

How to cope with life

Informational

Title: How to cope, a step at a time.

Subject: Resource

Topic: Coping

Jargon: Coping, depression, struggles, strategies, parasympathetic, dehydrate, grounding, technique, comfortable

Years on years I've had depression. It's just become a fact of my life. So when it gets bad, I have to learn to deal with it. One day everything was unbearable. Getting up took time, breakfast tasted bland, and every word uttered to me went straight through my head. **I felt awful and on the verge of tears before even stepping out the door.** I knew I had to get through the day, but every time I tried to speak I couldn't. I started to cry. What could I do? I remembered back to what I'd been told by adults.

"Take deep breaths, drink water, blah blah." but is it really that simple? I started pacing my breathing. 1...2...3... Slowly it evened out, and my tears were drying. I poured myself a cup of water and chugged it. Suddenly I felt okay. Not great, but okay. So I wondered if there were other ways to feel better.

Take it from me when I say life can be hard. **You have to work at things everyday: work at getting up, work at getting ready, work at leaving the house (that one can be tricky), and just generally work at doing everything you need to do.** You have to work to be alive, and sometimes that stinks. So if you have trouble facing your job (living), then sometimes you'll need to learn to cope with it. What is coping? Well coping is like surviving. You learn and use skills to deal with the problem you're facing. Coping can take a lot of practice and time, but it's ultimately worth it for you to overcome your internal struggles. So without further ado, I'm going to teach you some strategies I use to keep going every day.

Imagine you're crying. Just imagine, don't do it. Crying takes away your breath, and makes your head may start to hurt. Crying sucks. So I looked into fixes for this problem. Everyone tells you to take deep breaths, but why? As it turns out, deep breaths actually have a chemical effect on our bodies. I found that the parasympathetic nervous system is what controls our fight or flight response. Deep breathing happens to trigger our parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn eases stress

and provides you with a calming feeling. So really, if you take the time to focus on your breathing, your heart rate will go down and you will feel better, even if temporarily.

So why do we drink water when we cry? Well, from what I've learned, your emotions may partially be a result of mild dehydration. Not drinking enough water or just working hard enough to dehydrate yourself can bring down your mood. So drink some water, even if just a sip! I promise it will help a little.

If science isn't your thing, and you really just want to take your mind off of what's bothering you, try grounding. Grounding is a technique that helps you ease back into reality and focus on what's around you. So first find yourself a spot to sit or lay down which will help you feel more in touch with your surroundings. Next, take a look around. I find the easiest way to ground is to find 5 things you can touch, 4 things you can see, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Another way to ground yourself is again, focusing on your senses. If you're eating, observe the different flavors you can taste and how they make you feel. If you're outside, listen to the animals and all that is alive. Or the easiest, pick something up and think about the different textures of it. I assure you grounding is the quickest and most effective technique I've used.

The most imperative situation is when you feel unsafe, like you may harm yourself. It's awful and these thoughts are dangerous. Start by making a contract with an adult promising to be safe. A way I've found to avoid harmful behavior is by doing art (with a safe tool like a marker) on the place I want to self harm. It really helps me not to hurt myself. If you find that is leading to unsafe actions, you can always seek out help. While sometimes coping is helpful, it may not always be the best choice when you know you are a danger to yourself.

Coping is great; however, it's not for everyone. Really, if you are hoping to cope better, what works for someone else may not work for you. Always do what makes you the most comfortable, and don't be afraid to talk to someone!