

Emily Duffy Therapy

I have put together a generic coping plan template as well as ideas for ways of coping that might be useful. I hope that something in this document works for you.

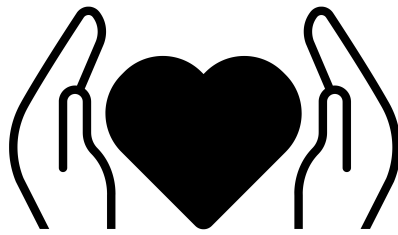
Please do bear in mind that this is brief and not as detailed as a plan could be!

The ways of coping detailed in this document are all known ways, so you can always find more about them with the links provided or by searching online.

The ways of coping here are ones that I have found work for myself at different points in my life or I have feedback from clients that they have worked for them - it may be that they don't click for you - that's okay - there will be ways of coping but it may mean looking elsewhere for what might work. Some of these used to work for me but don't anymore, some are tried, tested, and still hold up as a way of coping years later, unfortunately there isn't a one size fits all when it comes to this.

****If you are suicidal with intent to act or feeling at risk of harming yourself, please call 999 immediately.**

If you are looking to cope with suicidal thoughts there is a specific coping plan for this here



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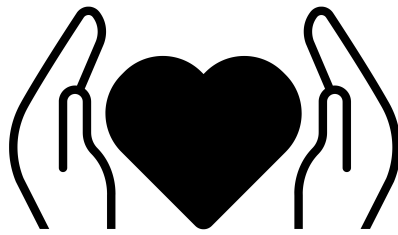
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My Coping Plan

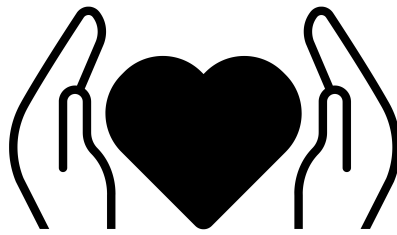
What happens when you're feeling this way?(Think about any physical symptoms, cognitive symptoms, thoughts you might have etc.)

Physical types of coping:

Cognitive types of coping:

Who can you talk to in times like this?

What compassionate affirmation can you tell yourself? Or what would you say to a friend in this situation?



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Journaling:

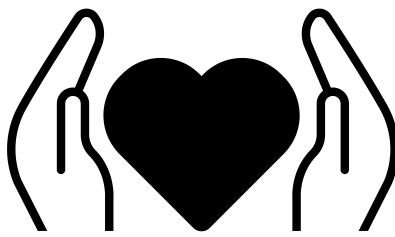
This can take many forms and so it's finding the way to journal that feels best for you. It may be that you:

- write it out as a diary format, what's happened in your day, how you feel about it etc.
- track your mood and anything you feel 'triggered' those moods.
- use it as a gratitude reflection writing down the things you feel grateful for that day no matter how small they are.
- free-write whatever is on your mind in that moment in a nonjudgmental and accepting way.
- writing letters to yourself - whether this be your current self, past self, or future self. Maybe it's letters to other people as a way to process your thoughts and feelings.
- plan to do lists, prioritise tasks, order your thoughts as a list, mind-map your thoughts.
- use a mix of the above or other ways of writing.

As an example, I found setting aside 15-30minutes a week to free-write what was on my mind was helpful. I would then end my entry with 3 things that I was grateful for to remind myself there can still be good within the bad.

Free-Writing:

This is a process where you set aside a certain amount of time for yourself in a quiet space to sit down and write. The idea being you put pen to paper and write whatever comes to mind without rejecting the thoughts or editing them - i.e. you write and don't stop. It might be that you have a topic in mind that you then free-write about.



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Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is a process where we look to be in the present, be grounded, and feel connected with where we are in the now.

There are many different ways of being mindful and it can be incorporated into daily life tasks, into activities, and into how we think.

One common mindfulness exercise used in Acceptance & Commitment Therapy is to sit in a quiet, safe space and allow yourself to relax.

