



Building Coping Skills Workbook



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER



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Coping With Stress

How you cope with stress can impact how stress affects you. Choosing healthy, positive ways to cope doesn't have to be a challenge. Let your senses do the work.

Take a look at the ideas below. How many might you try?

See: Looking for beauty in what's around you.

- Step outside. Focus on the first tree, plant, or shrub you see.
- Visit a market, and look at the plants or flowers on display.
- Create a space in your home that gives you joy.
- Light a candle and concentrate on the flame.
- Look at the stars at night.



Hear: Listening for calming sounds.

- Listen to music that calms or motivates you.
- Sing, or play an instrument.
- Find an inspiring podcast or audiobook.
- Share your story with someone you care about.
- Listen to sounds from a relaxation app.

Feel: Finding the soothing touch.

- Wrap yourself in a soft blanket.
- Change into cozy clothes.
- Ask for or give a hug to a safe person.
- Pet a dog or cat.
- Take a warm bath or shower.





Taste: Nourishing body and soul.

- Make yourself a non-alcoholic drink (like tea, hot chocolate, sparkling water, or kombucha).
- Treat yourself to some fruit or a small dessert.
- Do something special to your food or drink. (Add nuts or fruit to a salad, for example.)
- Make yourself an easy but nourishing meal.

Smell: Finding comfort in scent.

- Use your favorite lotion, perfume, or cologne.
- Light a scented candle, or try essential oils.
- Walk into a bakery and inhale the scent of fresh bread. Or bake your own.
- Boil cinnamon, orange peels, and cloves



How many new things did you find to try?

Are there others you might try?

Write them here.

Relaxation Techniques

Learn relaxation techniques to reduce stress and anxiety. Try different techniques to find what works best for you. Practice these techniques often and your ability to relax will improve over time.

Listening to music

Listen to your favorite music by itself or play music while using another relaxation technique. Look for new music that is soothing to you and helps you to feel calm and relaxed, such as nature sounds.

Physical exercise

Exercise is a good way to lower stress. It can help you relax by releasing muscle tension in the body. Exercise also releases endorphins, which are chemicals (hormones) your body makes that help relieve pain, reduce stress, and improve your sense of well-being.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Some people cannot relax due to muscle tension. Progressive muscle relaxation is a way to decrease tension in your muscles. This is done by alternating the tensing and relaxing of different muscle groups throughout the body.

- Set aside 15 minutes for this exercise.
- Find a comfortable, calm place where you will not be disturbed. Sitting in a comfortable chair or lying down is preferred.
- Work through the different muscle groups. These include your feet, calves, thighs, hands, upper arm (biceps), buttocks, stomach, neck, shoulders, mouth, eyes, and forehead.
- Follow these steps:
 1. Tension: Take a deep breath in and clench (tighten) one of the muscle groups. Hold your breath for 5 seconds.
 2. Relaxation: Breathe out through pursed lips and relax the muscle group. After 15 seconds of breathing and resting, repeat the same muscle group 2 to 3 times before moving on to the next muscle group.

Breathing exercises

This exercise involves focusing on taking slow, deep, even breaths.

- Set aside 3 to 5 minutes for this exercise.
- Follow these steps:
 1. Slowly breathe in through your nose, feeling your lungs expand your chest.
 2. Hold your breath to a count of 3.
 3. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, feeling the muscles in your face, jaw, and shoulders relax.
 4. Repeat 5 to 10 times or until you feel calm.

Note: If you feel light-headed while doing this exercise, slow your breathing.

Positive thinking

Thinking negative thoughts can affect your health, causing stress and muscle tension. Create some positive statements to replace negative self-talk. Repeat these statements to yourself and use them to motivate you as you cope with changes.

Some examples:

- I am doing the best that I can.
- I respect myself.
- I care for my well-being.
- I will try again.

With practice, positive thinking will help you to reduce stress as you learn to view yourself and your situation in a positive light.

Guided imagery

This is a type of meditation that involves seeing yourself or your surroundings in a way that promotes relaxation, safety, and comfort. It reduces stress and anxiety, and promotes positive thinking. The more you practice, the easier it will become.

