

The Coping Skills Kit



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Stress and CFS Symptoms

In the Power Up model, stress is viewed as a factor that can perpetuate the condition, not the cause. The root cause is overtaxing the body's energy reserves. Low energy is viewed as a real physical problem, not a misperception. Other symptoms may be a different story.



Symptoms Other than Fatigue

Some CFS symptoms, such as pain, burning sensations, headaches, stomach distress, and sensitivity to light, sound, smell, or chemicals, may be more directly related to stress. To be fair, who wouldn't be stressed out having such a debilitating and mysterious illness? This burden is added to the normal human stress of environment, negative thinking, and past trauma.

If the symptoms travel to different parts of the body, come and go depending upon your mood, or are relieved when your focus changes, it is likely they are psychosomatic in origin. If this is the case, then reducing stress should result in those symptoms decreasing. If symptoms persist despite mental adjustments, then please consult your physician to see if there are medical issues to address.

The Need for Structure

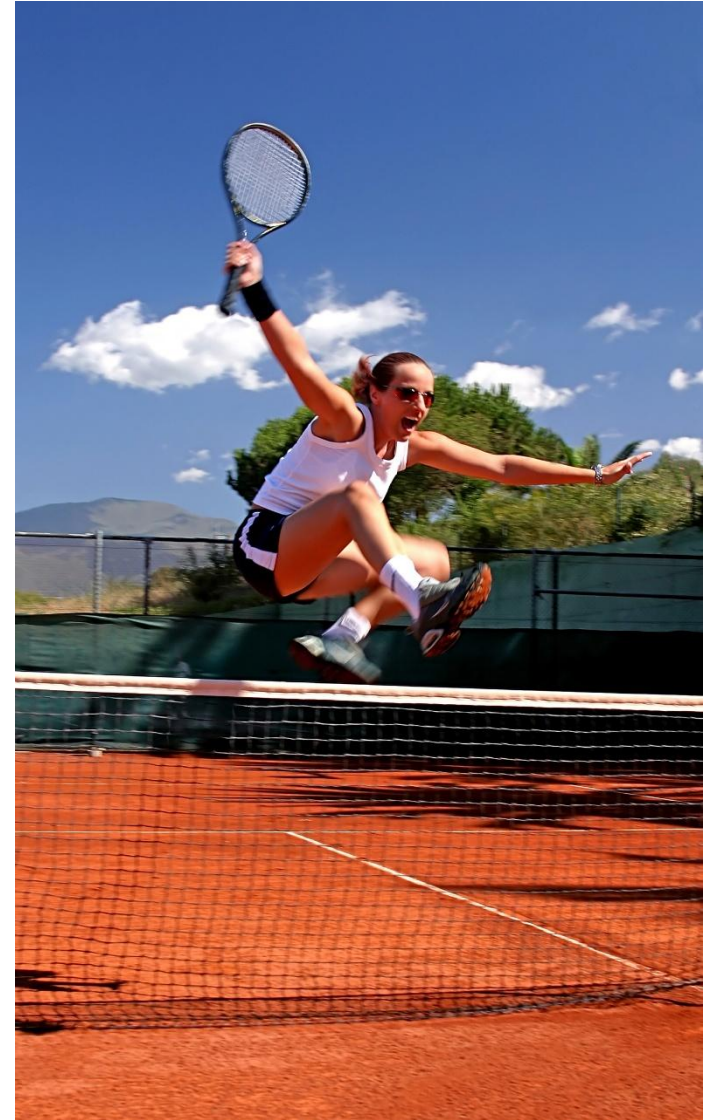
People hate to feel out of control. If there is a problem, we need a plan. Developing a plan and a positive outlook goes a long way toward feeling more relaxed.

Read the following statement out loud five times per day, preferably in the morning. If desired, make changes so it fits you better.

Although I have been weak for some time, there is nothing physically wrong with my body. My core energy is low, but it can be built up. I can recover by staying calm, pacing myself, and doing my exercises each day. It will take time, but I will get there. If I overdo things and crash, I will survive. I have gotten through it before. I can learn from every experience and do better in the future. Recovery is a process. At least now I am developing a workable plan. I am building hope.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Visual imagery tends to affect us emotionally in a deeper way. Visualize yourself managing each day successfully. Picture yourself performing cognitive exercises, setting appropriate limits on activities, and doing your physical exercises. Then, see yourself becoming progressively stronger and engaging in more activities you love, and eventually having the lifestyle you truly desire. Spend five minutes per day visualizing these scenarios.



Choose a Better Path



Possessing effective emotional management skills is an essential factor in having a happy and successful life.

The Positive Path

Change your life by focusing on being happy and relaxed one day at a time



1. Positive activities- The 4 L's (love, labor, learning, leisure).
2. Spirituality- maintain the positive emotions of love, peace, and joy.
3. Truth- focus on keeping thoughts logical and positive.
4. Meaning- Be involved in good causes. Be passionate about developing talents.

