

How I cope:

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE

Strategies and sources of support that young people use in difficult times.

Described by over 70 young people as part of the HeadStart research project and developed for this guide by the HeadStart National Young People's Group.

www.ucl.ac.uk/children-policy-research/how-i-cope-young-persons-guide

Activities



Doing different activities to:

Take your mind off your problems, have fun and relax

Everyone has their own activities that they find helpful

For example:

- Jigsaws and other types of puzzles
- Making things
- Watching TV or movies
- Writing poetry
- Drawing
- Listening to music

When don't activities help?

When you get frustrated with the activity, like when you can't find the right piece for your puzzle

Techniques



Using different techniques to try to regulate your emotions

Whether you use a particular technique depends on the situation

For example:

- Counting to 10 to calm down when you are angry
- The 54321 exercise - being aware of your senses

When don't techniques help?

Sometimes you can forget to use a technique in the heat of the moment

Ignoring, distracting and disengaging

Disengaging from problems by:

- Distracting yourself
- Forgetting problems
- Putting problems out of your mind
- Ignoring problems and people who are upsetting you (like bullies)



When doesn't this help?

Sometimes you need to try and solve a problem, rather than ignore it.

Positive thinking



Trying to see the positive side of difficult situations

Thinking positive thoughts to cheer yourself up

Not giving up

For example:

- Feeling proud of your achievements
- Realising why you don't need to worry about something

When doesn't this help?

Thinking positively can sometimes be really hard to do

Acceptance



Waiting for problems to go

Becoming used to difficult situations

Accepting that some aspects of life can be hard

This is helpful when:

- There are things that you can't control
- When you have to do something that you don't want to do

When doesn't this help?

Acceptance isn't helpful if a situation is really bad or if it could hurt you

Responding vs Reacting



Handling arguments with others by either:

Responding

- Taking a breath and thinking about what you are going to do next - Standing up for yourself or making peace
- Seeing both sides of the argument, understanding each other, and then discussing it
- Talking to a teacher or parent about it first

Reacting

- Doing what immediately comes into your mind

When doesn't this help?

Reacting isn't always the best thing to do as it can lead to more conflict.

Bottling it up



Preferring not to talk about your problems with others.

When doesn't this help?

Bottling it up rarely helps

Think of it like a glass of water:

- If you hold onto the glass for an hour then it gets heavier
- If you hold onto it for even longer then your hand goes dead
- Talking to people is like putting the glass down on the table

You can't talk to everyone. You can try out different people to talk to.

Talking



Talking to someone who you have built trust with, for example, family, pets, school staff, or friends.

You need to find the right person - personality is important.

The right person:

- Cares about you
- Wants to hear what you say
- Validates what you are going through in your own terms

When is talking unhelpful?

When people are dismissive of what you are going through

Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioners

Receiving guidance and support.

Someone who will:

- Listen
- Understand
- Help you find solutions
- Not just give an automated response

Listening to understand, not just to reply, is important.

Practitioners can talk to other people in your life to make sure that everyone's on the same page.

When don't practitioners help?

When they don't understand you or when they focus on the negative