- Set aside 10 to 15 minutes for this exercise.
- Find a comfortable, calm place where you will not be disturbed. Turn off the lights, phone, radio, and television. Get into a comfortable position, such as sitting or lying down.
- Listen to a guided imagery recording.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils from plants as therapy to improve well-being. Some oils, such as lavender, are thought to produce a calming effect. The oils can be inhaled or applied in a diluted form to the skin. Oils to try:

- Lavender for insomnia, congestion, headaches, and stress
- Peppermint for nausea and headaches
- Lemon for air purification and nausea

Other resources

- Look for other resources, such as books, music with guided meditation and mobile apps to support relaxation and stress reduction.
- It is good to practice relaxation techniques often, even when you are not stressed or anxious. We can help you and give you more information to help you practice correctly and safely.
- Visit Integrative Health for free recordings and resources: wexnermedical.osu.edu/integrative-health/resources.
- Stress Management: Learn tools to relieve stress, including breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, and other techniques at go.osu.edu/stress_tools.
- Stress Management: Practice mindfulness and meditation at go.osu.edu/less_stress.

Sleeping Better: Calming the Body With How We Breathe

How we breathe is closely tied to our emotions. When we are anxious, frustrated, or stressed, our breathing speeds up and becomes more shallow. On the other hand, our breathing slows and deepens when we feel relaxed.

This relationship also works both ways. By changing how we breathe, we can calm the physical effects of our emotions, which can help set the stage for restful sleep.



Start with a breathing exercise

To get started, try the breathing exercise below. This strategy, called paced breathing, uses longer exhales (breathing out) than inhales (breathing in). This particular pace of breathing can help our brain switch over from “fight or flight” to a more calm and relaxed state.

Paced Breathing Exercise: Step by Step

1. Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes if you are comfortable.
2. Take a few moments to settle in and focus gently on the sounds and sensations of your breathing.
3. Give yourself permission to let go of stressors and worries for a few moments. If you get distracted by thoughts or mental chatter, that is normal. Practice noticing the thoughts and gently returning focus to the sounds and sensations of breathing.
4. Breathe gently in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe out as if you wanted to make a candle flame flicker but not completely go out. If breathing with just your nose or mouth is more comfortable than alternating, that is okay. Stick with what is comfortable for you.
5. While taking slow, comfortable breaths, gently lengthen your exhale, making it slightly longer than breathing in. You might start with breathing in for a count of 3 seconds, and out for a count of 6 seconds. Everyone is different, so a comfortable pace may be different for you.
6. Continue the exercise for a few minutes. If completing at bedtime, you may naturally transition to sleep. If practicing at other times, open your eyes at the end of your practice and take a few moments to stretch and orient to your surroundings before continuing with your day.

What Is Depression?

Symptoms of Depression

Depressed mood	Loss of interest or pleasure	Weight gain or loss	Lower concentration
Trouble sleeping	Tired nearly every day	Feelings of worthlessness	Returning thoughts of death
Symptoms must cause significant distress.		Symptoms must last for at least two weeks.	

Key Facts

- About 1 in 10 people will have depression during their lifetime.
- Most people have their first depressive episode between ages 20 and 30.
- While certain factors increase the risk of developing depression, it can affect anyone, at any age, and of any race or ethnic group.

Risks for Depression

- Family history of depression or similar disorders.
- Poverty, unemployment, social isolation and other stressful life events.
- Regular drug and alcohol use.

Psychotherapy

(Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)

- CBT works by changing self-defeating thoughts and behaviors.
- CBT has been found to be equally and sometimes more effective than medicine in many cases.
- CBT is the most researched form of psychotherapy for depression.

Medicine

(Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors)

- SSRIs increase the level of serotonin (a chemical related to depression) in the brain.
- Studies suggest that SSRIs are the most effective when used to treat severe depression.
- SSRIs don't work overnight—it might take up to 6 weeks before they reach their full effect.

A combination of both psychotherapy and medicine has been found to be the most effective treatment for depression.

Other Facts

- Over ½ of those diagnosed with depression also suffer from anxiety.
- 60% of those who die by suicide suffer from depression or a related mood disorder.
- Physical exercise has been found to have a significant antidepressant effect.
- Depressive episodes also occur during bipolar disorder, along with manic episodes.

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a mental and physical reaction to perceived threats. In small doses, anxiety is helpful. It protects us from danger and focuses our attention on problems. But when anxiety is too severe, or occurs too often, it can become debilitating.

Symptoms of Anxiety

Uncontrollable worry	Feeling very nervous	Sleep problems	Tense muscles
Poor concentration	Increased heart rate	Upset stomach	Avoiding fear

Types of Anxiety

Generalized Anxiety: An excessive amount of anxiety or worry in several areas of life, such as job responsibilities, health, finances, or minor concerns (such as finishing housework).

