HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

Coping strategies are efforts you can make to manage a situation you might deem as stressful or potentially harmful. These may include:

- Talk to someone
- Mindfulness
- Create a distraction kit
- Make a plan for your future
- Write your thoughts and feelings in a journal
- Listen to a playlist of your favorite songs
- Watch funny videos
- Cuddle with a pet
- Grounding exercise (5-4-3-2-1) - say aloud
  - 5 things you can see
  - 4 things you can feel
  - 3 things you can hear
  - 2 things you can smell
  - 1 thing you can taste

- Reasons for living
- Write a gratitude list
- Breathing techniques
- Do something creative (writing, drawing, playing an instrument, etc.)
- CARESS (Communicate Alternatively, Release Endorphins, Self-Sooth)
- Stretch
- Go for a walk
- Body tapping
- Visualizations and/or meditations

Healthy v. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

Healthy coping strategies adjust to or tolerate negative events or realities while you try to keep a positive self-image and emotional balance. The benefits are usually long-lasting. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Establishing and maintaining boundaries
- Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation and mindfulness
- Regular physical activity
- Goal setting

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Unhealthy coping strategies avoid or suppress underlying issues and provide temporary relief without addressing the root cause. They may exacerbate distress in the long run. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Avoidance
- Self-harm
- Negative self-talk
- Substance abuse

Harm Reduction or Harm Mitigation

Harm reduction or mitigation refers to a range of intentional practices and public health policies which lessen the negative social and/or physical consequences associated with various human behaviors, both legal and illegal. Examples of harm reduction or mitigation include but are not limited to:

- Offering clean needle exchange programs, Narcan trainings and accessibility
- Instead of cutting their wrist, an individual can snap a rubber band on their wrist until the emotion passes, or paint their arm red instead