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle for Good Emotional and Physical Health



- Engage in regular exercise
- Relax and take breaks
- Get a good night's sleep
- Drink lots of water
- Maintain a healthy diet (Eat in moderation, avoid too much sugar, drink lots of water, eat fruits and vegetables)

Create a Bright Future with Today's Goals



1. Plan activities in areas that add joy and growth to your life (music, sports, reading, art, service).
2. Motivate yourself by remembering that making self-development a high priority will change your life.
3. Build good habits by setting small, achievable goals.

Mindfulness

The Buddhist practice of mindfulness means being fully aware of one's thoughts, actions, and feelings in the present moment, non-judgmentally. The end goal is to experience life more fully and richly. Not judging is important because judging oneself or others or the situation at hand typically leads to negative emotions that cloud the moment. As we seek inner peace and contentment, it is important to give the pursuits of each day our full attention. Psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn had this to say about mindfulness:

Fundamentally, mindfulness is a simple concept. Its power lies in its practice and its applications. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality.

Meditation



Meditation is an ancient Eastern practice. It seems to tap into the brain's affinity for patterns and rhythm. Meditation helps people in two powerful ways. First, it trains our ability to focus and be in the moment. Secondly, it helps us to relax. Research has shown that meditation produces small to moderate reductions in multiple dimensions of psychological stress, similar to exercise or antidepressants. Meditation reduces stress indirectly by calming the mind and body. It creates a mental state more conducive to problem-solving.

Preparing for Meditation

Meditation is typically practiced while sitting cross-legged on a thin cushion or a yoga mat. If sitting in this position is uncomfortable due to a physical condition, it is acceptable to sit in a chair instead. There is a correct placement of your hands for balanced energy flow. Make a circle by touching your pointing finger on each hand to your thumb. Then rest your hands on your leg just above the knees. If thoughts intrude while you are focusing on the object, merely refocus without making any judgment about your ability. Take deep, slow breaths from the nose while meditating. The longer the time between breaths, the better the relaxation response.

Breathing Exercises

Sit down with your hand placed on your abdomen. Then take a deep, slow breath from your abdomen and slowly release it. Notice how the extra oxygen makes your body tingle and feel more alive. Hold your breath after exhaling for as long as you comfortably can. Then repeat this pattern of breathing. Become aware of your surroundings and surrender to the moment. Performing this exercise in any setting for just a few minutes can help you slow things down and feel more relaxed.

Meditation Methods

Meditation can be practiced effectively by focusing on a small object for 10 to 15 minutes or more, twice per day. This is a type of Zen meditation, and it requires the greatest concentration. In my estimation, this practice also produces the best results. There are other methods that are less rigorous. One effective method is to close your eyes and visualize a symbol, such as a star, a lit candle, or a word, such as “truth.” Some people like more active ways to feel centered. They might prefer to practice yoga or to spend time out in nature.

Stay Emotionally Balanced



Notice when you feel depressed, tense, or negative and try to quickly regain your positive focus.

First analyze your inner needs: tired, bored, hungry, lonely?

Next, consider if problem-based negative emotions have crept in: Angry, anxious, depressed, guilty, frustrated, shame.

The Key Principle of Emotions



It is not what happens to us that causes negative emotions, but how we **choose** to think about it.

THE ABC Theory – Albert Ellis

**A (event) causes B (thought)
that produces C (emotional
reaction)**

Why Can't People Just Decide to Think Rationally and Do the Right Things?

Neuroscience has proven that we have a dual mind system, an emotional system and a logical system. The emotional system is much more powerful and very persistent in seeking its own way.



The Team of Rivals

Logical System

(Logic, planning, organization, awareness, self-control)



Emotional System

(Emotions, desires, creative thinking, automatic patterns, wisdom)



This hidden system operates largely subconsciously. However, we can increase our awareness.

The Thoughts and Feelings of the Heart Can Be Very Different Than Those of the Logical Mind

Other words for the emotional system are “heart” and “inner self.”

I “should” versus I “want”



It Takes Training to Learn the Skills to Successfully Manage the Inner Self



We can be upset and not know why.

We can avoid doing the right things or following through on responsibilities.

We can give in to impulses we know are self-defeating or hurtful to others.

We experience conflict because the heart often has ideas and impulses that are very different than those of the logical mind.

The heart is very clever and gets us to lie to ourselves or make excuses to justify bad behavior.

The Secret of Change



We can **communicate** with the emotional mind. The logical mind can serve as a wise friend to the inner self.

We can alter negative emotions with truth.

We can also reprogram the heart to act differently. Later positive experiences cement in the new behaviors.



What's in Your Heart?

Play detective- discover what thoughts are causing the negative emotions. If unsure, use the magic list method.