Phobias: A very intense fear of a specific situation or object, which is out of proportion to its actual threat. For example, a fear of giving speeches or of spiders could be a phobia.


Panic: An extreme anxious response where a person has a panic attack. During a panic attack, the individual has many physical symptoms, and is overwhelmed by a feeling of dread.


How Does Anxiety Grow?





Anxiety drives people to avoid the things that scare them. When a “scary” thing is avoided, they feel a sense of relief right away, but the relief does not last long. The next time a similar threat comes up, it feels even scarier. This creates a harmful cycle of avoidance, and the anxiety gets worse.

Anxiety Treatments

 **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**
CBT is a very effective treatment for anxiety. During CBT, the unhealthy thinking patterns that create anxiety are identified and challenged. Often, CBT will include parts of exposure therapy and relaxation skills.

 **Relaxation Skills**
Various techniques, such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness, give immediate relief of the symptoms of anxiety. With practice, relaxation skills will become a powerful way to manage anxiety in the moment.

 **Exposure Therapy**
During exposure therapy, the therapist and their client create a plan to gradually face anxiety-producing situations to break the cycle of avoidance. With enough exposure, the anxiety loses its power, and symptoms get less.

 **Medicine**
Medicine can help control the uncomfortable symptoms of anxiety. However, because medicine does not fix the cause of the anxiety, it is typically used with therapy. The need for medicine varies greatly, case-by-case.

What Is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness defined by extreme emotional highs (mania) and lows (depression). Treatment usually includes a combination of psychotherapy and medicine.

↓ Depression (the “lows”)

Typically lasts at least 2 weeks.
Symptoms must cause impairment and include:

- Depressed mood
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Returning thoughts of death
- Fatigue nearly every day

↑ Mania (the “highs”)

Typically lasts at least 1 week.
Symptoms must cause impairment and include:

- Actions more focused on reaching goals
- Inflated self-esteem and euphoria
- Racing thoughts
- Seeks pleasure without regard for consequences
- Decreased need for sleep

⚠️ What does mania really look like?

During mania, people lose the ability to make rational decisions. Common behaviors include emptying bank accounts for an immediate thrill, leaving a loving spouse or using dangerous drugs. Imagine your body has a motor – which you can’t turn off – that’s pushing you through bad decision after bad decision. When the motor finally shuts off, the damage has already been done.

🧠 Psychotherapy

Therapy for bipolar disorder often includes learning to recognize episodes of mania and depression before they get out of hand.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a common and well-supported treatment for BPD.

💊 Medicine

Medicine is a normal part of treatment for bipolar disorder. It can be very effective.

A type of medication referred to as “mood stabilizers” are often used to manage emotional swings.

▼ ▼

A combination of both psychotherapy and medicine has been found to be the most effective treatment for bipolar disorder.

📍 Common Misconceptions

“I sometimes feel really sad one minute, then happy the next. Is this bipolar disorder?”

The ups-and-downs of bipolar disorder are *usually* longer lasting than people think. Periods of depression typically last two weeks or more, while mania lasts a week or more. The symptoms of bipolar disorder are also much more extreme than regular mood swings.

“People are happy when they’re manic.”

Sometimes, but mania is usually a scary experience. Mania often comes with feelings of irritability and being unable to stop or slow down. Plus, mania almost always ends poorly.

“Someone with bipolar disorder shouldn’t use antidepressants because they’ll become manic.”

The decision to use antidepressants should be made on a case-by-case basis by a doctor. Often, the benefits of antidepressants far outweigh the risks, and they are an essential part of treatment.

What Is Psychosis?

Psychosis describes conditions that affect the mind when there is some loss of contact with reality. When someone becomes ill in this way, it is called a psychotic episode. During this time, the person may not know what is real and what is not real. Getting treatment early increases the chance of a recovery.

Psychotic Episode Behaviors

A person having a psychotic episode may have:

- Delusions (false beliefs)
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that others do not see or hear)
- Nonsense speech
- Behavior that does not fit the situation

They may also have:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Problems being social
- Trouble functioning in everyday life

Is psychosis the same thing as schizophrenia?

No. Schizophrenia is a mental illness that has periods of psychosis, but someone with psychosis may not be schizophrenic.

