

STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES

ACTIVITY

Time Needed

40–60 minutes

Materials

Note-taking supplies

Activity Description

Everyone experiences a variety of stress in their day-to-day lives, and sometimes we face stress that feels unsurmountable. Stress can be a trigger for drug use. Drugs can sometimes make us feel less stress in the moment, and it can be tempting to relieve the stress through chemicals. But drugs are not a long-term or safe coping mechanism. We have our own instinctive coping strategies and can learn new ones. The idea behind this activity is to actively identify what you naturally tend to do when you are stressed or facing a challenge and determine if it's an effective strategy for you. You can share your coping strategies with others and learn some new ones. Hopefully you will develop a list of effective strategies that you find work well and some of them will become second nature with practice. Sharing this work with members of your support team can help you reinforce using them in your more vulnerable moments.

Suggested Steps

1. Take notice of your stress.

Take a moment to think about stress you experience in your day-to-day life. Note what you are nervous about. What do you worry about? Is there anything out of the normal routine that has you worried even more than usual?

2. Consider your current coping strategies.

Now take a moment to think about how you generally cope with stress. Many of us cope in different ways, and often it depends on the severity of the stress. Do the ways you cope settle your nerves or do you find your stress never goes away?

3. Create a list.

Generate a list of your current coping mechanisms, noting which ones work best and when you use certain ones.

4. Share and learn.

Meet in a small group to add some new ideas to your list. You could also do this as a larger group gallery walk activity where everyone lists their strategies on flip chart paper around the room and adds to each other's ideas.



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5. Share your list of coping mechanisms with a friend, family member, and/or someone on your support team. Talk to them about how they cope with stress and try using a new strategy from your list if you experience stress over the next week.

6. Find a local or national resource or resources you can call, text, or email in case the stress does become larger than you can handle.



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