Coping Skills Practice
This packet offers tips and activities to help aid in stress management and healthy coping. This packet is not meant to replace actual therapy but to help provide tools to facilitate healthy self-care and stress management strategies. For more information on how to connect with a counselor or licensed therapist, see the resources listed below. Island County Human Services now offers a mental health support line that can also help you navigate the resources available to help you and your family.

**Counseling Resources**

Island County Mental Health Call Line: 360-678-2346

Monday-Friday 10am – 8pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 5pm

Crisis Chat: Text “Home” to 741-741

I’m Hurting-Crisis Chat [http://imhurting.org/](http://imhurting.org/)

Teen Link Call Line 866-833-6546

WA Warm Line 877-500-9276

Seattle Children’s Hospital Counselor Referral Program: Call 833-303-5437

Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m

Child Mind Institute Telehealth Program: [https://childmind.org/our-care/telehealth/](https://childmind.org/our-care/telehealth/)

**Coping and other Emotional Supports**

YMCA-Free Yoga and Fitness classes online! [https://ymca360.org/](https://ymca360.org/)


Progressive Muscle Relaxation [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZEdqcGVzo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZEdqcGVzo)

Mindfulness for Youth [https://www.mindfulschools.org/](https://www.mindfulschools.org/)


Mindfulness Northwest- Local mindfulness workshops. [https://www.mindfulnessnorthwest.com/](https://www.mindfulnessnorthwest.com/)

Little Flower Yoga- ideas [https://www.littlefloweryoga.com/blog/robot-relaxation-for-kids/](https://www.littlefloweryoga.com/blog/robot-relaxation-for-kids/)


What’s in it for me?

Having your own set of go-to coping skills and self-care strategies will benefit you now and for the rest of your life. These skills and strategies will help you build resiliency, understand your emotions, and manage your stress.

Terms to ponder:

**Self-care**- refers to intentionally engaging in practices and activities that reduce stress.

https://www.teenhealthcare.org/blog/what-is-self-care-anyway/

**Resiliency**- Think of resilience as a process of bouncing back — of rising above adversity. And to do so ideally, with lessons that enable you to better handle the next bump in the road.

https://parentandteen.com/building-resilience-in-teens/

**Coping Skills**- strategies used to support emotional and physical health.

https://parentandteen.com/coping-skills/
Coping Skills Checklist

1. Check off the ones you do now
2. Circle the ones you want to try
3. Cross off the ones that don't work

**CALMING SKILLS**
- Deep breathing using a pinwheel
- Deep breathing with bubbles
- Deep breathing with a stuffed animal
- Deep breathing using a feather
- Take a mindful walk
- Yoga
- Imagine your favorite place
- Think of your favorite things
- Picture the people you care about
- Say the alphabet slowly
- Remember the words to a song you love
- Run water over your hands
- Carry a small object
- Touch things around you
- Move
- Make a fist then release it
- Positive self-talk
- Take a shower or bath
- Take a drink of water
- Counting
- Block out noises
- Take a break
- Calming Jar

**DISTRACTION SKILLS**
- Write a story
- Crossword Puzzles
- Sudoku
- Bake or Cook
- Volunteer/Community Service
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Read
- Clean
- Play with a pet
- Play a board game
- Play video games
- Screen time
- Play with a friend
- Start a garden
- Creative thinking
- Make up your own game
- Plan a fun event
- Start a new hobby
- Do a crafting project
- Your favorite things
- Be silly and laugh
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
### MOVEMENT SKILLS
- Squeeze something
- Use a stress ball
- Shred paper
- Bubble wrap
- Use a sand tray
- Jacob's ladder
- Hold a small stone
- Shuffle cards
- Make something
- Use a fidget
- Walk
- Exercise
- Dance
- Punch a safe surface
- Play at the park
- Make an obstacle course
- Swing on a swing
- Jump on a trampoline
- Jump rope
- Scooter
- Go swimming
- Stretches
- Tumbling
- Gymnastics
- Yoga

### PROCESSING SKILLS
- Write in a journal
- Write songs
- Write poetry
- Write music
- Draw
- Talk to someone you trust
- Create a playlist
- Write what's bothering you and throw it away
- Write a letter to someone
- Use "I statements"
- Make a worry box

### SENSORY SKILLS
- Use a weighted blanket
- Sit in a bean bag
- Wrap up in a soft blanket
- Eat a crunchy snack
- Use a body sock
- Crawl through a tunnel
- Sip a drink through a straw
- Do wall push ups
- Turn upside down
- Stretch on an exercise ball
- Play with water beads
- Use mermaid fabric
5 Ways to Prevent Stress Buildup

There's no avoiding the stress of everyday life. Schoolwork, responsibilities at home, busy schedules, other people's expectations, disappointments, deadlines, social drama: all of these can create tension.

