

Roadmap to Resilience

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Effective coping mechanisms are temporary measures to help avert disaster. However, coping is only step one in a two-step tango. Equally as important as responding to the emotional emergency, is being able to resolve the issue which triggered your alarm in the first place.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you understand:

- (a)** ways to respond to an emotional emergency
- (b)** effective coping strategies during crisis
- (c)** how to apply practical breathing and grounding exercises

Emotion-Focused Coping

Emotion-focused coping strategies increase your capacity to sit with emotions or uncomfortable feelings, especially if you're not in a position to change the situation or circumstance. Rather than being intimidated by unhelpful emotions, and instead of avoiding or running away from them, there are certain skills you can employ to face, address and resolve them. It's important to note that emotion-focused coping doesn't set out specifically to change unhelpful emotions into more helpful ones, rather, it simply seeks to regulate them. By exerting authority over your body, you can effectively control the way you feel. This form of coping is important so that your feelings don't overwhelm you and end up negatively influencing your actions.

EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING ISN'T DESIGNED TO CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS OR CORE BELIEFS (THAT MAYBE THE ORIGIN OF YOUR EMOTIONAL EMERGENCY). RATHER, BY EXERTING CONTROL OVER YOUR BIOLOGY AND REGULATING YOUR MOOD, YOU END UP IN A BETTER POSITION TO LATER DEAL WITH YOUR THOUGHTS AND CORE BELIEFS.

Breathing

When feeling stressed or anxious, without your conscious awareness, you typically breathe in an abnormal manner. This can lead to shortness of breath, hyperventilation and ultimately panic attacks. Under-breathing leads to an increased concentration of carbon dioxide in your blood, which can contribute to mental confusion, agitation, muscle twitching, and paranoia. On the flipside, over-breathing causes carbon dioxide levels to rapidly decrease, contributing to tingling and numbness, dryness of mouth, accelerated heartrate and dizziness.

Breathing is the only involuntarily biological function that you can also exert voluntary control over. When you control breathe, you change the biochemistry of your blood, and lower your heartrate, producing a sense of calm.



Option 1: Inhale through your nose for 3 seconds. Hold your breath for 3 seconds. Then exhale for 3 seconds. Repeat this controlled breathing exercise 10 times.

Option 2: Inhale for 4 seconds. Then exhale for 6 seconds (exhaling 1.5 times longer than inhaling). Repeat this controlled breathing exercise 10 times.

STEP 1: Sit in a comfortable upright position and take your resting heart rate (find your pulse, and over the course of 15 seconds, count how many times your heart beats. Multiply this number by 4, yielding your total 'beats-per-minute' [BPM] heart rate baseline). Record your 'pre-breathing' resting heart rate below:

No. beats over 15-secs = _____	Multiply (x) by 4 = _____	Baseline Heart Rate = _____ BPM
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STEP 2: Once you have established your BPM heart rate baseline, select from either breathing exercise (option 1 or 2) - taking 10 controlled breaths in the manner prescribed (you may of course like to extend this beyond 10 breaths). Record your 'post-breathing' resting heart rate below:

No. beats over 15-secs = _____	Multiply (x) by 4 = _____	Baseline Heart Rate = _____ BPM
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STEP 3: Sit quietly for 2 minutes before taking your resting heartrate one final time. Record your 'follow-up' heart rate below:

No. beats over 15-secs = _____	Multiply (x) by 4 = _____	Baseline Heart Rate = _____ BPM
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Grounding

Grounding is a simple exercise to help you bring your mind and emotions back into conscious awareness and ultimately, under your control. It brings you back into present reality so that you can better engage thoughts, feelings and behaviours with greater intentionality. There are many different grounding exercises. **Practice each activity below, and see what works best for you:**



Option 1: Cognitive awareness

Ask yourself 9 rapid fire random personal-knowledge questions. In the tradition of security questions for lost passwords, ask yourself questions like:

What's the name of the street I lived in when I was a child?	What was the name of the first church I ever attended?	What was the name of my 5th grade teacher?
What was the name of my first pet?	How old am I exactly (years and months)?	What brand was the first mobile phone I ever owned?
What's one of my favourite bible verses?	What's my current favourite sports-shoe brand?	What's the earliest phone number I remember?

Option 2: Sensory awareness

To complete this 3-minute grounding exercise, you'll need a small piece of dried fruit (e.g., apricot, sultana, mango)

STEP 1 Before placing in your mouth, look at the fruit for 1 minute noticing its shape and colour. DO NOT EAT	STEP 2 Move the dried piece of fruit around in your mouth for 1 minute, noticing the texture. DO NOT CHEW IT	STEP 3 Chew the piece of fruit for 1 minute, noticing the taste and the changes in flavour. THEN SWALLOW
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Option 3: External awareness

Pay attention and notice your external environment. Using your five PRIMARY senses, notice 10 things that you would not normally have noticed.

VISION What you see	OLFACTORY What you smell	TACTILE What you feel	GUSTATION What you taste	AUDITORY What you hear
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Option 4: Internal awareness

Pay attention and notice your internal environment. Using your five PRIMARY senses, notice 10 things that you would not normally have noticed.

Temperature	Balance	Vibration	Movement	Time
Thirst	Hunger	Fullness	Tension	Pain