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Positive Coping Skills for PTSD & Dissociation

Find a therapist or physician and begin to address your trauma and PTSD

Educate yourself about trauma and PTSD

Join a support group in person or online for PTSD or trauma

Use relaxation

- Deep Breathing
- Muscle Relaxation
- Meditation/Prayer
- Quiet Music
- Stretching

Find Positive Activities

Apply Coping Skills for PTSD Symptoms

- Tell yourself it's now, not then—these are memories.
- Talk about them with someone you trust.
- Slow down the rapid heart rate and remind yourself it will pass.
- Keep your eyes open during flashbacks.
- Get up and move around.
- Drink cold water or wash your face with a cold wash cloth.
- Call someone you trust.
- Tell yourself you are safe.
- Turn on soft music that is associated with now, not then.
- When having nightmares, get out of bed and orient yourself to the here and now.
- Read a book or do a quiet hobby.
- Do a light exercise to relax your muscles and release the tension.

Write things down so when you can focus again, you can take care of what you need to do.

If prescribed, take the medication as prescribed for your symptoms.

Practice your coping skills daily, even if not having symptoms, so they are more natural to use when having difficulties and needing them.

Volunteer your time to reach outside yourself and focus on others, while increasing your connection to the community and your contribution or self-worth by giving of yourself.

Do basic self-care exercises such as eating regularly and healthy, sleeping regularly, and doing things to care for you.

Journal, read or do something that allow you to spend time in personal reflection, personal growth, personal enjoyment or otherwise, decreases stress and increases inner strength.

Listen to yourself and your personal needs based on your thoughts, your feelings and your gut responses. You know yourself better than anyone. If you feel you need to take some time to work on playing more and being less serious, you most likely do.

Allow yourself to do things that bring you smiles or fun. Sing, play games, play with children, be optimistic about something (even if it seems trivial), learn something new like a hobby.

If necessary for your safety, move geographically.

Begin an exercise program as approved by your physician.

Use grounding exercises to help you manage when triggered. (See the file, Grounding When Triggered on the Trauma page).

Fight unhealthy messages of guilt from the trauma. As a survivor of trauma, you did not ask for the trauma, and you did not do anything to prompt the trauma to occur, even if the perpetrator said you did. Those are games and messages they say to blame the victims of trauma so they can get away with the trauma and leave the victim thinking it is all their fault so hopefully they won't tell. So don't buy into those old messages. They were lies. It wasn't your fault.

Avoid the negative coping skills if at all possible. Alcohol and drugs, self-injury, gambling, etc. and things that put you at risk of feeling worse and doing more harm to yourself. You've already experienced enough harm due to the trauma. Give yourself every opportunity at this point to have the freedom to recover from the trauma you experienced, and to fight the hopelessness and helplessness that comes with it.

You are strong. You survived the trauma. You can make it through the memories and the symptoms of the PTSD. Have faith in yourself. You are so worth it!