A person must have psychotic symptoms for at least six months in order to be diagnosed with schizophrenia. But a person can have psychosis and never be diagnosed with schizophrenia or any other mental illness. This is because there are many different causes of psychosis, such as being sleep deprived, some medical conditions, certain prescription medicines, and abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Early Warning Signs

A person will often show changes in their behavior before psychosis develops, such as:

- Drop in grades or job performance
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Suspicious or paranoid ideas
- Uneasy feeling around other people
- Spending more time alone
- Intense new ideas, strange feelings, or having no feelings at all
- Caring less about personal hygiene or appearance
- Hard time telling reality from fantasy
- Confused speech or trouble communicating

Any one of these warning signs by itself may not mean that there is a problem, but someone with many of these should talk to a mental health professional.

People Can Recover

It is possible for a person to recover from psychosis with early diagnosis and the right treatment. Many people who get early treatment never have another psychotic episode. For other people, recovery means the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life, even if psychotic symptoms return sometimes.

What is Borderline Personality Disorder?

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is an illness marked by an ongoing pattern of changing moods, self-image, and behavior. Someone with BPD is often impulsive and has problems in relationships. They also may have intense episodes of anger, depression, and anxiety that can last from a few hours to days.

Many people with BPD often report going through traumatic life events, such as abuse, being abandoned, or dealing with adversity in childhood. Others may have been exposed to unstable and hostile conflicts in their lives.

Signs of BPD

People with BPD often have mood swings and seem uncertain about how they see themselves and their role in the world. As a result, their interests and values can change quickly.

People with BPD also tend to view things in extremes, such as all good or all bad. Their opinions of other people can also change quickly. They may see someone as a friend one day and an enemy the next day. These shifting feelings can lead to intense and unstable relationships.

Key symptoms of BPD (criteria):

1. Tries to avoid being abandoned, whether real or imagined. For example, they may cut off communication with someone in anticipation of being left by them.
2. A pattern of intense and unstable relationships with family, friends and loved ones, often swinging from extreme closeness and love, to extreme dislike or anger.
3. Distorted and unstable self-image or sense of self.
4. Impulsive and often dangerous behaviors, such as spending sprees, unsafe sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, and binge eating.
5. Self-harming behavior, such as cutting.
6. Recurring thoughts of suicidal behaviors or threats.
7. Intense moods that change quickly, with each episode lasting from a few hours to a few days.
8. Chronic feelings of emptiness.
9. Inappropriate, intense anger, or problems controlling anger.
10. Hard time trusting people, which sometimes goes with fearing other people's intentions.
11. Feeling cut off from oneself, seeing oneself from outside one's body, or feelings of unreality.

Not everyone with borderline personality disorder has every symptom. Some people have just a few, and others have many.

Symptoms can be triggered by what seem to be ordinary events, such as being apart while a loved one travels for work. How severe the symptoms are also depends on the person's level of illness.

Adapted from National Institutes of Health, Borderline Personality Disorder (12/2017).
www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder/index.shtml

Mindfulness Meditation

The goal of **mindfulness meditation** is simple: to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. As you practice, you'll find that this is easier said than done.

During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It is normal that your mind will wander. You will simply bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing, again and again.

Follow the instructions below to begin practicing mindfulness meditation.

Time and Place

Aim to practice daily for 15 to 30 minutes. More frequent, consistent, and longer-term practice leads to the best results. However, some practice is better than no practice.

Find a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices, and set a timer for your desired practice length.

Posture

- ❖ Sit in a chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
- ❖ Straighten your back, but not to the point of stiffness.
- ❖ Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
- ❖ If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
- ❖ Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
- ❖ If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, feel free to take a break or adjust.

Awareness of Breathing

Because the sensations of breathing are always present, they are useful as a tool to help you focus on the present moment. Whenever you become distracted during meditation, turn your focus back to breathing.

Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose or mouth, the rise and fall of your belly, and the feeling of air being exhaled back into the world. Notice the sounds that accompany each inhalation and exhalation.

Wandering Mind

It's normal that your thoughts will wander during mindfulness meditation. At times, it might feel like a constant battle to maintain focus on your breathing. Don't worry—that's normal. Instead of struggling against your thoughts, simply notice them without judgment. Acknowledge that your mind has wandered, and return your attention to breathing. Expect to repeat this process again and again.

Mindfulness Countdown

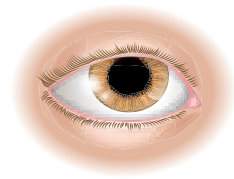
Slow down and calm down.

Countdown 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 using your 5 senses. If you can't do any of these, just replace it with something you can do.

First, take 3 slow belly breaths.

5

List 5 things you can see.



4

List 4 things you can feel.



3

List 3 things you can hear.



