



## *The Coping Skills Toolbox*

### **What exactly is a Coping Skills Toolbox?**

It is a collection of your various favorite and healthy items that you can use when you are feeling anxious, panicky, or distressed.

It has sometimes been recommended that students create a coping skills toolbox for those times when they need something to help them get through an anxiety attack, panic attack, or any kind of distressed situation.

Because there are nearly an infinite number of ways to cope, it is not necessarily important whether you cope like everyone else. All that matters is that you find effective coping methods that will help you to build resilience and to thrive.



*Ms. Patrice Davis, Intervention Supervisor*



# A Coping Skills Toolbox

<p>Let's make a Coping Skills Toolbox!</p>	<p><b>What Is It?</b> A Coping Skills Toolbox is a place for you to keep things that calm you down in periods of distress. If you have everything gathered in one place, it's easier to remember to use your coping skills rather than using negative behaviors.</p>	<p><b>Self-Soothing</b> (Comforting yourself through your five senses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Something to touch. (Ex: stuffed animal, stress ball)</li> <li>2. Something to hear. (Ex: music, meditation guides)</li> <li>3. Something to see. (Ex: snow globe, happy pictures)</li> <li>4. Something to taste. (Ex: mints, tea, sour candy)</li> <li>5. Something to smell. (Ex: lotion, candles, perfume)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Distraction</b> (Taking your mind off the problem for a while)</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> Puzzles, books, artwork, crafts, knitting, crocheting, sewing, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, positive websites, music, movies, etc.</p>	<p><b>Opposite Action</b> (Doing something the opposite of your impulse that's consistent with a more positive emotion)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affirmations and Inspirations (Ex: looking at or drawing motivational statements or images)</li> <li>2. Something funny or cheering (Ex: funny movies/TV/books)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Emotional Awareness</b> (Tools for identifying and expressing your feelings)</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing &amp; art supplies</p>
<p><b>Mindfulness</b> (Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment)</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or paperweight), yoga mat, breathing exercises</p>	<p><b>Crisis Plan</b> (Contact info of supports and resources for when coping skills aren't enough)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Family/Friends Therapist Psychiatrist Hotline Crisis Team/ER 911</p> </div>	<p><b>Put it all together!</b> Once you've gathered all of your items, put them together in a box or other container, decorate it to your heart's content, and put it in a place where you'll remember it. Then USE IT!!</p>

