

COPING SKILLS CURRICULUM

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COPING SKILLS INTRODUCTION

Objective: Participants are introduced to the concepts of coping and coping skills.

Supplies:

- Bag, book bag, or box with materials (enough for each group member) such as:
 - Set of watercolor paints, play sunglasses, miniature or play cooking utensil (spatula, whisk, etc.), a “click” pen with the spring removed, an old/torn pair of tennis shoes, broken umbrella, hand held can opener, small drinking cup
- Worksheets to hand out
- Stickers of any kind

1. Introduction Activity

Have each consumer reach into the bag or box and pull out one item. Ask what they would use the item for. Give each person a chance to respond, in turn. Prompt those who may not volunteer an answer.

Ask, in turn, “Suppose you needed to:

- Paint this room with the watercolors?
- Wear the sunglasses outside at the beach?
- Cook dinner for your family with the play utensil?
- Write a book using the broken pen?
- Play in the Super Bowl with the torn tennis shoes?
- Walk to school in the rain with the broken umbrella?
- Open all the cans of food for the school cafeteria?
- Give everyone in the group something to drink with that cup?

Discussion points:

- You could do the job with what you have, but it would be very difficult and take a very long time.
- How could the job be done easier or faster? (With the right tools or equipment.)
- How do you know what the tools or equipment would work the best? (They’ve been taught, or they’ve seen others use them.)

2. Define Coping Skills

Say: We all need the right tools to do a job. Sometimes you can do a job with the wrong tool, but it's a lot harder. It's the same with our behavior skills. Sometimes we can use certain behaviors to deal with problems or difficult situations, but it doesn't exactly work out right. That's what we're going to talk about during the next few weeks.

What does it mean to "cope" with something? To cope means to deal with or attempt to overcome problems or difficulties. It means to have the ability to deal with a difficult situation effectively; to have an available supply that can be drawn on when needed.

Coping skills are behavior skills that you use as a way to handle problems. Everyone has coping skills. Just like the tools that you pulled out of the bag/box - some coping skills are more helpful or successful than others. A helpful coping skill, then, would be a skill that you have in your "bag" that you can use to help you deal positively with a complicated or frustrating situation.

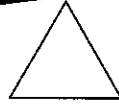
3. Coping: Costs and Benefits Worksheet

Distribute worksheet to all members. Read the comments. Have the group follow along as you read the coping skills. Ask that they put a sticker in the square for the skill that they use.

4. Further Discussion:

- Which of these skills might work best for the next few days?
- Which skills will have the best results over time?
- Which skills or behaviors don't seem to work well?
- Which skills or behaviors should you give up?
- Which skills would be the most difficult for you to stop using?

Many times when you are in a crisis, you may try to use a coping skill or behavior that you are used to using, but which doesn't really work in that situation. You need to become familiar with other skills that may be more helpful. Those are the things we'll work on.

COPING:**COSTS - and - BENEFITS****Comments:**

We all cope with difficult situations and our emotions in different ways. Every type of coping has some costs and some benefits. Some coping skills and behaviors may help in the short term, but cause more problems in the long run. Or, some coping skills may not seem to work today, but over time will have better results.

Follow along as I read over the list of coping skills and behaviors below. Can you identify some ways that you deal with the problems in your life?

Blaming other people rather than taking responsibility for my actions	Thinking that someone else has the problem rather than me
Breaking tension with something funny	Tuning people out when I'm upset
Denial - not admitting the problem exists	Planning ahead, imagining how people might react if I do something
Making the problem seem bigger or smaller than it really is	Helping others
Getting my way by not doing anything	Avoiding emotional issues by doing something unhealthy (not eating, eating too much, etc.)
Following a role model	Withdrawing from people or activities
Holding things in and acting as if I weren't upset	Redirecting my emotions into positive activities (art work, sports, etc.)

Depressed? ?
Feeling Down? ? ?
What Can I Do? ? ? ?

Objective: To develop effective coping skills by identifying specific strategies to cope when feeling depressed.

Supplies:

- Coping cards (cut out the list of coping strategies and attach to cards)
- Feeling Good cards (cut out the list of feel good actions and attach to cards)
- Flip chart, chalk board, or white board if you choose to have group draw
- Blank cards
- Pens, pencils, or markers

1. Comments:

Everybody feels down, very sad or depressed at times. When you get really down, you may not be able to deal with problems very well. Today we're going to review some things you can do to help you feel better so that you can cope with your problems better. (It may be useful to briefly review what a coping skill is from Lesson 1.)