1. Let your gaze soften or close your eyes.
2. Now imagine you're watching leaves flow past you on a gentle stream
3. As a leaf flows by try place your thought on it without judgment or rejection and then allow it to continue flowing past for the leaf to come along.
4. The process of letting thoughts drift off on a leaf is to be the same for all thoughts whether painful, upsetting, shocking, pleasant, happy, or neutral.
5. If you find you're spending time on a thought, this is okay, try to refocus on the exercise and let another thought come through.

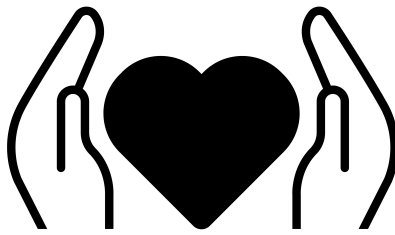
This exercise takes practice, but the idea is to practice acceptance of our thoughts, ourselves, and to bring realisation that thoughts don't have to control us.

<https://www.mindfulnessmuse.com/acceptance-and-commitment-therapy/leaves-on-a-stream-cognitive-defusion-exercise>

Another mindfulness exercise is the 'raisin exercise' as a way to practice slowing down, being in the moment, and grounding us in the now. To do this you will need a small bit of food - normally a raisin is used - but you can substitute this with something you prefer.

1. Sit somewhere quiet, comfortable and safe. For each stage really think about what you're doing and how you're feeling in this moment.
2. Look at the raisin in your hand, notice the grooves, smoothness, and how it looks.
3. Hold the raisin in your hand, roll it around in your fingers, feel the grooves, the smoothness, the texture of the food.
4. Now hold the raisin close to your nose, notice the smells from it.
5. Now place the raisin in your mouth without chewing. Move it around in your mouth and notice the sensations.
6. When you're ready you can now eat the raisin.

<https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/raisin-exercise-audio/>



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Breathing Exercises:

Breathing exercises are often used when our body is in a state of anxiety, stress, or panic. Slowing down our breathing and focusing solely on our breathing can sometimes help our minds slow down too and ground us back to the here and now.

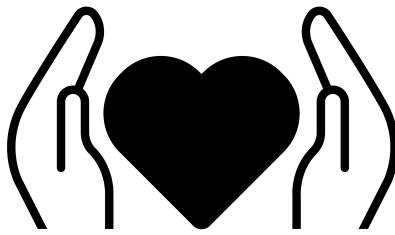
The easiest breathing exercise is the 4-4-4 - there are different versions of this around where the lengths to hold are different, so it may be that trying different timings help you better, but essentially the idea is to:

- % Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds feeling the air fill your lungs as you do.
- &" Now hold the breathe in your lungs for 4 seconds focusing on how it feels.
- ' " exhale the air out of your mouth for 4 seconds, feeling it pour out of your body.
- (" Repeat this a few times or how ever many times are needed. I often shake all my limbs after doing this too to shake out any excess energy clinging to my body!

Body Scan:

This is good for noticing where our emotions are within our body, good for tracking symptoms with chronic illness, as well as feeling connected with our bodies.

- % Preferably this is to be done when lying down somewhere comfortable, however if you are sitting allow your body to sink into your seat with your feet placed flat on the floor.
- &" Close your eyes and take a few deep breathes as outlined above.
 - a. At each stage below make sure to notice how the body part is feeling as well as any emotions that come up for you.
 - b. Once feeling relaxed bring your attention to your feet. Notice any tension, pain, sensations that come to you whilst focusing your attention. Whilst noticing those sensations take a breathe and try to notice any feelings that are coming up for you.
 - c. Now move up the feet, your legs, your stomach, arms etc. until you've done this for each part of your body.



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Grounding Exercise (5,4,3,2,1):

This exercise is often used with anxiety, overwhelm, stress, and panic when trying to reground into the now. This is also another type of mindfulness exercise.

In your environment at this moment what are:

- 5 things you can see and voice them in your head as you look at them
- 4 things you can touch and voice them in your head as you touch them,
- 3 things you can hear and voice them in your head as you hear them
- 2 things you can smell voicing them in your head as you breathe,
- 1 thing you can taste, voicing it in your head as you taste it.

