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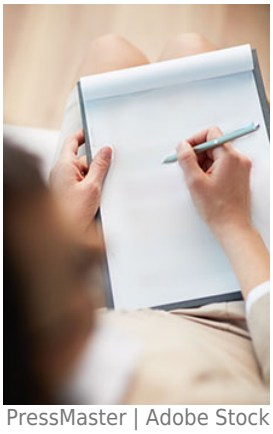
Coping, Crisis and Safety Plans: How to Make One



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Summary: A coping plan (aka safety or crisis plan) is a written list of helpful instructions prepared ahead of time, in order to help guide you (and those that care about you) about what to do (and not do) to support you in times of stress and crisis.

What is Coping, Crisis and Safety Planning?

Life isn't always easy -- in fact, it can get pretty stressful sometimes. During times of stress, it becomes hard to think and deal with things.

The solution? A Coping Plan is a helpful tool where you have written down ahead of time, possible stresses that might happen, and what you and your support network can do to support you.

The plan is created ahead of time, when people are calm. It is not done during a crisis, when people are upset and unable to think clearly.

A Coping Plan can also help during a crisis (which is why it might be called a Crisis Plan); and can also help keep people safe (which is why it can be called a Safety Plan).

Looking for a downloadable template?

Here is a Google doc version that you can download and customize to make your own plan.

Instructions

- Visit this link https://docs.google.com/document/d/19lTNGq7ZtV7F7wBoeBR-f2yBcr3uFZNAuojRGN1D3kk/edit#
- Select File > Download as Word document, or Rich Text Format.

Reasons for Living: Purpose, Hope, Meaning and Belonging

Who do I live for? E.g. mom, dad, siblings, friends, relatives, pets, etc. What do I live for? E.g. future dreams, goals, etc.

When I'm Well (aka "in the Green Zone")

"Green zone" is when we are feeling calm, and can be rational and logical.

What do I look like when I feel well? (i.e. "green zone") E.g. "happy, wanting to keep busy, funny", etc.

What key things help keep me well? E.g. Getting enough sleep; eating healthy; being physically active; getting outside; reducing screen time; taking my medications; staying away from drugs/alcohol, etc.

Triggers and stresses

What are my top triggers and stresses? (e.g. school, work, home)	What are possible ways to cope with each trigger or stress? Or what do you hope to see different?
1.	
2.	
3.	

When I'm Frustrated, Stressed, Sad, Annoyed, Upset ("In the Yellow Zone")

"Yellow Zone" is when someone is starting to get stressed and frustrated. In this zone, we usually do not want deep, logical discussions or problem-solving, but usually want emotional support.

When I'm getting started to get upset, what do I look like? E.g. sad, mad, withdrawn, etc.?

Coping strategies: When upset, what can I do to cope? E.g. going for a walk, talking to someone, distracting myself, etc.)

Self-compassion: What kind things would I say to support someone else in the same situation? E.g. It's okay, you're a good person, etc.

Getting Support from Others: When I'm starting to get overwhelmed, who can I turn to? What can they do? E.g. Listen to me without interrupting; Ask if I want you to give advice, or just listen; accept and empathize with how I'm feeling; ask me if I want a hug.

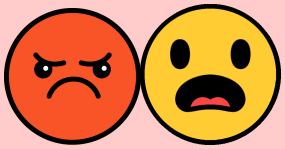
Do's...

What should others **NOT** do?, E.g. Don't blame, criticize or punish me, don't ask too many questions

Don'ts...

When I'm Completely Overwhelmed, in Crisis ("Red Zone", "fight/flight/freeze")

Red zone is when people feel completely overwhelmed. In this zone, your brain is in a "fight/flight/freeze" mode, and you usually cannot think logically.



When I'm feeling completely overwhelmed, what does that look like for me?

Coping: What can I do when overwhelmed? (e.g. take a time out; etc.)

Support from Others: What should others do to support me if I'm in crisis?
E.g. Stay calm yourself; keep things quiet

What should other people **NOT** do?
E.g. Stay calm yourself; keep things quiet

Any other things I need others to do for me
E.g. Look after my pets

Resources in a Crisis

If things don't calm down, where else can we get help?
• Crisis lines

Up to aged 18?
• KidsHelpPhone 1-800-668-6868
Adult aged 18+?
• https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/looking-for-local-resources-support/

Local Emergency Department

My Medications

Name of Medication, Dosage, What it is For

My Professionals and Doctors

Name	Contact Information

About this Document

Written by the eMentalHealth Team. Special thanks to Marjorie Robb, Psychiatrist.

Disclaimer

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