

## Coping Strategies & Crisis Planning

Normally we manage stress in our lives – we all have stress of some sort every day. Sometimes we experience severe stress that can leave us feeling overwhelmed and at risk of “losing control.” When we feel distressed enough we are at risk of behaving impulsively. Impulsive actions can be dangerous – some people harm themselves, others might harm others (either verbally or physically), and yet others might abuse alcohol, and/or drugs to seek relief from stress.

By learning to use “Individual Coping Strategies” (i.e. activities we can do on our own that are good for our health rather than destructive) and a “Crisis Plan”, we can learn to manage stress more successfully and avoid behaving impulsively.

Please refer to the following worksheets to help you learn an approach that can help you manage your stress.

### Worksheet # 1: “My Coping Strategies”:

Anything can be a coping strategy; but generally they can be fit into three categories (physical, intellectual and meditative/spiritual). Worksheet #1 gives some examples of each. The blank columns are for you to write down as many strategies that you can think of and are prepared to try. Be sure to write down activities in each of the three columns. Pick 5 strategies (at least one from each category) and write them down on the bottom of worksheet #2 in the order you plan to do them when you start to feel stressed.

### Worksheet # 2: “Coping Strategy Analysis”:

This is an analysis sheet to show you how well your coping strategies have been working. When you are feeling stressed (i.e. you have a thought or feeling you want to change) record the date and time, name your mood (e.g. depressed, anxious etc.) and give it a value from 0 – 100 (the before score). Now do your first coping strategy. After 20-30 minutes re-score your mood (the after score). If you feel the stress level decreasing, just continue until you’re feeling “okay” again. If after 20 or 30 minutes you are not feeling better, switch to your second strategy. Same thing over again – if you need to go to a third, or fourth, or fifth strategy, do this. After trying your 5 strategies, if you are not feeling “okay” again, you should move on to your “crisis plan” (see worksheet # 3).

Keep recording this information every time you use your coping strategies and over time you will be able to tell which strategies work for you and how well. Stick to the ones that work!

### See worksheet #3: “My Crisis Plan”:

Use your “Crisis Plan” if your coping strategies aren’t working. As needed, move from point 1 to point 2 to point 3, etc. Each additional level provides extra support to help you stay in control. In the long run, you will be safest if you can maximize the degree to which you can handle stress on your own (only using external supports as needed). You should consider going to the emergency room if you feel you have tried lower level of supports without relief (especially if you are at risk of harming yourself or others).

You should evaluate your crisis plan on an ongoing basis and make changes to maximize its success.

Share your crisis plan with your “mental health supports” so they can know how you want them to help.

**Worksheet # 1:**

**My Coping Strategies**  
(i.e. things I can do on my own)

Physical	Intellectual	Meditative/Spiritual/ Vegetative
e.g. Walk Progressive-Muscle Relaxation (PMR) Swim Yoga/Tai Chi Sit-ups/Push-ups	e.g. Puzzle Journaling Reading Art/poetry Crosswords	e.g.: Meditation Music Prayer Visual Imagery Yoga/Tai Chi TV/video games

**WORKSHEET #2:**

**Coping Strategy Analysis**

**Use your coping strategies when you have a thought or feeling you want to change!**

**Name your mood and rate its severity from 0 – 100 (0 = no problem ... 100 = the worst ever) both before and after you use your coping strategy.**

<b>Crisis Date/time</b>	<b>Strategy (1-5)</b>	<b>MOOD</b>				<b>MOOD</b>		<b>CONTEXT</b>
		<b>Before</b>		<b>After</b>		<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	

- My 5 Strategies: (things I can do on my own)
- 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)
  - 4)
  - 5)

- Guidelines:
- 1) Have at least one strategy from each category
  - 2) Do them in the same order (1 to 5)
  - 3) Try them for at least 20 minutes each
  - 4) Stop ... when you feel "okay" again

**If you have tried your coping strategies and they aren't working, move on to your "Crisis Plan"!**

## Coping Strategy Analysis

**Use your coping strategies when you have a thought or feeling you want to change!**

**Name your mood** and **rate its severity** from 0 – 100 (*0 = no problem ... 100 = the worst ever*) both before and after you use your coping strategy.

Crisis Date/time	Strategy (1-5)	MOOD Before	MOOD After					CONTEXT

**If you have tried your coping strategies and they aren't working, move on to your "Crisis Plan"!**

## WORKSHEET # 3:

### Crisis Plan

*-used to help control your behaviour when you can't control your thoughts-*

IF I FEEL IN CRISIS after trying my coping strategies (see worksheet #2), I may try the following strategies (in order if possible)

(1) Take “**as needed**” **MEDICATION** ... as prescribed.