2. Coping Card Activity (explain procedure before beginning)

Place cards upside down in the center of the table. Ask a volunteer to choose a card and describe to the group how he/she might use that coping skill. Group members can 'pass' on one card if they can't answer, and give it to the person on the right. They then must choose the next card, however, and answer it. After the first person, proceed counterclockwise to the next consumer, until everyone has had at least one turn.

(Remember to encourage those who are hesitant to participate. Read for those consumers who have reading limitations.)

3. Comments: Recognizing the importance of these valuable tools is the first step in developing coping skills. The next step is exercising or practicing these skills when you feel sad or depressed, to help yourself feel better.

4. Feeling Good Activity (choose one or allow the consumer to choose which one he/she wants to do)

Option 1- Charades: Use the Feeling Good cards. Have each consumer take turns picking a card and acting out the action(s) described. The rest of the group will guess what the action is.

Option 2-Pictionary: Use the Feeling Good cards. Have each consumer take turns picking a card and drawing on the board the action(s) described. The rest of the group will guess what the action is.

5. Discussion:

Allow consumers the opportunity to share any other activities they do that help them feel better. Distribute the blank cards and have consumers write or draw an activity they can do today to help them feel better. Instruct them to keep the card in a place where they can be reminded what to do.

COPING CARDS
(cut out and attach to cards)

ASSERTING MYSELF

**LISTENING TO FAVORITE
MUSIC**

**CONTACTING ONE OF MY
SUPPORTS**

EATING SOMETHING HEALTHY

CHANGING A HABIT

**EXERCISING OR
PLAYING A SPORT**

HELPING SOMEONE

TAKING A BREAK

GOING SHOPPING

TAKING A WALK

COPING CARDS
(cut out and attach to cards)

LEARNING SOMETHING NEW

**TAKING A HOT BATH
OR SHOWER**

GOING TO A MOVIE

LAUGHING OR CRYING

**WRITING A LETTER OR
WRITING IN A JOURNAL**

GOING TO A NEW PLACE

**READING A BOOK OR
MAGAZINE**

TALKING TO A FRIEND

FEELING GOOD CARDS

(cut out and attach to cards)

EXERCISE

LISTEN TO MUSIC

SMILE

LAUGH

HUG

READ A BOOK

TALK WITH SOMEONE

PLAY WITH ANIMALS

BE WITH FRIENDS

DO ARTWORK

BARRIERS TO COPING SKILLS

Objective: To improve coping skills by recognizing potential barriers or roadblocks any by identifying possible options.

Supplies:

- Flip chart or board; marker or chalk
- Handouts
- Construction paper or other dark colored paper (one piece)
- Highlighters
- Pens/pencils

1. Barriers to Coping Activity

- Ask consumers to list some of their goals in life. The goals may be short-term (pass a test) or long-term (become a mechanic). They may be things they want to do (play football next year) or have (new bike), or things they want to change about themselves (stay out of detention this year, not be angry all the time).
- Write their goals on the board/flipchart, large enough for you to see, but small enough to cover with a piece of construction paper or other dark paper. After you list all the goals, cover the list.
- Explain to the group that even though there is a barrier between them and their goals, the goals are still there. (You might partially remove the covering to show them.)

2. Activity: "Barriers Worksheet"

- Give each person the "Barriers" handout and highlighters. Briefly point out some of the barriers that are on the handout.
- Ask each person to highlight the block that has the type of barrier or frustration that they think gets in the way of achieving their goals. They can also write any barrier not listed in the blank blocks.

3. Discussion points

- People sometimes talk about “getting over” a problem. If you think of these barriers or problems as a brick wall, you could dig under, climb over or go around the problems. The most effective way to resolve any problem is to break down the barrier. You do this by identifying it, which you’ve done, then by confronting it. Confronting it means taking responsibility for your part of the barrier.
- How do these barriers prevent you from getting to your goal?
- What are some ways to remove your barriers? (Give each consumer a chance to respond. Call on them and give encouragement.)
- As a suggestion is given that would remove a barrier, slowly remove the paper from in front of the list, until all the goals are visible again.
- Say, “Remember, that just because you might have barriers, your goal is still there. It is important to remove the barrier to be able to see the goal and achieve it.”

4. Activity: “Look for Alternatives” (Additional or optional activity, depending on the time)

- Comments: When you feel like your problems are too big, you can sometimes feel overwhelmed. You may not be able to see the barriers or roadblocks in your life, or what choices you might have. Being able to identify your choices is one positive coping skill.
- Pass out handout and pens/pencils
- Ask each consumer to write down a problem that they have.
- Take up all handouts, mix them up, and read the problem out loud, without identifying whose paper it is. (Ask the consumers not to identify it either.)
- Ask the group to give possible solutions and write those on the paper.
- After each problem has been addressed, return the papers to their original owners and ask them to consider whether any of the solutions seem like they could work.
- Discuss the benefits of looking at choices or alternatives, and at getting ideas from other people when you have a difficult problem.

