



PAPYRUS Alternative Coping Strategy Suggestions



Sometimes, we get so overwhelmed that we do something that can cause us harm as a way to cope. We may do this for many reasons; **to express or drown out the emotional** pain, to try and **feel something when we feel numb**, to feel a **sense of control**, or as a way of **communicating** to shout out for help. It can be really difficult not to do this, especially when feeling overwhelmed with thoughts of suicide. In order to try and replace these potentially harmful things, it can be helpful to figure out **what the existing coping strategy does to help** so we can try to replace it with something which can have a similar result but is safer.

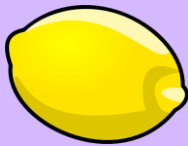
Please make sure that you are safe when trying out any of the things we suggest below, such as; not eating or drinking something that you have an allergy to, only doing activities that it is safe for you to do, and making sure that you clean up any water left over from ice so that you don't slip over.



Have you tried...?

To feel something when feeling numb:

- Eat something sour or bitter, such as a lemon or sour



sweet.

- Do the 5,4,3,2,1 technique to re-focus: Think of 5 things you can see, 4 that you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste right now.
- Hold something cold or warm (not hot) and focus on the feeling of the sensation on your skin.
- Chew a piece of ginger or chilli.
- Do something physical, like exercising.
- Focus on how it feels to breathe. Notice the way your chest and stomach move with each breath.
- Slap a hard surface.
- Go out and be around people.

To feel in control when it feels like you aren't:

- Plan out your day into small and manageable chunks.
- Breakdown tasks into small things to do and tick lists.



- Focus on the here and now- it might be helpful to focus on something specific to help you to do this, such as noticing things you can see around you or what you can hear or feel.



- Do a task where you usually feel in control and that helps you feel that you have achieved something.
- Write down what you want from your life, goals and dreams.
- Note down everything that you have done in the past week to show yourself how much you have achieved.

When you're feeling too much emotionally and need to express it:

- **Throw frozen Yorkshire puddings at the wall and listen to them crack.**
- **Shout or scream to get things off your chest.**
- **Use a punching bag to get**



out frustration.

- **Set some time aside each day to attend to worries- Give yourself a set half hour late in the day to sit and think of or talk through your worries. If any come up earlier, write them down and put them away for later.**
- **Throw eggs or ice cubes in the bath so they smash.**
- **Flatten drink cans for recycling, seeing how fast you can go.**
- **Throw ice into the bath or against the wall and watch it**



smash.

- **Let yourself cry, for as long as you need to.**

To show others that you're struggling:

- **Write down how you're feeling- this can be as a letter, song, poem, or any other way you like.**



You can or show it to someone to help them to understand how things are for you.

- **Draw whatever comes to mind to express how you're feeling.**
- **Make a mood chart and put it somewhere that people can see if you want them**



too. You can put your 'feeling of the moment' up to tell your loved ones what is going on for you.

Other ideas:

- Spend some time writing down positive things about yourself when you are feeling okay and ask other people to write things about you too. Look at these at times when you can't see the positives.
- Listen to a podcast that



inspires you.

- Focus on helping someone else; volunteering or doing good deeds that help you to feel good about yourself.





Starting points to look into for more ideas:

Here are some examples of other coping strategies that you can look into on the internet or ask therapists/counsellors about that might be helpful to try;

- **Breathing techniques.**



- **Progressive muscle relaxation.**
- **Mindfulness and meditation.**
- **Grounding techniques.**
- **Learn distress tolerance skills (from Dialectical Behavioural Therapy).**



An important thing to remember is that the things on this list are short-term coping ideas. They can help for a little while but it is really important to get some help for in the long-term. Talk to those around you, ask for help. Speak to your family, friends and GP. Get some support as soon as possible. Don't try to deal with everything alone, there is always something or someone out there who can help.