

HOW TO CREATE A COPING KIT

with Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW

When it comes to physical health, nobody thinks twice about having a first aid kit handy. It is smart to be prepared with the necessary tools you may need in case of an emergency. Why can't we do the same with our mental health? This brief article explains how creating a coping kit can be helpful when faced with difficult emotions or a psychological emergency.

When people become overwhelmed by difficult emotions or thoughts it can feel intolerable. Sometimes even when we know deep down what we need to do in the moment to calm ourselves, we are so distressed that we can't think straight! Planning ahead and having a "coping kit" can assist you in tolerating these moments. A coping kit can be a container, a bag or whatever it is that you prefer, that is filled with items that can help you cope in the moment.

Suggestions of items to put in your coping kit:

Use Your 5 Senses. Put things in your coping kit that are comforting and allow you to self-soothe by utilizing your senses, grounding yourself back into the present moment. Some ideas:

sight:

- pictures of your pet, family or friends
- Pictures of your favorite vacation location or one you'd love to visit
- A motivational quote
- A favorite book or magazine

smell:

- Your favorite perfume/scent (or the scent of someone who brings you comfort)
- A candle or body lotion with a soothing scent
- Essential oils

touch:

- Bubble wrap
- Soft fabric
- Fidget toy
- Stress ball
- Wool socks
- Play-Doh or clay

taste:

- Gum
- Hard candy/ sour candy
- mints
- Coffee/juice packet
- Your favorite tea



hear:

- iPod with a playlist of your favorite songs
- Recording of a comforting voice
- A guided meditation on a recording device

Activities you can include:

Put some of your favorite activities in your coping kit, use them as diversions from your unwanted thoughts/emotions or jot your thoughts into a journal to help you process them:

activities:

- A journal and a pen
- A coloring book and pencil crayons
- A crossword
- Sudoku
- Phone applications for coping (Headspace, MindShift)
- A puzzle
- Handouts with reminders of relaxation techniques, or thought restructuring techniques

tips:

- Decorate this box/bag/container to fit your personality!
- Remember to put healthy/helpful items that will make you feel better, not worse!
- You can also put a list of names and numbers of your support system in your kit, to remind you that you have people who can offer you comfort and support.
- Put any of these suggested items in your kit OR items that are completely different. This is for YOU therefore YOU will be able to decide what content will be most helpful in moments of distress.



Kelly Mental Health

build
YOUR OWN
COPING TOOL KIT

Include items in your tool kit that will help you calm down when you feel sad, angry and scared. Let's explore some options by thinking of items that soothe you/calm you down (think about your 5 senses: touch, taste, hear, smell, see).

touch

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taste

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smell

*Which other items
could you include in
your kit?*

see

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hear

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