5. Activity: Tic-Tac-Toe (Additional or optional activity, depending on the time) To demonstrate the barriers that come up in our lives, and having to deal with them in different ways, have the consumers play tic-tac-toe. Options:
- Divide the group into pairs, give them blank paper, and pencils, and then let them play several games of tic-tac-toe.
 - Divide the group into pairs and let them play, one pair at a time, on the board or flipchart.

Discussion points: just like the game of tic-tac-toe, you may have barriers come up. You have to look at your choices and decide which would be the best possible solution. This is the way you learn to adjust or cope with those barriers. It doesn't mean that you always win, but that you were able to do the best you could at the time.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE WORRIED

Objective: To increase the ability to cope with worries.

Supplies:

- Flipchart or board;
- marker or chalk
- Handout
- Pens/pencils
- Index cards (any size)
- Aluminum foil (pre-cut)
- Glue or tape
- Permanent markers, various colors

1. Introduction

Ask the group to brainstorm a list of things that they usually worry about and list them on the flipchart or board.

Discussion Points:

- Sometimes we worry and don't even realize how much we do, or how much it affects us. That's why it's important to take a look at what we worry about, how important those things are, and how much control we have over the situations we worry about.
- Good coping skills are being able to stop worrying about the things that aren't really important, deal successfully with those things that are in our control, and give up those things we cannot control.

2. Activity: Worrying Worksheet

- Distribute handouts and pens/pencils. Ask the group to make a list of what they worry about.
- Ask a volunteer to share one worry that they have. Go through the worksheet as a group, using the volunteer's identified worry.
- Encourage the group to comment on whether or not the consumer has control over the situation/worry, and whether or not the person is using that control if he/she is able to get control.
- Ask the group for feedback about how the worry could be surrendered/given up or how the person might soothe him/herself about the worry if they can't gain control.
- Ask the group to work individually for a few minutes to work on one of their own worries. OR if you have another volunteer, work on another worry as a group.

3. Activity: Positive Focus

- Distribute the Positive Focus worksheets and pencils to each consumer.
- Discuss the benefits of having a positive focus to help us deal with worrying about things. Keeping a positive focus helps keep away negative thoughts. When you focus on positive things about ourselves, our situation, our activities, etc., we begin to feel more positive about our situations, our problems, and ourselves.
- Have consumers complete the worksheet by either writing or drawing.
- After completing the worksheet, have everyone share their 3 favorite “pictures” with the group.

4. Activity: Make a Mirror (optional or additional, depending on the time available.)

- Give each consumer an index card and enough aluminum foil to cover the card (pre-cut).
- Fold over the card and either glue or tape to the back
- Using permanent markers, have consumers draw a picture of themselves in their “mirror” to remind them to be positive. Encourage them to keep the “mirror” where they can see it at home.

POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

Objective: To increase coping skills by becoming aware of the components of a positive mental attitude.

Supplies:

- Handouts
- Pens/pencils

1. Activity: PMA Handout

- Discussion: Positive mental attitude is an upbeat, optimistic outlook or perception on life. You can develop a positive mental attitude by identifying your strengths when dealing with stress or working toward a goal. Ask consumers to give their definition of each word: positive, mental, attitude.
- Possible responses: (if they don't say these, you should)
 - Positive: helpful, encouraging, up, good
 - Mental: thinking, thoughts, in your mind
 - Attitude: way of thinking, point of view, position, mind-set, opinion
- Complete handout as a group, reviewing and explaining each section at a time, using the following example:
P – "I want to learn how to play the piano."
M – "It's hard to try something new, but I know I can do it."
A – "I'm a quick learner."
- Have someone in the group volunteer one of their own plans – perhaps you can volunteer your own. Again, work together as a group to complete the P-M-A process. Have the group work a few minutes on at least one plan alone. Assist as needed. Tell the group that their CSW may follow up individually with them.

2. Activity/Worksheet: Talk Yourself Into Feeling...

- Pass out worksheets and pencils.
- Discussion: Another way to feel positive about yourself and your problems is to talk yourself into feeling positive. Using positive words can help you cope with most situations.

- Option 1: Ask consumers to complete the worksheet individually. Begin by sharing the example on the worksheet and maybe an additional example, depending on how well the group understands the process.
- Option 2: Ask consumers to work as a group to complete the worksheet by writing the feelings on the board and asking for possible responses. Ask consumers to write down the responses on their own sheets, to refer to later.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

Objective: To assist consumers in learning to make healthy choices and use positive coping skills when life's situations become difficult.

