

# Dealing with Distress

Life can become challenging and when that happens it is helpful to have coping skills. Coping skills do not take the difficulty away, but they do allow us to get through it, build our resilience, and decrease the level of distress for the next challenge.

## Self-Soothing

**Breathing:** Take deep breath from the diaphragm or stomach. Breathe in then through your nose, and slowly breathe out through your mouth.

**Exercise:** Move in whatever way is helpful to you. Some find yoga helpful, while others prefer a run. Try a few different things and see what feels best.

**Music:** Listening to a favorite artist or song can help calm or even motivate a person.

**Relaxation:** Progressive muscle relaxation helps to relax the body. After an intense interaction or just noticing tension in your body utilizing guided relaxation or teaching yourself to relax helps calm the body down. Taking a bath or a shower can also help.

**Imagery:** Put an image in your work space that you can easily access and focus on during the day. Pictures of family or places you would like to go allow focus to shift and your mood to calm.

**Visualization:** Sometimes have an image close by is not possible. In those instances, think of images or scenarios that are calming. Picturing the ocean, imagining the sounds of the beach for a few moments can be restorative.

## Action

**Act:** Do something positive for yourself or someone else.

**Socialize:** Having a support system to share concerns, ideas, and thoughts with provides you with a sounding board and reassurances you might need in a tough situation. Listening to their feedback or their own concerns can help give perspective and create mutual understanding.

**Entertainment:** hobbies are a great way to focus your energies into positive things and shift your focus away from the difficulty. Whether it is a solo or group activity, find something that genuinely interests you and engage in it.

**List your achievements:** Whenever you are feeling stuck or down, consider listing all of your successes and accomplishments in life. Keep a running list of the things others have said you do well or that they appreciate about you. Reviewing the list from time to time is a good reminder of what you have accomplished over time.

**Problem Solving:** Is there something you can do to resolve the issue? Seek out opinions and other perspectives to determine if there are any options you missed.

### **Next Steps**

Use your coping to calm your mind, slow your breathing, and regulate your emotions. Once you have achieved this, take these next steps.

**Reframe:** Recognizing that we can put a negative spin on things whether it is our perspective, experience, or just plain fear, take the time to consider if there is another way to view the issue.

Ex: a beloved supervisor is leaving. Original thoughts: “why is this happening to me? This is terrible!” Reframe: “This is an opportunity for them to do something they love and it is a chance for me to grow in my role and introduce a new supervisor to the work I enjoy.”

**Goals:** Create goals or action steps to move you through the situation. Think about what steps you can take, what you might need, and who can support you as you adapt.

**Assess:** What worked? What didn't? Were you successful in moving through the challenge? What made it easier/better? Where do challenges or hurdles still exist? Note these for next time and keep working.

Change is harder for some than it is for others, be patient advocate and work towards an outcome that supports you and your team.