

Depression Coping Skills & Tools

- Self Care: eat healthy, exercise daily, get appropriate amount hours of sleep based on the age of the individual, maintain positive relationships with family and friends, engage in fulfilling hobbies or activities.
- Make and keep supportive friendships and other relationships. When depressed, it is important to challenge the inclination to isolate. Connection is one of the greatest tools for fighting depressive symptoms.
- Deep breathing: Take a deep breath in through the nose – pause – then breathe out slowly through the mouth.
- Progressive muscle relaxation: Tense muscle groups in the body one at a time, then relax that muscle group for 15 seconds before moving to the next muscle group
- It is important to acknowledge what can and cannot be controlled, focusing on things that can be controlled.
- Avoid guilt, shame, or blame. Focus instead on problem-solving, and how to move forward.
- Identify and talk about feelings with a trusted adult.
- Break down chores and tasks into smaller steps. This can be motivating and help prevent from feeling overwhelmed.
- Challenge unhealthy or unhelpful thoughts: Avoid thinking traps such as over-generalization, all or nothing thinking, mind reading, and jumping to conclusions. Identify and challenge these unhealthy thoughts and try to replace them with a more helpful thought.
- Practice mindfulness or grounding exercises.
- Draw or write about feelings.
- Listen to music or play a musical instrument.
- Get outside and go for a walk or hike.
- Visualize a calm and peaceful place: notice what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.
- Ask for help, Cuddle, or play with a pet, Get or give a hug.
- Get moving: engage in intensive cardio exercise (such as running) for 30 minutes.
- Stay focused and centered in the present (don't dwell on the past or worry about the future).

Parental Support

- If there are firearms in the home, ensure they are locked up and not accessible to children
- Reach out to a professional or school counselor for help.
- Be responsive instead of reactive when talking to a child.
- Communicate availability and openness to talking about problems and feelings
- Avoid lecturing that may cause disconnection
- Together, come up with a plan to manage screen-time
- Assist with self-care by structuring bedtime and sleeping routines, and encouraging healthy eating practices, and regular exercise.
- Give hugs multiple times everyday
- Maintain consistent family routines and rituals, such as eating dinner together as a family
- Remember that it is not your job to "fix" your child, but to be his or her advocate and cheerleader.