

Fold me

“The goal isn’t to get rid of all your negative thoughts and feelings; that’s impossible. The goal is to change your response to them.”

- Marc Chernoff

Developing Strategies for Coping



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Definition of Coping: what people do to alleviate the hurt, stress or suffering caused by a negative event or situation.

2 Types of Coping

- Problem-focused – you generate solutions, weigh the costs and benefits, choose one and act on it, experience less depression during and after stressful situations
- Emotion-focused – 2 types
 - Behavioral – seeking emotional support from people close to you, distract yourself or do some type of physical exercise to take a breather from sadness, anxiety or distress
 - Cognitive – positively reinterpreting the situation

Why Strategies for Coping?

Research has found overwhelming evidence for cognitive, emotion-focused strategies. People who experience a “wake-up call” after a traumatic event or find the positive after a life-altering event. They are found to reorder their priorities and discover what was truly important in life. Construing benefit in negative life events is a tremendous coping strategy. It can influence physical health as well as your happiness. It’s the power of the mind over the body. Research found that those who believed they had grown and matured from a negative traumatic event were more likely to be healthier, in contrast to those who blamed the negative event on something. “That which does not kill me makes me stronger” may be true. Some claim to have a transformative experience after a profound life event, not only can you survive, not only can you recover, you can flourish. (E.g. books like *Proof of Heaven, The Shack*)

How do I Develop Strategies for Coping?

- Social Support – most effective coping strategy, people were happier, less anxious, less depressed who had a strong social support network they could turn too
- Finding Meaning – a traumatic event can shake your assumptions of “why me”, take time to rethink your assumptions and beliefs
- Expressive Writing – write about your most painful or distressing experiences, describe your deepest thoughts and feelings
 - Studies showed that those who wrote in a journal 15 minutes a day experienced 1) fewer visits to the doctor 2) enhanced immune functions 3) less depression and distress 4) obtained higher grades and 5) more likely to find jobs after unemployment
- ABCDE – coping via thought disputation:
 - write down the nature of the **adversity** (my friend hasn’t called me in 3 weeks)
 - identify any negative **beliefs** (she’s mad at me)
 - record the **consequence** of the problem (I’m lonely)
 - **dispute** the negative belief (perhaps she has been busy)
 - optimistic explanations can **energize** you