**Coping Skills for Those Who Self Injure**

*Taken from:* [*www.self-injury.net*](http://www.self-injury.net)

**Coping Skills To Delay The Urge:**• take a cold or hot shower  
• clean  
• stay out of your room and be around people  
• talk to someone  
• call a friend or family member  
• stare at a picture, notice all the details and/or make up a story about it  
• throw a deck of cards in your room and pick them up in order  
• make a collage…think about why you chose the images you did etc…  
• trace the body part you want to hurt on a piece of paper then draw what you want to do to the body part on the paper  
• sit in the dark  
  
**Coping Skills For Destructive, Angry, Or Violent Feelings:**• tear up newspaper  
• rip apart an old phone book  
• punch pillows  
• use a pillow to hit a wall in your room  
• throw ice cubes at a brick wall  
• cut up pop bottles  
• break sticks  
• exercise  
• draw a self portrait then mark what you want to do on it  
• make play-doh or clay sculptures then smash them  
• dance to music in your room  
• throw a ball against a wall  
• deep breathing  
• listen to music  
• take a shower  
  
**Coping Skills For When You Are Sad, Depressed, Or Unhappy:**• do something slow and soothing  
• massage where you want to hurt yourself with lotion or massage oil while telling yourself that you are special and deserve to treat yourself with love and respect  
• curl up under a blanket with some warm milk, tea, or hot chocolate  
• talk to someone about the things that you like  
• read a book  
• watch TV  
• think about a time or place that is comforting to you (like envisioning yourself laying on the beach in Hawaii…hear the waves on the sand, the seagulls, smell the salt water, etc…)  
• listen to music  
**Coping Skills For Craving Sensations Or Feeling Unreal:**• squeeze ice or hold an ice cube to the skin inside your arm (NOTE: putting ice on a spot you want to burn gives you a strong, painful sensation and leaves a red mark afterward, kind of like burning would, but does not leave a lasting effect)  
• rub ben gay or peppermint oil on your skin (particularly under your nose because it produces a strong sensation  
• bite into something strongly flavored (like a hot pepper, gingerroot, unpeeled lime, lemon, or grapefruit, etc…)  
• exercise  
• take a hot or cold shower or bath  
• use a toothbrush instead of a sharp object since it creates a feeling on your skin, yet is not a sharp object  
• focus on how it feels to breathe…notice the way your chest and stomach move with each breath  
• orange meditation (explained later)

**Coping Skills For Wanting To See Blood:**• draw red lines on your arm with a marker  
• draw red lines on paper with a red pencil and then drip water on the lines  
• draw slashing lines on paper  
• lay flat on your bed and focus on a point on the ceiling  
• take a small bottle of liquid red food coloring and warm it slightly by dropping it into a cup of hot water for a few minutes…uncap the bottle and press its tip against the place you want to cut…draw the bottle in a cutting motion while squeezing it slightly to let the food color trickle out  
• draw on the areas you want to cut using ice that you’ve made by dropping six or seven drops of red food color into each of the ice-cube tray wells  
• use rubber stamps on your body (red ink can work well for this…it can also be a good way to get you to think of positive things if the stamps have positive words on them)

**Coping Skills For Wanting To Pick At Scabs And Scars:**• add some red food coloring (or something red) to glue or a henna tattoo kit and put it on yourself…let it dry and then pick it off as you would a scab and it should leave behind a reddish mark

**Coping Skills For Wanting Focus**• lay flat on your bed and focus on a point on the ceiling  
• choose a random object (like a piece of tape) and try to list 30 different uses for it  
• do a task that requires focus (like playing a game, playing gameboy, making a bracelet, etc…)  
• draw an intricate design (make sure there are lots of tiny details in the design so it requires your focus and takes a while to do)  
• choose an object in the room and examine it… write a detailed description of it… include everything: size, weight, texture, shape, color, possible uses, feel, etc…)

**Coping Skills To Help You Express Your Feelings:**• write what you are feeling in a journal  
• draw a picture of what is making you angry  
• write a letter to the person(s) that has hurt you and express how they made you feel (these letters don’t have to be in perfect form and you do not have to please anyone but yourself…you do not have to give these letters to the people, but it is a great way to release the feelings that you are carrying within…after you write the letters, you can decide what you want to do with them…some people find tearing up the letters helps)  
  
**Coping Skills To Gain Control:**• throw away your sharps that you cut yourself with as a way to show yourself that you have control over it  
• make a contract with yourself or someone you care about

**If You Tend To Dissociate:**• focus on what is real around you (this comes down to the basics, such as, the couch is blue, the light is on, the walls are white, there is a book on my desk, I can feel my shoe pinching my toe, etc…)  
• play the 54321 game (explained later)  
\*\*Try not to be hard on yourself for feeling this way. Try not to beat yourself up inside by calling yourself names or expecting yourself to just “not feel this way” or to “snap out of it.” This internal namecalling and self-verbal abuse will only make you feel worse. You are trying to take care of yourself.  
\*\*If you have tried all of the coping skills, then answer these questions before hurting yourself:  
Answer these questions before allowing yourself to self-injure. It helps to write them down, as your answers may change from time-to-time. Comparing your answers can be cathartic as well as informative.  
1- Why do I feel I must self-injure? What has driven me to cut, burn, etc.?  
2- Have I done this before? How did I cope then? Did I feel the same way?  
3- What other paths have I pursued to ease my pain before now? Is there something else I can do that won’t harm me?  
4- Is there something I’m trying to communicate with my self-injury?  
5- How am I feeling now?  
6- How will I feel when I am self-injuring?  
7- How will I feel afterward? How will I feel tomorrow morning?  
8- Can I avoid the problem that has driven me to this point? Is there a better way I can handle it next time?  
9- Must I self-injure?

**Orange Meditation:**Sit at a table with an orange in front of you. (You can use any food.) Look at the orange. Look at the color and the shape. Notice any markings. See the dimple at the center. Is it exactly round? Hold the orange in your hands. Feel the skin. Smell the skin. Imagine the grove where the orange grew, and see it hanging on the tree. See the other trees in the grove. Now begin to peel the orange. Feel the oiliness of the skin. Notice the inside of the peel. Notice the color and shape of the section. See the white strings on the section of the orange. Hold it to your nose and smell its fragrance. Bite into the orange. Feel its texture. Notice its taste. Are there seeds? Is it juicy? Does the juice run down your chin or get on your fingers? Continue to eat the pieces of orange. How many slices are there? Notice how you feel after eating the orange. How was the experience of really taking notice of how it looked, smelled, tasted?  
  
**54321 Game:**• name 5 things you can SEE in the room with you  
• computer monitor, cat, telephone, etc.  
• name 4 things you can FEEL right now  
• chair on my back, feet on the floor, hair on my neck, etc.  
• name 3 things you can HEAR right now  
• fingers tapping on a keyboard, ceiling fan, cat purring, etc.  
• name 2 things you can SMELL right now  
• (or 2 things you like the smell of)  
• my shampoo, incense, my dog’s fur, etc.  
• name 1 GOOD THING about yourself  
• i got a B today, i’m doing this exercise, i tell the truth, etc.

Write lists. Make lists of everything. Things that need to get done, things that you want to do someday, goals, activities, distracters, shopping lists, foods you want to try, feelings, things you like about yourself, pro/con lists.