My medications: (1) (2)

(2) **TALK TO SOMEONE** ... just to talk (i.e about anything ... not about how I am feeling).

People I can talk to: (1)

& tel. # (2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(3) **BE AROUND PEOPLE** ... just to be with people (i.e. not to talk about how I am feeling).

Places I can go: (1)

(2)

(3)

(4) **TALK TO A MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT** (i.e. anyone who is available & able to keep calm & who I can tell how I'm really feeling & who can help me feel better or help me get to the emergency department if needed)

My supports: (1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

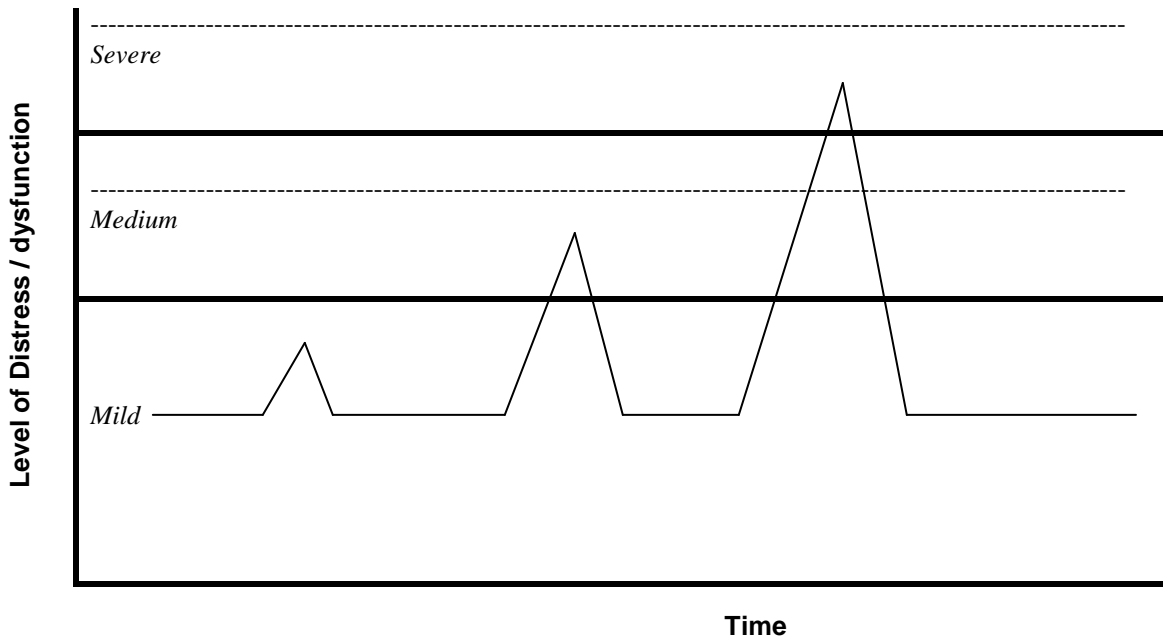
(5)

(5) **GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT**

*These are suggestions that have been helpful for some people but may not be effective for everyone.*

*You may need to move directly to step (4) or (5) depending on your individual circumstances.*

# My Treatment Plan



< 1 = mild	"I can handle it." "I'm in control."	1-2 = medium	"I don't know if I can take it." "I'm losing control."
> 2 = severe	"I can't take it, anymore!!!" "Make it stop, NOW!"	}	"Breaking point" => impulsive behaviour e.g. self-harm, substance use

## 1. Coping Strategies

## 2. Crisis Plan

3. **Comparing Symptoms**, to increase emotional awareness

4. **Therapy**, to help identify & change triggers

5. **Reduce Baseline Stress** by attending to the relevant ...

### Biological Factors:

i.e. "chemical imbalances" & physical health problems

i) ADD "chemical stabilizers" ... i.e. Medication

ii) REMOVE "chemical de-stabilizers" ... i.e. Alcohol, drugs, some medications

iii) CONTINUE doing what works, as recommended

### Psychological Factors:

i.e. "past events that are affecting my present experience"

... often reflected in problems with self-esteem, trust and emotional regulation/control ... addressed by therapy.

### Social/Environmental Factors:

e.g. \$, housing, mental health supports, relationships/lack of

... addressed by education, problem solving, individual/family/couple therapy, building social supports etc., as needed.