2

List 2 things you can smell.



1

List 1 thing you can taste.



Anger Iceberg

Your anger may just be the tip of the iceberg

The Anger Iceberg represents the idea that, although anger is on the outside, other emotions may be hidden beneath the surface. These other feelings – such as sadness, fear, or guilt – may be causing other feelings that impact your anger. By exploring what is beneath the surface, you can gain insight into what is giving it power.

For example, if your anger is fueled by jealousy, you may benefit from working on communication skills. If your anger is caused by stress, you may benefit from developing habits for self care.

Practice getting below the surface

Imagine a friend is facing a situation that is similar to one of your own anger triggers. What emotions do you think they might feel, other than anger?

In your family, or in the culture you grew up in, what emotions do people freely express?

What emotions do they keep to themselves?

Imagine a person who handles difficult emotions, such as sadness, fear, or hurt, effectively. How do they show these emotions? What do they do to cope with them?

Anger is sometimes used to cover up other emotions that make a person feel vulnerable, such as hurt or shame. Can you think of a time you expressed anger in order to cover up another emotion you were feeling?

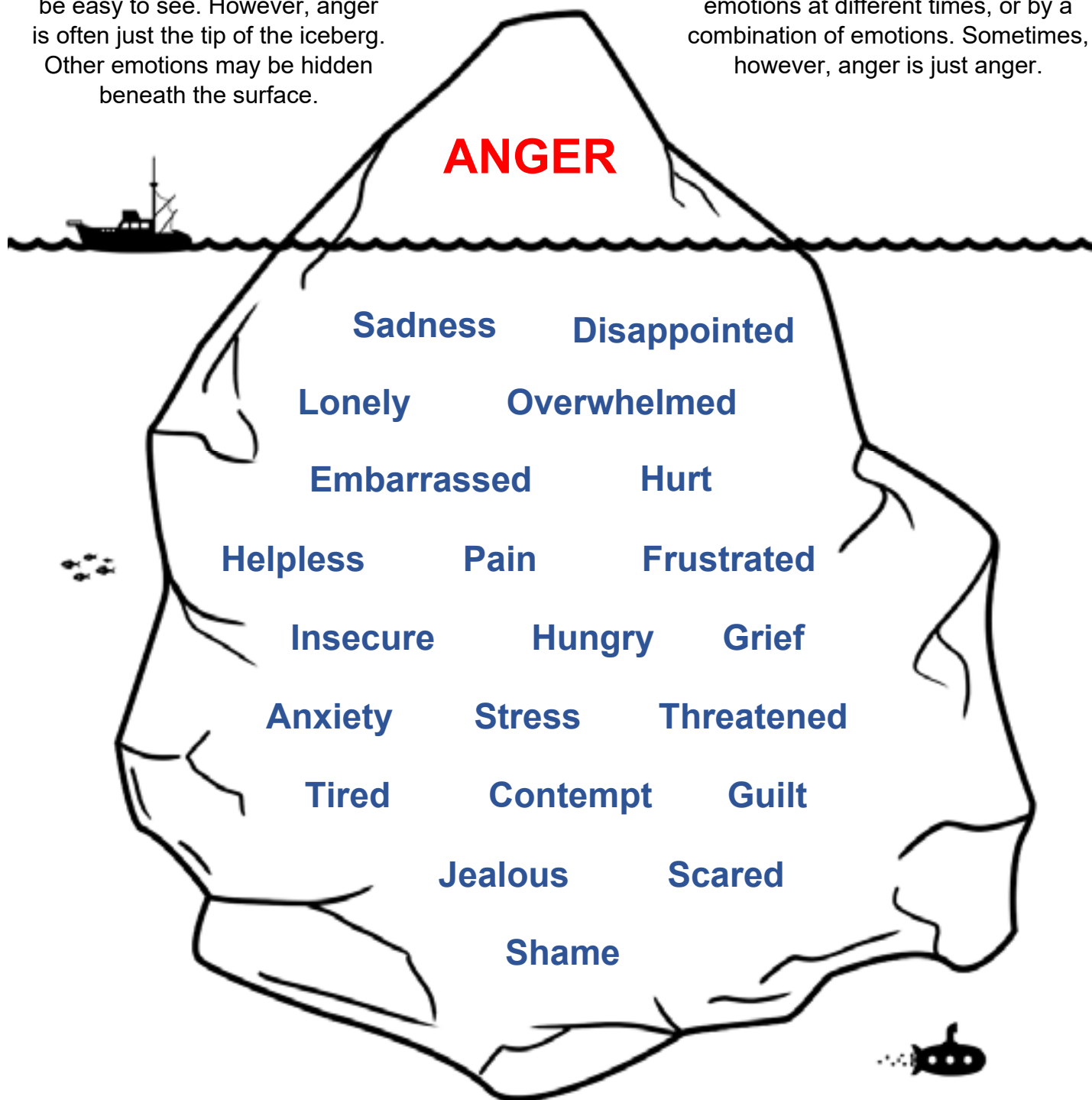
Anger Iceberg

In some families, anger is seen as more acceptable than other emotions. A person might express anger in order to mask emotions that cause them to feel vulnerable, such as hurt or shame.

Anger triggers are people, places, situations, and things that set off anger. Your triggers can provide clues about the emotions behind your anger.

Anger is an emotion that tends to be easy to see. However, anger is often just the tip of the iceberg. Other emotions may be hidden beneath the surface.

Anger may be fueled by different emotions at different times, or by a combination of emotions. Sometimes, however, anger is just anger.



Happiness, Joy, and Suffering

What is the difference between happiness and joy?

Happiness...	Joy...
Comes from the outside (external)	Comes from the inside (internal)
Depends on the circumstances	Act of will
Having what you want	Wanting what you have
Feeling euphoric	Feeling content
Effect	Cause
Result	Foundation
Comes and goes	Constant
Temporary	Lasting

Helpful quotes

- *When we avoid the legitimate suffering that results from dealing with problems, we also avoid the growth that problems demand from us.* - M. Scott Peck
- *The truth that many people never understand, until it is too late, is that the more you try to avoid suffering the more you suffer. This is because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you in proportion to your fear of being hurt.* - Thomas Merton
- *The seed of suffering in you may be strong. But don't wait until you have no more suffering before allowing yourself to be happy.* - Thich Nhat Hanh