# 50 Ways to Take a Break

Take a Bath



Listen to Music

Take a Nap

Go to a body of water

Watch the clouds



Light a candle

REST  
your legs up on a wall



Let out a sigh

Fly a Kite

Watch the stars



Write a Letter



Learn something NEW

Listen to a guided relaxation



Read a Book



sit in NATURE

2x  
Move twice as slowly



Take Deep Belly Breaths

MEDITATE



Notice your Body



Call a friend



Meander around Town

WRITE in a journal

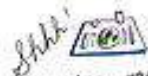


Walk Outside

Buy some Flowers



Find a relaxing Scent



Eat a meal in SILENCE



Turn off all electronics

Take a bike ride



Pet a furry creature

Create your own coffee break



View some ART

Examine an everyday object with Fresh Eyes



Drive somewhere NEW



Go to a park



Go to a Farmer's Market



Forgive Someone



read or watch something FUNNY

Engage in small acts of KINDNESS



COLOR with Crayons



Make some MUSIC



Climb a Tree



Let go of something

Do some gentle stretches



Paint on a surface other than paper



Write a quick poem



Read poetry



Put on some music and DANCE



Give Thanks



# 99 Coping Skills

1. Exercise (running, walking, etc.).
2. Put on fake tattoos.
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal).
4. Scribble/doodle on paper.
5. Be with other people.
6. Watch a favorite TV show.
7. Post on web boards, and answer others' posts.
8. Go see a movie.
9. Do a wordsearch or crossword .
10. Do schoolwork.
11. Play a musical instrument.
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair.
13. Sing.
14. Study the sky.
15. Punch a punching bag.
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut.
17. Let yourself cry.
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired).
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath.
20. Play with a pet.
21. Go shopping.
22. Clean something.
23. Knit or sew.
24. Read a good book.
25. Listen to music.
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray).
27. Meditate.
28. Go somewhere very public.
29. Bake cookies.
30. Alphabetize your CDs/DVDs/books.
31. Paint or draw.
32. Rip paper into itty-bitty pieces
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball.
34. Write a letter or send an email.
35. Plan your dream room (colors/ furniture).
36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal.
37. Hyperfocus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance.
39. Make hot chocolate, milkshake or smoothie.
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Dough.
41. Build a pillow fort.
42. Go for a nice, long drive.
43. Complete something you've been putting off.
44. Draw on yourself with a marker.
45. Take up a new hobby.
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal.
47. Look at pretty things, like flowers or art.
48. Create or build something.
49. Pray.
50. Make a list of blessings in your life.
51. Read the Bible.
52. Go to a friend's house.
53. Jump on a trampoline.
54. Watch an old, happy movie.
55. Contact a hotline/ your therapist.
56. Talk to someone close to you.
57. Ride a bicycle.
58. Feed the ducks, birds, or squirrels.
59. Color with Crayons.
60. Memorize a poem, play, or song.
61. Stretch.
62. Search for ridiculous things on the internet.
63. "Shop" on-line (without buying anything).
64. Color-coordinate your wardrobe.
65. Watch fish.
66. Make a CD/playlist of your favorite songs.
67. Play the "15 minute game." (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again.)
68. Plan your wedding/prom/other event.
69. Plant some seeds.
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car on-line.
71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible .
72. Sort through your photographs.
73. Play with a balloon.
74. Give yourself a facial.
75. Find yourself some toys and play.
76. Start collecting something.
77. Play video/computer games.
78. Clean up trash at your local park.
79. Perform a random act of kindness for someone.
80. Text or call an old friend.
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter.
82. Look up new words and use them.
83. Rearrange furniture.
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send.
85. Smile at least five people.
86. Play with little kids.
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend).
88. Put a puzzle together.
89. Clean your room /closet.
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels, or backbends.
91. Yoga.
92. Teach your pet a new trick.
93. Learn a new language.
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot.
95. Get together with friends and play Frisbee, soccer or basketball.
96. Hug a friend or family member.
97. Search on-line for new songs/ artists.
98. Make a list of goals for the week/ month/year/5 years.
99. Face paint.

## Positive Self-Talk

1. When it comes to thoughts, you have a lot of mind and control!! Your body listens and responds to your thoughts!!

Your mental self-talk can be: POSITIVE or NEGATIVE

2. Sports Psychology is a great example of the power of mind control. An athlete is taught to stay positive, to stay calm, be focused, be confident, to “see yourself as a winner,” and to “picture the ball going in the hole.” Many athletes find success with this positive thinking and imagery.
3. Another way of positive thinking and mind imagery is used in relaxation and relieving stress. You can imagine a scene, place, or event that you remember as peaceful, restful, beautiful, and happy. It acts as a retreat from places of stress and pressure; consequently, the body actually responds with a lower blood pressure and a lower pulse rate to calm down and relax.
4. Just as making positive statements to yourself help you to build confidence, improve performance, and improve your mental skills, negative thinking damages these things.

Our sub-conscious mind can't tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined! It takes any pictures, any thoughts that you send to it as reality. Once you direct an image or visualization to your sub-conscious brain, it will work 24 hours a day to make that image a reality, coming up with a plan to make those thoughts true for your life. So, choose your self-talk very carefully because your sub-conscious brain takes whatever you send it as real.

Examples: If you were taught as a child that all dogs will bite you, your mind will automatically raise that fear every time you see a dog. (Although your friend tells you that her dog is friendly, your mind believes and sends the fear message. You have to re-train your brain!!!)

If you continually say, “I’m really bad at math,” then your brain will send thought reminders to you like, “I can’t do this,” “This is too hard for me,” “I’ll never get this because I am bad at math.”

5. You can retrain and change your thinking by having positive self-talk. It’s not easy at first, but it can literally change your life!