Everyday stressors have a way of piling up if we don't keep them in check. Adding these 5 simple actions to your regular routine can help you avoid that "bogged down by stress" feeling. The key word is "routine." You need to make sure you keep doing these to enjoy the benefits:

1. **Balance responsibilities (like schoolwork) with activities you enjoy.** It's all about balance: all work and no play is bad. But if your schedule is so crammed with activities that there's no time for homework, that'll stress you out too.

2. **Manage responsibilities.** Use a calendar or planning app to keep track of assignments, chores, practices, and other obligations. Of course, planning is no good if you don't actually do what you plan: Managing stress also means regular studying, keeping on top of assignments, and overcoming procrastination. Take time to reflect a bit every day and think about how things are going. What do you need to work on? Do? Make time for?

3. **Eat healthy foods.** What you eat affects your mood, energy, and stress level. Eating healthy doesn't mean avoiding all treats — it goes back to that balance thing again. It's OK to treat yourself to ice cream occasionally if you ate a salad or turkey on whole wheat for lunch. But if ice cream and sweets are your main source of fuel, you're likely to crash or feel cranky — and stressed!

4. **Get proper sleep.** This may seem like a no-brainer. After all, who doesn't love to sleep? But getting the right amount of sleep is actually something we need to focus on because it's easy to let homework, talking to friends, or binge watching get in the way of sleep — no matter how much we want to catch those ZZZs.

5. **Make time to exercise every day.** It's hard to feel anxious when you're taking deep breaths on a run or feeling the rush of a downhill bike ride. Exercise doesn't just take our mind off of stress; it releases chemicals in our brains that make us feel better.

Learning to manage stress means building coping skills that allow you to take everyday challenges in stride. It's about keeping problems in perspective instead of ignoring them, and learning what to work on and what to let go of.

**Reviewed by:** KidsHealth Behavioral Health Experts


Note: All information on TeensHealth® is for educational purposes only.
**Square Breathing**

This visual aid will help guide your breathing practice. After you feel comfortable with this pattern, try making it fun by blowing bubbles or breathing on a pinwheel to give you something to focus on. Begin at “start” and follow the arrows around the square. This breathing pattern is:

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold breath for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold breath for 4 seconds, repeat. Please practice breathing in a seated position or while lying down.
RELAXATION
ADOLESCENTS and adults (beginning age 12)

Deep Breathing Exercises

• Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:

  o Put one hand on your abdomen. Concentrate on taking deep slow breaths, so that you can feel your abdomen going in and out as you breathe. Sometimes it can help to breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth. You might want to try counting to yourself as you breathe in and out. You can also repeat a word to yourself each time you take a breath, like “strong,” or “calm,” or “relax.” Take a few minutes right now to just practice taking deep breaths in and out.”

  o This kind of breathing exercise takes practice. Try practicing for a few minutes every day when you are feeling calm. If you get used to it while you are feeling calm, you will be able to use it when you are feeling stressed, for example, like right before a test.”

Muscle Relaxation Exercises

• Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:

  o This exercise is used to help you relieve some of that tension by focusing on relaxing your muscles. I will ask you to tense a specific muscle group for 5 seconds, and then relax it for 10 seconds. While relaxing your muscles, do so completely and let the muscle go completely limp. While relaxing, try to remember the pleasant feeling of the moment.

  o Hold your right arm straight out in front of you and bend your hand upward pointing your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold that tension. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax
and let your arm drop to your side. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Hold your left arm straight out in front of you and bend your hand upward pointing your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold that tension. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your arm drop to your side. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Shrug your shoulders, raising them as high as possible. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your shoulders drop down. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Sit up straight in your chair. Arch your back as much as you can. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and sit back in your chair. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Close your eyes tightly. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and leave them closed but softly. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Tighten your jaw muscles as much as you can, clenching your teeth together. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax your jaw muscles and unclench your teeth. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Bend your neck forward, trying to touch your chin to your chest. (Count 5 seconds). Now bring your neck back upright. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Straighten both legs, stretching them outward and tensing all the muscles. (Count 5 seconds). Now let them relax and bring them back down to the floor. Count 10 seconds.

