

## Coping: 'What People do to alleviate the Stress and Pain caused by Negative Events or Situations'

We cannot lead a life without anything negative in it. Half of the people experiences something traumatic in their life. As a consequence, people can get depressed, confused or anxious. Learning to deal with these emotions has a big effect on our happiness. However, coping also is important for the smaller setbacks of daily life.

These are 3 ways to use 'coping strategies' as a way to become happier:

1. **Finding meaning through 'expressive writing'**. Write about the saddest and most painful experiences of your life. Describe the experience in detail and research your reactions and deepest feelings toward it. Do this for 3 to 5 consecutive days for 15-30 minutes at a time. It is the act of writing itself that makes this exercise so powerful. Writing helps you to organize your thoughts and memories in a coherent way, creating a story out of what happened. This analysis can help you to find meaning in what happened.
2. **Try to get something positive from a trauma**. This exercise has 3 steps. 1) Acknowledge that the trauma has caused you a lot of pain and suffering. Think about what you did in this situation that makes you proud. 2) Think about how you've grown as a result of your loss. Do you now have a different outlook on life? 3) Think of how the trauma has positively influenced your relationships. Have they become closer or more intimate?
3. **Coping via a thought discussion**. When something bad happens, we suffer from negative thoughts and feelings (I am not worth anything, I am unattractive). These thoughts are usually automatic and too pessimistic. Take the next 5 steps to work with these thoughts: 1) describe the nature of the setback very objectively (my best friend hasn't called me in 3 weeks) 2) identify the negative thoughts that surround the problem (she must hate me) 3) What are the consequences of the problem (I feel bad and lonely) 4) question your negative thoughts (she has never did anything to show that she hates me) 5) think of more optimistic explanations for the problem (she has been very busy).