*Today, we are going to practice this difficult, but powerful positive self-talk.*

## **What is positive self-talk?**

Positive self-talk is a strategy that we can use to help us get through anxiety provoking situations. It helps us to break stress up and involves focusing on positive rather than negative statements. There are three key stages: preparation, coping, and review.

### **Preparation**

As we are about to enter a situation or face something that we find daunting, we can help ourselves to prepare with positive statements such as:

"It's not going to be as bad as I think."

"It won't last long and I can cope."

"I am getting better and need to re-build my confidence."

"If I do get bad feelings, I know they won't last long and I can cope with them."

"It's better to go than not to go. Worry doesn't help."

"I might enjoy it if I go."

### **Coping**

In order to help us cope and stay in the situation, we can use positive statements such as:

"Concentrate on what is going on....not how I feel."

"This is just anxiety; it is an unpleasant feeling, but I've never been ill."

"Concentrate on what I have to do."

"I know I am going to be OK."

"The feelings always pass."

"Relax and think positively."

"One step at a time."

"Anxious feelings are unpleasant, but not harmful or dangerous."

### **Review**

Comments to help you review your achievement and give yourself praise:

"I coped with that."

"I achieved that; I am getting better."

"I handled that; it should be easier next time."

"I can be pleased with the progress I'm making."

"I did that well."

"If I keep this up, I'm going to get really good at this."

Even when things don't go according to plan, you should still take time to review the situation and praise yourself for what you have achieved. Each small step is progress, so try to focus on the positives rather than the negatives.

Here are some additional examples of self-talk statements for you to use. Pick a few to practice.

**A. Preparation for Stress**

I've succeeded with this before.  
What exactly do I have to do?  
I know I can do each one of these tasks.  
It's easier once I get started.  
I'll jump in and be alright.  
Tomorrow I'll be through it.  
I won't let negative thoughts creep in.

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**B. Facing a Challenge**

I will take it step by step; I won't rush.  
I can do this; I'm doing it now.  
I can only do my best.  
Any tension I feel is a signal to use my coping exercises.  
I can get help if I need it.  
If I don't think about fear, I won't be afraid.  
If I get tense, I'll take a deep breath and relax.  
It's OK to make mistakes.

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**C. Coping with Fear**

Relax now!  
Just breathe deeply.  
There's an end to it.  
Keep my mind on right now—on the task at hand.  
I can keep this within limits I can handle.  
I can always call \_\_\_\_\_  
I am only afraid because I decided to be. I can decide not to be.  
I've survived this and worse before.  
Being active will lessen my fear.

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**D. Self-Congratulations**

I did it!  
I did alright.  
I did well.  
Next time, I won't have to worry so much.

I am able to relax away anxiety.

I've got to tell \_\_\_\_\_ about this.

It's possible not to be scared.

All I have to do is stop thinking I'm scared.

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**E. Affirmations**

Every day in every way I grow stronger and stronger.

I enter this day with a peaceful heart.

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## Replace Negative Thoughts with Positive Thoughts (Positive Affirmations)

These are some examples of positive affirmations. These statements can help students fight their negative thoughts. Affirmations can help when students are thinking negative thoughts or even when they are not thinking negatively. Affirmations work better and faster the more times a student says them. Students may say these affirmations to themselves several times daily, or they may post them around their house so they can look at them until they sink in. If students do not like these affirmations, encourage them to create their own.