- Take three nice deep breaths, and remember that feeling of relaxation and calm.
Guided Imagery Exercise #1
(introduction to imagery)

- Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:
  
  o Choose a relaxing scene. Think of the most relaxing place you have ever been. The place can be real, or it can be imagined. For example, your place can be the beach, or it can be a castle in the clouds. There are no right or wrong answers, and your imagination is limitless! When you have chosen your place try to imagine it using all your senses - sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, and temperature. Create as much detail in your mind as possible.
  
  o Now chose a word or phrase that will help you recall this scene (e.g., ocean, my relaxing spot). Take a few deep breaths, and go through your scene in your mind. (Allow about 10 minutes to practice).
  
  o As you become more confident in using this imagery technique, try using it during the course of your day. You can practice during a study period, for example, or on your way to school. Try to practice at least two times per day, and repeat your word or phrase several times to yourself at the end of your practice when you are relaxed.

Guided Imagery Exercise #2
(guided imagery with suggestions for relaxation)

- Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:
  
  o Sit in a comfortable position with your arms and legs uncrossed. Let your eyes focus gently on a point in front of you. Begin with slow, rhythmic breathing, focusing on every breath – feel where it is in your body, focus on that sensation with the knowledge that your body knows how to find comfort and how to conduct the breathing process without you having to concentrate on it.
  
  o As you continue to feel relaxed and calm, I want you to experience the sense of relaxation you feel in your body. Notice that the muscles in your feet, legs, hips, chest, arms, back, neck, and head are feeling looser and more relaxed. Feel the tension leaving your body as you experience warmth and comfort. The warmth is spreading through your body and along with it comes comfort and relaxation.
Now imagine that there is a large, open pouch in front of you. Into this pouch, I’d like you to put in all your worries, fears, and anxieties. Imagine the anxiety, fears, and worries as a gray mist that comes out of your body every time you exhale. As it comes out, it goes into this pouch and cannot re-enter your body. Visualize the gray mist entering the pouch and feel the warmth that enters your body as a result of having the anxiety, worries, and fears exiting. Once you are ready, close the pouch and feel comfort in knowing that the fears and worries will not come back into your body. Focus on the feeling of warmth throughout your body.

Now I’d like to help you find a state of deeper relaxation and concentration. Imagine you are at the top of a staircase – any kind of staircase where you feel most comfortable. As you look down the staircase, take a breath in and go down one step, feeling secure and planting both feet firmly on the step. Again, focus on the sense of warmth and comfort. Now, when you are ready, go down to the second step, going deeper into relaxation. Now, go to the third step and notice the corridor. Stop briefly and look at the very long corridor, with doors on either side.

You are not sure what is behind each door so take some time and let your intuition guide you toward a particular door. Once you have opened the door, examine the scene there. If that is a scene that feels most comfortable to you, go ahead and step inside the room. This door may lead to a pleasant scene or memory, sometime when you felt at your best – relaxed, without a care or concern for time, without any worries or demands. Stay there and take in the energy. What do you see? What do you smell and feel? Do you feel a particular sensation? Take in this feeling and store it securely in your mind, knowing that your mind can create this memory, and with increased practice you can more quickly achieve this feeling of security, calm, and strength in moments when you need it most. Again, feel the warmth and healing that surround you as you take in the comfort and relaxing feeling of this scene.

Now, when you are ready, go back out into the corridor and face toward the staircase. Take your time, and go at your own speed, there is absolutely no rush. When you feel ready, go up to the first step. As you do so, you will feel slightly more alert, but with a continued sense of relaxation and well-being. (give some time). If you are ready, go ahead and take the next two steps up the staircase. Again, you will feel increasingly more alert, but continue to experience and enjoy a sense of relaxation and well-being.

I want you to take your time, take rhythmic breaths, and continue to experience this feeling of safety, warmth, and relaxation. Once you feel ready, go ahead and open your eyes. There is no rush, do this at your own pace and as you feel ready.
Get Back to Nature

Step outside and ground yourself to find calm and reduce stress. Reconnecting with nature through mindfulness activities can reduce stress and make you feel happier.¹ Mindfulness is the practice of being aware of the present, the here and now.

