

Coping Strategies

🕒 Time: 20+ Minutes

📊 Difficulty: Moderate

Life can be challenging and unpredictable, and it's natural to experience stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions when things don't go as planned. **Coping strategies are the techniques we use to manage these emotions and navigate difficult situations.** However, not all coping strategies are created equal. **Some are adaptive, meaning they help us deal with challenges in healthy and effective ways, while others are non-adaptive, meaning they only provide temporary relief and may even make things worse in the long run.**

This exercise is designed to help you get a better understanding what are some adaptive (good) and non-adaptive (bad) coping strategies for anxiety & overthinking (remember that they're intertwined!). This is important because overthinking is often caused by some underlying fears and anxieties that do not get properly addressed due to using non-adaptive coping strategies that don't help long term. The exercise will help you become more aware of your own coping patterns and replace counter-productive ones with more productive alternatives.

HERE'S WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND BEFORE YOU GET STARTED:

- ✓ Coping strategies can be categorized as adaptive or non-adaptive, but this distinction depends on the situation at hand. Non-adaptive coping strategies may be adaptive in certain circumstances, and adaptive coping strategies may become non-adaptive if overused or used in the wrong way.
- ✓ To truly commit to changing your coping patterns, you first need to identify WHY the HOW you cope is negative in the long term. This will help you brainstorm (while using the Adaptive Coping Cheat Sheet on the next page as a guide) new strategies that you can replace them with and the concrete steps you should take.
- ✓ **Remember that overdoing any of the coping strategies becomes non-adaptive at some point.** How do you know when? A simple question you can ask yourself is: 1) What will happen in long term if I keep coping in this way?

FIND THE WHEEL OF COMMON COPING STRATEGIES ON THE NEXT PAGE →

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ADAPTIVE COPING STRATEGIES FOR OVERTHINKING

01. Letting go of the uncontrollable

Accepting that some situations or outcomes are beyond your control, and focusing on what you can change or influence instead to reduce anxiety.

02. Physical activity

Engaging in physical activity, such as walking, running, or yoga, to release tension and reduce anxiety. It also helps you “get out of your head and into your body”

03. Worry journal

Creating a worry or thought journal to help process and understand your thoughts, feelings, and concerns. It also helps you discover recurring thought patterns.

04. Time management techniques

Implementing time management techniques, such as the Pomodoro Technique or to-do lists, to increase productivity and reduce anxiety related to tasks and deadlines.

05. Positive affirmations

Replacing negative thought patterns with positive affirmations or self-talk to build self-confidence and reduce anxiety.

06. Prioritizing taking action

Writing down a course of action (even if it's not perfect) and following through with it, despite feeling anxiety. This approach helps build positive momentum, resilience, and fosters a sense of accomplishment, ultimately reducing overthinking and anxiety.



NON-ADAPTIVE COPING STRATEGIES FOR OVERTHINKING

07. Constant comparison

Continuously comparing oneself to others, leading to feelings of inadequacy, increased anxiety, and overthinking about personal shortcomings or failures.

08. Overanalyzing

Constantly “researching” to find “the best” option or continuously seeking reassurance, leading to increased stress and anxiety.

09. Using unhelpful thinking styles

Using cognitive distortions such as all-or-nothing thinking, overgeneralization, emotional reasoning, should statements, catastrophic thinking, etc. which leads you to overthink your options.

10. Perfectionism

Setting unrealistically high standards and striving for perfection, leading to increased pressure, stress, and anxiety when these expectations are not met. Sometimes “good enough” is the way to go.

11. Procrastination

Procrastinating on tasks or decisions due to anxiety or fear of failure, leading to increased stress and an overwhelming workload.

12. Escapism

Engaging in activities, fantasies, or distractions as a means of avoiding or escaping from the reality of a situation, often leading to increased anxiety and overthinking when the underlying issues are not addressed.



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01

What kind of coping strategies or behavioural patterns do you use to deal with overthinking and anxiety?

02

Have they been helpful so far? How have they been helpful? If not, how are they harmful?

03

What are the long term consequences of using these coping patterns?

Try to think 5 to 10 years ahead and think of how your life will look like if you keep using these strategies. These outcomes can be both positive and negative!

04

What kind of coping strategies could you adopt right now to deal with overthinking & anxiety better? What are some concrete actions you could take to instill them?