

Managing Stress, Developing Strategies to Cope - Activity Six:

Coping is what people do to alleviate hurt, stress, or suffering caused by a negative event or situation. Generally strategies to cope have been divided into two groups; problem focused coping and emotion focused coping. Problem focused involves solving problems. People who use problem focused coping experience less depression during and after stressful events. For Example: “I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it”, “I do what has to be done one step at a time”, “I try to come up with a strategy about what to do, and make a plan of action”, “I try to get advice from someone about what to do”. Emotion focused coping is often the only effective strategy especially when the problems are overwhelming. Behavioral strategies may include distraction or physical exercise, or getting support from those around you. Cognitive strategies, in contrast, may include positively reinterpreting the situation. For example: trying to see the good in the situation, learning from the situation.

Constructing Benefit in Trauma: This involves seeing some value or gain (a silver lining) in your loss or negative life event – for example a change in perspective, a feeling that life has greater value, or a sense of personal growth. Constructing benefit in negative life events is a tremendously effective coping strategy. **Post traumatic Growth:** “That which does not kill you makes you stronger”. Post traumatic effects do not have to be negative, indeed they are often positive. E.g. Renewed belief in your ability to endure and prevail; Improved relationships; feeling better with intimacy and a sense of compassion; developing a deeper, more sophisticated and satisfying philosophy of life. **Social Support:** Turning to other people in times of strain, distress, and trauma is one of the most effective coping strategies that exist. Social support not only makes us happier and less anxious and depressed but it also makes us healthier. It is of almost magical proportions. **Finding Meaning:** Coping with a terrible event may require you to rethink your assumptions and beliefs, to find some meaning in the loss or trauma. This can happen in many ways, for example, by acknowledging that life is short and fragile, developing an understanding that things happen sometimes for no reason, or that life has sent them a message or a signal.

Activity 1 – Finding Meaning Through Expressive Writing: Research shows that this can be very useful. Writing about the experience in a journal forces you to organize and integrate thoughts and images into a coherent narrative. This aids the process of finding meaning and resolution. For 4 days write about your very deepest thoughts and feelings and about your most traumatic experiences. Continue this as long as you need to and watch the benefits unfold

Activity 2 – Coping via Disputation: When faced with adversity try using logic to overcome your negative thinking by following the ABCDE.

- A. Adversity- Define the adversity (e.g. my best friend has not called me in three days,).
- B. Belief - Identify beliefs triggered by this (e.g. “She must hate me, I’m too boring”).
- C. Consequences - Record the consequences (“I feel miserable and lonely”).
- D. Disputation (use logic) - dispute the negative belief (“perhaps my friend has been really busy”).

Energy - Considering the more optimistic explanation you can reenergize yourself