Take a step outside, go for a walk, and do these things:

**What can you hear?** What are the sounds of nature? Wind? Seagulls?

**What can you see?** Trees? Flowers? The sky?

**What can you Smell?** Take a deep breath. Do you smell fresh cut grass? Fragrant spring blooms?

**What can you feel?** Is the ground soft and forgiving? Is there a cool breeze? Light rain?

Spending a few minutes on this activity daily can boost your mood. Did it help? Add it to your list of new self-care strategies. 😊

Daily Gratitude Practice

Practicing gratitude everyday can help boost your mood and train your brain to see more of the positive and less of the negative aspects of daily life.


1. Write down a gratitude ritual you do now. For example, giving thanks before a meal or pausing before you go to sleep to think about what went well in your day (and how to find good in the things that didn’t!). It’s ok if you don’t have one you do every day. Write down one you might’ve done in the past.

2. Write down an everyday blessing you've noticed that you used to take for granted. For example, electricity that keeps the lights on; fresh, clean running water; or powerful arm muscles that help you play your sport.

3. Name someone you're grateful to have in your life and why.

4. Describe something that happened in the past that you didn't feel grateful for at the time, but now think of with gratitude.

5. Describe a moment when you felt gratitude in real time. What other emotions did you feel?

6. Describe a way you've thanked someone or intend to thank someone.
I've been under a lot of pressure!
But I'm okay! How are you today?

When you can name your emotions, you can tame your emotions. Use the emotions color wheel on the next page to help you write how you're feeling today. You can also use this technique to start your own journal.
Color Wheel of Emotions

[Diagram showing a color wheel with various emotions labeled around it, including happy, sad, angry, fearful, and other emotions with corresponding colors and descriptions.]
Just like brushing your teeth every day is important for dental health, daily self-care is important for everyone to maintain their mental health. Before you can care for others, you must care for yourself.
Are you hydrated?
If not, have a glass of water.

Have you eaten in the past three hours?
If not, get some food — something with protein, not just simple carbs. Perhaps some nuts or hummus?

Have you showered in the past day?
If not, take a shower right now.

Have you stretched your legs in the past day?
If not, do so right now. If you don’t have the energy for a run, just walk around the block, then keep walking as long as you please. If the weather’s bad, try moving around in your house or looking up a quick exercise or yoga video.

Have you said something nice to someone in the past day? Do so, whether online or in person. Make it genuine; wait until you see something really wonderful about someone, and tell them about it.

Have you moved your body to music in the past day?
If not, jog for the length of a song at your favorite tempo, or just dance around the room for the length of an upbeat song.

Have you cuddled a living being in the past two days?
If not, do so. Don’t be afraid to ask for hugs from family or pets. Most of them will enjoy the cuddles too; you’re not imposing on them.

Have you seen a therapist or talked to someone in the past few days?
If not, hang on until your next therapy visit or reach out to a crisis call line and talk through things then.

If daytime: are you dressed?
If not, put on clean clothes that aren’t pajamas. Give yourself permission to wear something special, whether it’s a funny t-shirt or a pretty dress.

If nighttime: are you sleepy and fatigued but resisting going to sleep?
Put on pajamas, make yourself cozy in bed with a teddy bear and the sound of falling rain, and close your eyes for fifteen minutes — no electronic screens allowed. If you’re still awake after that, you can get up again; no pressure.

Do you feel ineffective?
Pause right now and get something small completed, whether it’s responding to a message, completing an assignment, loading up the dishwasher, or making your bed. Good job!

Do you feel paralyzed by indecision?
Give yourself ten minutes to sit back and figure out a game plan for the day. If a particular decision or problem is still being a roadblock, simply set it aside for now, and pick something else that seems doable. Right now, the important part is to break through that barrier, even if it means doing something trivial.

Have you over-exerted yourself lately — physically, emotionally, socially, or intellectually?
That can take a toll that lingers for days. Give yourself a break in that area, whether it’s physical rest, taking time alone, or relaxing with some silly entertainment.

Have you waited a week?
Sometimes our perception of life is skewed, and we can’t even tell that we’re not thinking clearly, and there’s no obvious external cause. It happens. Keep yourself going for a full week, whatever it
TAKE A BRAIN BREAK

Give your mind a few minutes of peace and calm each day

COLORING IS A SIMPLE, RELAXING ACTIVITY THAT CAN GIVE YOUR BRAIN A BREAK AND HELP CALM YOUR BODY'S STRESS RESPONSE.
TODAY
I CHOOSE
JOY
we're all in this together