- *We are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full.* - Marcel Proust
- *Letting go gives us freedom, and freedom is the only condition for happiness. If, in our heart, we still cling to anything – anger anxiety or possessions – we cannot be free.*
- Thich Nhat Hanh

Did your idea of suffering change after reading these quotes?

Did you connect with some quotes, but not others?

My Safety Plan

Warning Signs/Triggers: Thoughts, images, mood, and/or behaviors that you have when you start to think about suicide or feel very depressed, or if here for other reasons, what brought you to the hospital:

Internal Coping Strategies: Things I can do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person.

People (family/friends) and social settings that provide distraction:

Name:	Name:	Name:
Phone:	Phone:	Phone:
Place:	Place:	Place:

People I can ask for help:

Name:	Name:	Name:
Phone:	Phone:	Phone:

Professional organizations (mental health provider) I can ask for help:

Name:	Name:	Name:
Phone:	Phone:	Phone:

Tips to make your home a safer place

- Check your home carefully for items that need to be removed, thrown away, or stored at another location.
- Remove all firearms (even antique ones that you think do not work).
- Lock away ALL medicines, including over the counter ones.
- Lock up and monitor medicines that are prescribed and must be taken.
- Remove or lock up any toxic materials.

Warning signs of suicide

- Withdrawal from friends, family, and social activities.
- Increased feelings of hopelessness: belief that things will never get better and nothing will ever change.
- Talking of feeling suicidal: directly: “I want to kill myself” or indirectly: “I won't be a problem for much longer.”
- Putting themselves down: “I am no good” or “I am a bad person.”
- Putting affairs in order, giving away possessions.
- Loss of energy, loss of pleasure in activities that were previously enjoyed.
- Increased complaints of physical symptoms.
- Change of eating habits or sleep pattern.
- Deterioration of work or school performance.
- Increased anxiety.
- Increasing hostility or anger to others.
- The recent loss of a family friend or relationship can be a trigger for suicide.

Getting help

If you feel like harming yourself or think someone else is at risk, it is important to seek help right away. Go to the nearest emergency department or call for help.

Resources include:

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988
- Suicide Hotline: 614-221-5445
- Seniors Suicide Hotline: 614-294-3309
- Mental Health of America: 614-221-1441 (free counseling)
- TEXT Crisis Line, text "4HOPE" to 741-741

If you feel unsafe at any time, call 988 or 911, or go to the nearest emergency department.

Emergency Department at
Ohio State University Hospital
410 W. 10th Ave., Columbus, OH 43210

Emergency Department at
Ohio State East Hospital
181 Taylor Ave., Columbus, OH 43203



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