1. I am responsible and in control of my life.
2. Circumstances are what they are, but I can choose my attitude towards them.
3. I am becoming prosperous.
4. I am creating the financial resources I need.
5. I am setting priorities and making time for what is important.
6. Life has its challenges and its satisfactions; I enjoy the adventure of life.
7. Every challenge that comes along is an opportunity for me to learn and to grow.
8. I accept the natural ups and down of life.
9. I love and accept myself the way I am.
10. I deserve the good things in my life as much as anyone else.
11. I am open to discovering new meaning in my life.
12. It's never too late to change.
13. I am improving one step at a time.
14. I am innately healthy, strong, and capable of recovering.
15. I am getting better every day.
16. I am committed to overcoming my condition.
17. I am working on recovering from my condition.
18. I can recover by taking small risks at my own pace.
19. I am looking forward to the new freedom and opportunities I'll have when I've recovered.
20. I am learning to love myself.
21. I am learning to be comfortable by myself.
22. If someone doesn't return my love, I let it go and move on.
23. I am learning to be at peace with myself when alone.
24. I am learning how to enjoy when alone.
25. I respect and believe in myself apart from others' opinions.
26. I can accept and learn from constructive criticism.
27. I am learning to be myself around others.
28. It's important to take care of my own needs.
29. It's okay to be myself around others.
30. I appreciate my achievements and I'm much more than all of them put together.
31. I am learning how to balance work and play in my life.
32. I am learning that there is more to life than success.
33. The greatest success is living well.
34. I am a unique and capable person just as I am.
35. I am proud of doing the best I can.
36. It's okay to make mistakes.

- 37. I am willing to accept my mistakes and to learn from them.
- 38. I am willing to allow others to help me.
- 39. I acknowledge my need for other people.
- 40. I am open to receiving support from others.
- 41. I am willing to take the risk of getting close to someone.
- 42. I am willing to relax and to let go.
- 43. I am learning to accept those things I can't control.

## Replacement Thoughts

Instead of Thinking	Try Thinking
Must	Prefer
Should	Choose to
Have to	Want
Can't	Choose not to
Ought	Had better
All	Many
Always	Often
Can't stand	Don't like
Awful	Highly undesirable
Bad person	Bad behavior
I am a failure	I failed at

Instead of Saying	Exchange With
I have to do well.	I want to do well.
You shouldn't do that.	I prefer you not do that.
You never help me.	You rarely help me.
I can't stand my job.	I don't like my job.
You are a bad boy.	That behavior is undesirable.
I'm a loser.	I failed at this one task.

Instead of Saying	Exchange With
Anxious	Concerned
Depressed	Sad
Angry	Annoyed
Guilt	Remorse
Shame	Regret
Hurt	Disappointed
Jealous	Concern for my relationship

## Positive Self-Talk/Coping Thoughts Worksheet

Positive statements encourage us and help us cope through distressing times. We can say these encouraging words to ourselves and be our own personal coach. We have all survived some very distressing times, and we can use those experiences to encourage us through current difficulties.

Examples of coping thoughts might be:

- Stop and breathe; I can do this.
- This, too, will pass.
- I can be anxious/angry/sad and still deal with this.
- I have done this before, and I can do it again.
- This feels bad; however, it's a normal body reaction. It will pass.
- This feels bad, but feelings may sometimes be wrong.
- These are just feelings; they will go away.
- This won't last forever.
- Short term pain for long term gain.
- I can feel bad and still choose to take a new and healthy direction.
- I don't need to rush; I can take things slowly.
- I have survived before, so I will survive now.
- I feel this way because of my past experiences, but I am safe right now.
- It's okay to feel this way; it's a normal reaction.
- Right now, I am not in danger. Right now, I'm safe.
- My mind is not always my friend.
- Thoughts are just thoughts—they are not necessarily true or factual.
- This is difficult and uncomfortable, but it's only temporary.
- I can use my coping skills and get through this.
- I can learn from this and it will be easier next time.
- Keep calm and carry on.

Write down a coping thought or positive statement for each difficult or distressing situation—something you can tell yourself that will help you get through. Write them down on a piece of card and carry it in your pocket or handbag to help remind you.

Difficult or Distressing Thought	Coping Thought/Positive Statement
<i>Ex: I always feel so awkward around people.</i>	<i>Ex: Just because I feel awkward does not mean that others see me that way.</i>

## Positive Data Log

Collect evidence, however small or apparently insignificant, that supports the alternative core belief. Write down that evidence on the form below—as soon as possible after you notice the evidence—otherwise you might forget, minimize, or discount the evidence.

You might start by collecting one piece of evidence each day and gradually increase to 2, 3, or 5 pieces of evidence each day to support the new healthy core belief.

Alternative/Healthy Core Belief: Ex: I'm going to fail high school and not get into a good college.

[illegible]





## