

Coping Strategies for Mood Related Problems

*“Promise me you’ll always remember:
you’re braver than you believe,
and stronger than you seem,
and smarter than you think.”*

— Christopher Robin from Winnie the Pooh

Check each box below as you practice each strategy. Track your progress. Engage an accountability partner to assist you. Discuss progress with the health care provider of your choice.

- 1. Make a list** of the actions or resources that help you cope with moodiness, anxiety, depression, anger, restlessness, boredom or stagnation.
- 2. Anticipate** which times of the day, month or year cause you the greatest risk of emotional instability. Notice when nutrition, hormones and seasonal changes impair your mood.
- 3. Be proactive** in planning how you will either *prevent* or *cope* with mood swings. *Recognize* your early warning signs of mood instability. *Make a preventative action plan with your doctor, therapist, support group or trusted friend.*
- 4. Eliminate alcohol and marijuana.** Inform your health care professional of an inability to reduce, control or eliminate your substance abuse. Seek substance abuse treatment now. Resume this workbook once you are alcohol/drug free.
- 5. Express your feelings openly.** Express emotions through music, dance, art, spoken or written word. Practice mindfulness by listening to your thoughts.
- 6. Make plans to do something fun, relaxing, cozy, exciting or special.** Follow through with your plans even when you do not feel like it. (Caution: work within your budget!)
- 7. Practice positive thinking.** Speak lovingly to yourself. If you don’t know how, research “self-compassion” and “self-care” in addition to “positive thinking”. Use the resources on this site and the gazillion other options available to you for free. You can do this!
- 8. Reassure yourself:** *“I am not a failure, I am just depressed.” “I am not falling apart, I am just anxious.” “I can feel upset without becoming self-destructive.” “This feeling will pass. I will be okay.”*
- 9. Allow a good cry.** Accept your emotions. Tears carry no shame. Tears are your body’s natural way of releasing toxins created by stress hormones.



□ **10. Make a list of reasons why your mood is disturbed, then problem-solve.**

*Cross off all reasons that are not within your control.

*Do a reality check—Do you exaggerate the negative? Does your affect match the situation? What are your options for problem solving?

*Talk with yourself exactly as you would speak to a friend in the same situation.

*Create a plan to address the real problems that are within your control in the same way you would assist a friend.

“A problem with no solution is not a problem.”

□ **11. Create a positive environment.** Brighten up your living and workspace by de-cluttering, organizing and cleaning. Caution: work within your budget! If you are not able to improve your space, consider spending time in a comfortable, soothing and familiar place such as a public library, museum or local park.

□ **12. Spend time with positive people.** Seek role models. Contact trusted people for intimate conversations. Read biographies about your heroes. Follow inspiring, motivational podcasts, blogs and social media.

□ **13. Avoid negative people and negative social media.** Detach from people who bring you down. Explain why you are detaching. Sometimes providing feedback to negative people sparks them into positive action. Perhaps they had no idea they were so negative and would love to be more positive with you. If your feedback offends them, they will avoid you. (Win/Win result!).



□ **14. Move.** Physical activity stimulates production of the brain’s “feel good” chemicals. Depressed and stressed people often complain that they cannot *EXERCISE* because they have no time, energy or willpower. Avoid that *E* word.

Just move. Got 10 minutes?

Take the stairs.

Park farther away.

Stretch. Reach. Bend. Walk

Wash. Tidy. Sort. Discard.

Any movement trumps inertia.

□ **15. Join in:** Sadness loves loneliness. Challenge emotional upset by connecting with others through volunteering, taking a class, joining a club or attending a church or support group in person or virtually. Any social activity directed toward overcoming loneliness is a step in the right direction. (*Well, maybe not just anything. When your mood is disturbed, avoid shopping malls, casinos, bars and “all you can eat” buffets.*)

□ **16. Eat healthy food. Eat in moderation and feel proud you did.** Reduce sugar, fat, salt and caffeine. Discuss nutrition with your health care provider. Make a rule not to engage in binge eating or emotional eating. Excessive eating leads to self-loathing and more binging.

□ **17. Practice good hygiene.** Careful grooming provides an emotional lift. Take care of your body with the same attention and affection you give to loved ones.

✓ Take a shower or bath daily.

✓ Use deodorant or powder.

✓ Brush and floss your teeth daily.

- ✓ Apply lotion or sunscreen.
 - ✓ Wear fresh underclothes and socks each day.
 - ✓ Comb or style your hair daily. Keep it clean.
 - ✓ Tidy up the nails on your hands and feet.
 - ✓ Take medication as recommended by your physician.
- 18. PLAY.** Use art, music, hobbies, crafts, sports, games, theater or recreation. Take time to discover your interests. What activities did you love as a child? What interests could you rekindle now? Do not let your age restrict your playfulness.
- 19. Expose yourself to natural sunlight and nature.** . Sunlight helps reduce depression. A brisk walk the first thing in the morning is a wonderful mood booster. (Use sunscreen!).
- 20. Use relaxation audios to practice meditation, deep breathing exercises or guided imagery.** Browse the internet or local library for free and low cost resources.
- 21. Consult your health care professional** if mood problems last for more than two weeks and do not respond to the 20 previous coping tools.
- 22. Call for help immediately when you or someone you know has thoughts of hurting self or others.**
- Keep a list of emergency contact numbers in your phone.
 - Keep a list of emergency resources in your phone.
 - Whenever possible, remove weapons from the home of those who pose a threat to self or others.

Emergency Mental Health Call 911

or [local Community mental health in Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties is 517-364-8318](http://www.localcommunitymentalhealth.org)

Mental health classes, support and advocacy

[Mental Health First Aid Classes](#)

[NAMI Lansing](#) support for mental health concerns

[Justice in Mental Health Organization](#)

Safety and protection, relationship violence

[Abuse in LGBTQ+ communities](#)

Lansing [Women's Shelter Eve's House](#)

[Women's Center of Greater Lansing](#)

[Michigan Sexual Abuse Hotline](#)

[Siren: Eaton County Relationship Violence Shelter](#)

[C.A.R.E. Capitol Area Response Effort](#)

See next page for additional help replacing bad habits with coping skills.

Replace Your Bad Habits with Healthy Coping Skills

*“When we are no longer able to change a situation—
we are challenged to change ourselves.”* Viktor E. Frankl

Coping skills → healthy habits, behaviors, thoughts, resources or tools to assist you in the process of working through painful emotions.

Place a check in the box of each coping skill you currently practice. Circle the strategies you intend to use.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relax with herbal tea | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish those projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit a library or museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk out feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Draw, paint or create | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a bath or shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan & make healthy meals | <input type="checkbox"/> Bike, hike, walk, jog, run |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write in a journal or diary | <input type="checkbox"/> Create a budget, pay bills | <input type="checkbox"/> shovel, ski, skate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> *Meditate or pray | <input type="checkbox"/> Rekindle a hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Use exercise equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a “good” cry | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish a craft | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice yoga, Pilates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice self-compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean, de-clutter, organize | <input type="checkbox"/> Swim, float, boat, canoe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> View inspirational movie | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend social event | <input type="checkbox"/> Care for animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inspirational blog, or tweet | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer, join something | <input type="checkbox"/> Do home improvements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sing, dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor or mentor | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan your calendar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educate yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a support group | <input type="checkbox"/> Tend yard or garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read | <input type="checkbox"/> Help someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Make a “to-do” list |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polish your nails | <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciate nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a game |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nap | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to or make music | <input type="checkbox"/> Recycle & donate stuff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become a role model | <input type="checkbox"/> Build social connections | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant something |

*Meditation questions:

1. What motivates you to use the coping strategies you marked in the columns above?
2. What triggers you to slip away from using your best coping skills?
3. How would you like to maintain your healthy coping skills? (Check all that apply):

- Support.** Surround yourself with people who have similar goals and successful intention.
- Prioritize.** Schedule time for the most important goals, including relaxation and fun.
- Accountability.** Document, record or discuss progress with yourself and with others
- Routines.** Practice maintaining healthy habits (Check to see if there is an app for that!)
- Embrace** → your emotions and experiences with self-compassion and curiosity.