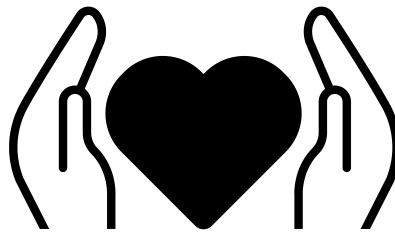
If there aren't this many number of things around you, you can use your memories and imagination to fill in the gaps for your favourite smells, tastes, sounds etc.

Happiness Jar:

This is something I heard about years ago that stuck with me and that has been useful for so many people I've worked with. Often we can get bogged down in the negative and maybe we recall negative thoughts, experiences, emotions easier than we can positive ones.

The happiness jar is a practice of gratitude and allowing us to remember the positive when we're feeling in a low place.

The idea is to get a jar, when something good, happy, positive happens write it down and place it inside of the jar. Then when you're in a negative cycle, you can read all the things that have happened that are positive to bring back the other perspective of good things can happen.



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Organising Tasks:

I tend to do this by to do lists, but sometimes it is help to do it in this format:

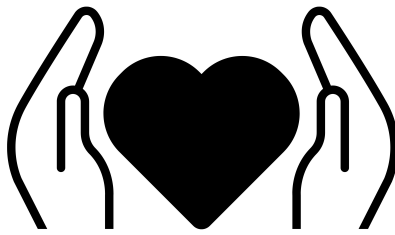
What is urgent to my living/
wellbeing?

What's important to me?

What can wait?

Within these three categories I might also think of:

- What's in my control? i.e. is it something that I can do now without anyone else or is it something I need to do but is waiting on someone else first.
- What's achievable for me to do with how I am feeling today?
- What are some nice things that I can add in too so it doesn't all feel so heavy?



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Setting Goals:

Having goals and a plan can be motivational when we've been feeling low, however they can also feel overwhelming too.

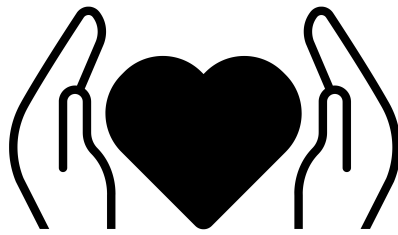
When setting goals I like to think about a few things:

- What would the ideal be in a perfect world? If not ideal what would the acceptable be? And finally what would feel achievable?
 - These might all be the same, but often they will be different and allow us to look at what we *can* do without putting ourselves under rigid and high expectations.

If you can't think how to separate the ideal, acceptable, and achievable try thinking about the following:

- Ideal would be where there are no other factors taking place i.e. I want to get a first in my degree and that is the only thing I have to focus on.
- Acceptable would be where there are other factors taking place i.e. I would be happy with a 2.1 in my degree alongside working my job, socialising, and maintaining my wellbeing.
- Achievable then looks at what feels possible in the real world situation i.e. I'm working 2 jobs and my health is a lot to manage - so anything from a 2.2 upwards in my degree feels achievable.

- If it all feels overwhelming, take the achievable goal and work backwards:
 - What's the end goal that feels achievable?
 - What's the step before that?
 - What's the step before that?
 - And the step before that?
 - keep going until you get to the most immediate thing.
- e.g.
 - I want to feel comfortable exercising twice a week for 30mins each time.
 - I want to try exercising twice a week for 15mins
 - I want to try exercising once a week for 15mins
 - I want to change into my gym clothing and stretch once a week.
 - I want to think about what exercise I want to do.



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Helplines:

- The Samaritans: 116 123 (24/7)
- LGBT Switchboard on 0300 330 0630 (10am–10pm every day)
- CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight every day)
- Text 'Shout' to 85258 for text based support

Useful Websites:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/a-z-mental-health/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/>

<https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/living-with-mental-illness/>

<https://lgbt.foundation/news/tips-to-help-cope-with-stress-and-anxiety/158>

<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/coping-mechanisms>