Magic List Method



1. Tell your inner self you would like to know what the issues of concern are.
2. Write on a piece of paper the five greatest possibilities for what could be bothering you. Be creative and try to not censor anything.
3. Slowly read the list out loud to yourself.
4. As you read the list, note which issues bring forth the greatest levels of emotion. (This is how the inner self communicates about its troubles.)

Tied Down with Negative Thoughts?



HE FOUND THAT HIS ARMS AND LEGS WERE TIGHTLY FASTENED TO THE GROUND.

Distraction through Activities

- Music
- Exercise
- Reading
- Art
- Socializing
- Work
- Playing with pets
- Games



Observation



Avoid struggling with unwanted thoughts. Just observe them and watch them **slide by** like clouds in the sky.

The Contemplation Period

People easily fall into a trap of feeling sad, angry, or guilty about the past and anxious or hopeless about the future. In short, they make themselves miserable by focusing on things they have little control over. We can change our lives by choosing how much time to spend dwelling on problems each day. A focused 15-minute contemplation period is recommended. This time is used to feel emotions and to come up with solutions to problems. It is OK to have more than one contemplation period, but it is suggested that the total be less than one hour per day.

OK, that's enough on that problem. I can't do anything about it right now. If I dwell on it, it will ruin my mood. I need to keep busy and move on. I'll think about it tomorrow.

Defusion Techniques

- Picture thoughts floating away on leaves on a stream (or on a conveyor belt.)
- Repetition – e.g. Lemon, lemon, lemon or Milk, milk, milk.
- “I notice I’m having the thought that
- Hear thoughts sung to Happy Birthday – or other tunes.
- Radio or baseball play-by-play announcer. “It’s the top of the fifth inning. Joe is having a meltdown.”
- Thank your mind. “Thank you mind for that interesting thought.”
- Naming the story. “Here is another ‘I am such a terrible person’ story.”
- Say thoughts ultra-slow or fast, or in a silly voice.

Learn to Surf the Waves of Negativity



Commentary



We can make comments that provide a better perspective and give ourselves permission to let go and move right on.

Critical Thoughts (judging)

“Thanks for your help wicked witch!”



Angry Thoughts

“Whoa, Hulk. Take a chill pill!”



Overanxious Thoughts

“The sky is falling! The sky is falling!”



Acceptance of Reality

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the ability to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Stay Positive

Examples of Turning Thoughts

I will never be able to learn this.

- I can try. If I take it one step at a time it might begin to make sense.

No one at the party will talk to me.

- I can say hello to people and see what happens. There are friendly people everywhere.

No one is hiring. Why even bother looking?

- The situation may be difficult, but the more businesses I approach the better the chances.

Correct Your Thinking Errors

Negative emotions spring mainly from false thoughts and beliefs.

Exaggeration

Is it really that big?



Judging and Labeling

Labels are for soup cans

“Stupid, worthless, jerk, hopeless, loser”



Not Accepting Reality

If we just run faster, we
will get out of here.

*I can't believe he did that,
what a jerk!*

*I should have done better
on that test.*

*I feel so hurt she did not
want to be my friend.*



Predicting

Are you 100 percent sure this will happen?

I'll never get a job. I have no experience.



The Editing Technique

- a) Write out your distressing thoughts about the problem of concern.
- b) Cross out lines containing exaggerating, judging and labeling, denial of reality, or predicting from your self-talk.
- c) Use the Key Thoughts Guide below to correct your thinking:
 - What are some logical and rational statements I can make to help me view this problem more clearly?
 - Am I being positive in my attitude? What are some encouraging declarations I can make? What things are working in my favor?
 - If the worst did come to pass, how could I handle it constructively?
- d) Read the new statement five times.

Self-Worth Protection Formula

Dealing with Criticism from Self and Others



1. Is this criticism 100% accurate, or do I just strongly *feel* that way? What is the evidence that it is not totally true?

2. I can practice humility and accept my weaknesses honestly so I can make them into strengths.

I am not as effective in _____ as I would like to be.
I could improve by _____.

3. I know I have worth. All people have equal value and great potential. I can increase in knowledge and continue to progress.

The Anger Management Card



When angry, just read through these questions:

1. Why is the person acting this way—bad mood, not understanding the situation clearly, personality trait?
2. What did I do to possibly contribute to the problem?
3. What emotion lies beneath my anger—frustration, hurt, jealousy, resentment, guilt, or insecurity?
4. What rule of mine is this person breaking? Does he have the same standard? Can I accept his behavior and not judge him?
5. Am I being fully logical about this problem, or do I need to calm down or take a time-out in order to think more clearly?

6. What would the likely consequences be if I express my anger? Considering these consequences, would acting out be worth it in 30 days?
7. Is there any solution or compromise that would resolve this situation, or should I just let it go?
8. What could I say to appropriately express my feelings?