**Addiction:** eating disorders, gambling, drugs, alcohol, stealing

**Compliance:** "People Pleasers" avoid conflict by giving into everyone around them

**Dissociation:** Escaping mentally while the abuse is happening. The body and mind seem to separate. "Out of body" "spacing out"

**Denial:** denying the reality of the abuse "it didn't really happen" or minimizing the pain "it wasn't that bad" It is a way to keep the abuse a secret from themselves.

Although the memory of the assault may be blocked out the feelings of the assault are not easily forgotten

### **Difficulty having sex**

**Distorted reaction to the world:** distrustful, suspicious, paranoid, afraid of being alone, fear of conflict, sense of abandonment, worry too much about what others think, obsesses over the small details.

**Exaggerated Fight/Flight response:** abuse victims develop an over active fight/flight response. They are so prepared for something traumatic to happen that they overreact to everyday stressors or conflict.

**Overreacts** – yelling, screaming, fighting, loss of temper

**Underreacts** – motionless, having panic attacks, abandoning a conversation at the first sign of conflict.

**Physical reactions** - Their body is telling them a small problem is a very big problem

**Forgetting:** temporarily forget the abuse even happened

**Isolation from others:** bouncing from on relationship into another

**Impulsiveness:** making spur of the moment decisions.

Can lead to promiscuity.

**Lying:** compulsive liars especially if they were required to lie about the abuse during their childhood.

**Low Self-Esteem:** worrying a lot about what other people think. "Taking it very personally"

**Manipulations:** sometimes attempt to manipulate or control those around them

**Minimizing:** makes the abuse less real. Less serious than it was.

**Nightmares or lack of sleep:** some people become so good at controlling their emotions when they are awake that they suffer from them coming out at night.

**Rationalizing:** the victim intellectualizes or rationalizes the abuse "it wasn't so bad"

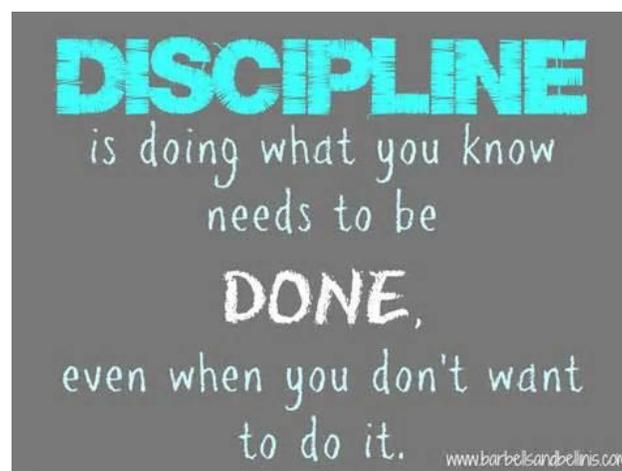
**Splitting:** a person is seen as either 100% good or 100% bad.

**Super alertness/ high alert:** "hyper vigilant" all the time, waiting for something bad to happen. "Fight" or "flight" is always going.

**Self-Harm/Self destructive behavior:** "cutting" the victim may not be trying to hurt themselves but is looking for physical release from the pent up emotional baggage.

**Suicide:** when all others fail and the victim sees no hope

**Work-a-holic:** always busy so not to have to deal with negative feelings.





Identifying your triggers  
 Arguments with friend  
 Work or school stress  
 Family friction  
 Breaking up with a partner  
 Sexual harassment  
 Teasing and bullying  
 Being treated badly  
 Physical illness  
 Feeling left out  
 Parents nagging

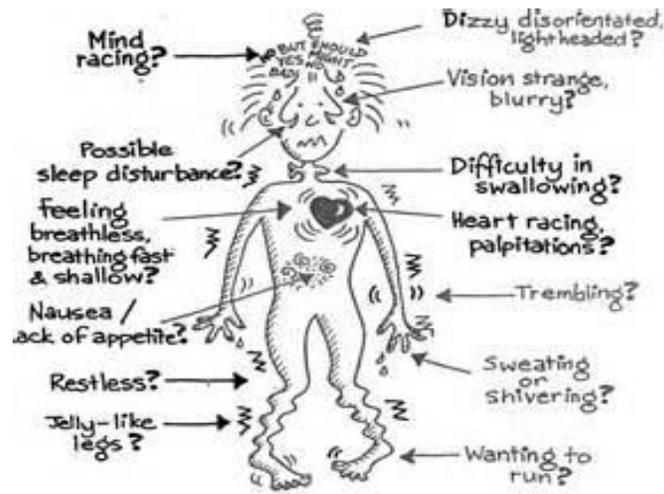
Remembering traumatic events  
 Not able to sleep  
 Making bad decisions  
 Feeling like I am no good  
 Feeling like I am walking on egg shells  
 Feeling ugly  
 Feeling like nobody likes me  
 forgetfulness  
 anxious  
 angry  
 racing thoughts

You can't let the opinions of others blind you from your truth. what you think of yourself is more important than what they think of you.

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## Coping Skills:

Using any or all of your five senses to help you calm down, focus and think clearly, when you are feeling anxious, angry and depressed.



## Constructive ways of coping:

**Calm Breathing:** a technique that helps you slow down your breathing.

Sitting upright.

Take slow breath in through the nose for about 4 seconds

Hold your breath for 1-2 seconds

Breathe out slowly through the mouth for about 4 seconds

Wait... start again

Do this 6- 8 times

### Calm breathing and visualization:

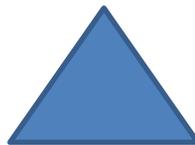
Think of a shape: for example a square

1. Take a deep breath in at the first corner
2. Breathe out to the next corner
3. And repeat around the square



for example a triangle

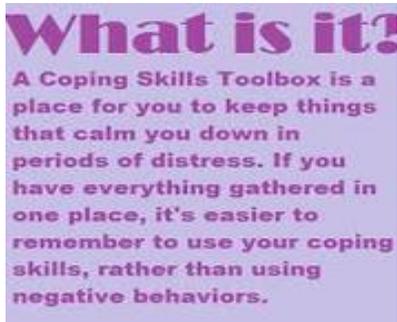
1. Take a deep breath at the bottom left corner
2. Breathe out to the next corner
3. Repeat around the triangle



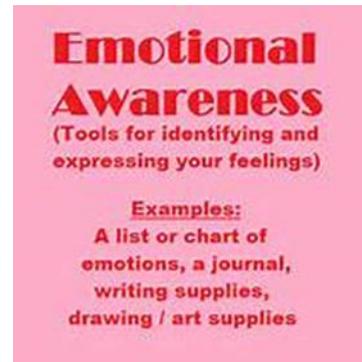
### Calming counting

1. Sit comfortable
2. Close your eyes
3. Take a long, deep breath and exhale it slowly while saying the word "relax" silently
4. Let yourself take natural, easy breaths.
5. Count down with each exhale, starting with ten
6. Notice any tensions, perhaps in your jaw or forehead or stomach
7. Imagine those tensions loosening
8. When you reach "one" open your eyes again.

## Coping Tool Box



- stress ball
- stuffed animal
- picture
- coloring
- legos
- journal
- puzzles
- various fabrics for tactile stimulation



### Counseling:

having someone that you can talk to once a week in a safe space.  
Someone that can help you make sense of what is going on in your day to day life.  
Someone that can help you restructure what is not working well.

### Support Groups:

similar to counseling it gives you people to talk to but in a support group everyone is sharing and everyone's experience is used to help and support each other, the only one not sharing maybe the facilitator, a counselor or therapist.

**Compartmentalizing** is when you separate one area of thought from another. Compartmentalizing doesn't mean you're avoiding your feelings or impulses; it just means that it's not productive to think about the other area of your life right now, and you'll get back to it later.

Think of a dresser with 3. 4. 8 or 10 drawers  
When your mind is racing all the drawers are open.  
Making it impossible to focus

Family	Work
School	Friends

Compartmentalizing is closing all the drawers and focusing on one at a time

Closed not thinking about	Closed not thinking about
Closed not thinking about	<b>Friends</b>

### Learn to compartmentalize difficult news

Let go of the feeling that you have to deal with every crisis, problem, or situation as soon as it happens. Write down, think, or say everything that I am thinking or feeling about it before I move forward

This keeps you from dwelling on something that is out of your control.



**Exercise:** finding a physical activity you enjoy

Going for a 15 minute walk or jog

Riding your bike

Lifting weights

Doing push up /sit ups

Yoga

Shadow boxing

**Visualization:** is the act of imagining yourself in a peaceful and safe environment – a place that makes you relaxed and happy. By transferring yourself there mentally, you're able to calm your mind and body and sufficiently distract yourself.

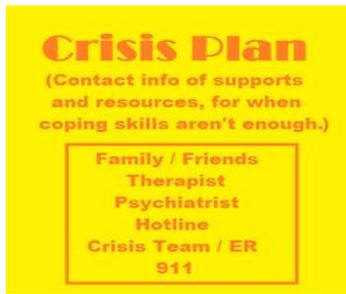
1. Choose a relaxing place or memory
2. Find a relaxing safe place
3. Close your eyes and start imaging yourself there
4. Relax your body/your muscles
5. Take away stress – turn off those nagging thoughts

Visualization is a process of trying to use all of your senses: for example my family camping trip. I can **hear** the voices of my father and uncles playing horse shoes (up over my right shoulder). I can **feel** the heat of the roaring fire (as I sit in front of the fire pit). I can **smell** the hamburgers and hotdogs cooking. I can **see** the different colors dancing in the flames.

Visualization is not an anxiety cure; it is a relaxation strategy that makes it easier for you to cope with your anxiety

### **Positive “destructive” coping skills**

1. Throw ice cubes in the tub until no longer angry.
2. Take a stack of newspaper, weekly ads, or used paper, about an inch thick and try to tear it until no longer angry
3. On old paper or weekly ads take a pen or pencil and scribble really hard on the paper until no longer angry.
4. Take a frozen cutie or tangerine (NO ORANGE) and squeeze it until calm.
5. Take an old rag, cloth, towel, or facecloth, and freeze it. When upset take it out, and try to tear it apart.
6. Color intricate details or draw a shape over and over again until the page is covered.
7. Utilize deep breathing
8. Utilize a communication journal, where you write notes to each other when upset instead of talking.
9. Write down all the mean things that come to your head on a piece of paper until you are no longer upset.  
You can then tear it up/throw it away so not to hurt others feelings.



Opening the lines of communication, emotions can get in the way of conversations. Writing to one another can allow you to channel your emotions without them interfering with a conversation.

**Autobiographical poem:** write a poem about yourself using this form

- Line 1 Your name
- Line 2 3 personal characteristics/physical traits
- Line 3 Brother or sister of \_\_\_\_\_ or son/daughter of
- Line 4 who loves \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ (people, things or ideas)
- Line 5 who feels \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_ (1 emotion about 1 thing)
- Line 6 who needs \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (3 things you need)
- Line 7 Who gives \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (3 objects you share)
- Line 8 Who fears \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (3 items?)
- Line 9 Who'd like to see, \_\_\_\_\_ (1 place or person)
- Line 10 Who dreams of \_\_\_\_\_ (1 item or idea)
- Line 11 A student/employee of \_\_\_\_\_ ( your school or teachers name/work or bosses name)
- Line 12 \_\_\_\_\_ (nickname or repeat your name)

**Acrostic/ Name Poem** – tells about the word. It uses the letters of the word for the first line of each poem and can be done in two ways.

Example:

Arial

A is for Agreeable, a breeze to get along with  
R is for Refreshing, stimulating company  
I is for Incredible, you raise the bar for greatness  
A is for Alluring, drawing people in  
L is for Light-hearted, you have an easy laughter

Arial

Agreeable  
Refreshing  
Incredible  
Alluring  
Light-hearted

**ABC Poem** – An ABC poem has a series of lines that create a mood, picture, or feeling. Lines are made up of words and phrases. The first word of line 1 begins with an A, the first word of line 2 begins with a B etc.

Example:

Although things are not perfect  
Because of trial or pain  
Continue in thanksgiving  
Do not begin to blame  
Even when the times are hard  
Fierce winds are bound to blow

**Color Poem** – a poem about favorite color to express your feelings about a single color with; analogies or similes, or list nouns which are (or remind you of) that color or use the five senses – looks like, sounds like, smells like, taste like, feels like

Green is .... the color of spring.

Green is .... renewal.

Green is .... the color of envy.

Green is .... a new crayon.

Green tastes like .... a crisp apple.

Green smells like .... fresh cut grass.

Green sounds like .... a croaking frog.

Green feels like .... soft, velvety moss.

Green looks like .... shiny emeralds.

Green makes me .... go.

Green is .... my favorite color.

**I Wish Poem** – each line of the poem begins with the words “I wish” and then you fill in your ideas.

### Coping Skills

**C**aring for yourself

**O**pening up

**P**ositive thinking

**I**ncubating your future

**N**ever give up

**G**roup work can be rewarding, keep an open mind

**S**leep for health reasons not to avoid living

**K**now your triggers

**I**ncubate others when you are not feeling safe

**L**isten before speaking, process your thoughts, and then respond

**L**earn how to cope with your stress and trauma

**S**afety is your number one priority