Supplies:

- Handouts
- Pens/pencils
- Highlighters

1. **Activity:** Handout

- Ask consumers to tell you what the word choice means. Use other words with the same meaning to help explain – free will, option, alternatives, and opportunity.
- Ask what they have a choice about in their lives (what to eat for breakfast, etc.). Give everyone an opportunity to answer.
- Ask what they don't have a choice about (wearing school uniforms, going to school)
- Explain that they have more choices than they sometimes realize when it comes to facing difficult situations. They can choose how to handle those situations.
- Pass out handouts and review as a group. Say, "When you have a problem you can choose how to handle it. You can handle it positively or you can handle it negatively." Read the situations as a group, what they can do positively, then negatively.
- Ask, "What's another way you might handle it?" They can write that in the 3rd column, or you can just discuss the possibilities if it's hard for your consumers to write.
- After completing the first 6 choices, review and ask the consumers to circle the positives or negatives that they usually use.
- Move on to the last 6 choices, as you did with the first 6.
- Ask consumers to draw a star or check mark by those things they want to change from negative to positive.

2. **Activity:** Role Play 'Positives'

- Ask for a volunteer to think about a difficult situation they had recently.

- Ask for volunteers to role-play the situation, but making sure they use a 'positive' response listed on the handout.
- HINT: Have as many volunteers as possible, or use a situation the consumers can identify with if no one volunteers. (Being punished by mother for not coming home from a friend's on time – how could they react after receiving the punishment?)
- Role-play several different 'positives' until each person has had a chance, if they want.

KEEPING A JOURNAL

Objective: To increase coping skills by learning to journal.
Make a journal, for writing or drawing.

Supplies:

- Handouts
- Construction paper
- Lined and unlined/drawing paper
- Pens, pencils, colors, markers
- Stickers, glitter, other creative supplies
- 3-hole punch
- Yarn, string, ribbon, etc. to tie journal

1. Introduce topic of journaling.
 - Discussion: Learning to keep a journal, by writing or drawing your experiences, is a useful way of coping with problems. You can do it by yourself; others can look it at later with your permission; and it is always a safe place to reveal your real thoughts. It's more helpful if you do it on a regular basis.
 - Pass out handouts. Encourage the group to offer their ideas or opinions or personal experiences about using a journal. (The handout can become the first page of their journal, to remind them of its purpose.)
2. Activity: Make a Personal Journal
 - Place craft supplies on the table. Each consumer should pick 2 pieces of construction paper for the binder of their journal
 - Allow each consumer to choose whether they want to make a journal to write or draw in. For those that choose to write, give them 7 pieces of lined paper. For those that choose to draw, give them 7 pieces of unlined/drawing paper.
 - Using the art materials let each consumer decorate the front page of their journal, punch holes in it, and tie it together.
3. Activity: My First Writing/Drawing
 - Pick a theme that is common to your group, i.e., coping skills, communicating with adults, anger, etc. Have consumers write/draw about something that happened to them today or recently related to this theme. Prompt and assist as needed to make sure everyone at least attempts, reminding them of the benefits.

MUSICAL COPING

Objective: To introduce the concept of using music as a coping skill. To create a personal CD holder.

Supplies:

- CD player
- Various CD's with different "mood" music – not necessarily with lyrics (suggestions: slow, sad songs; happy, upbeat songs; dark, negative songs; "light" music, etc.)
- Handouts previously copied onto construction or other colored paper
- Glue or clear tape
- Scissors (safety)
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, stickers, etc. to decorate CD covers

1. Introduction

- Discussion: Everyone has stress or hard times in one way or another. Sometimes listening to music can help you cope with those hard times.

2. Activity: Relating Music to Mood

- Ask consumers to sit with their eyes closed while you play several different types of music. As they listen, ask them to pay attention to how the music makes them feel. After playing a song for 1-2 minutes, ask for feedback on their feelings. Continue until you have played at least 3 songs.
- Ask consumers to identify the types of music they listen to. "When you listen to that music, how does it make you feel?" Ask, "What type of music would you listen to if you wanted to change your feeling from sad to happy? From angry to calm? From tired to excited?"

3. Activity: Make CD Covers (play light, soothing music while consumers work)

- Allow consumers to choose the color of handout they want. Put the art materials in the center of the table.
- Instruct the group to compete the front side of the CD cover (the blank side) by drawing symbols of how their favorite music makes them feel.

- Instruct the group to complete the back side of the cover by writing 1-3 words or phrases of self-encouragement that they can think about while listening to music. (Example: I will survive. I can relax. I will feel better.)
- Glue or tape 3 edges, very close to the end, leaving one end open for the CD. (Tape seems to work best)
- Allow consumers to share their designs, what they mean to them, and how they think music might help them cope.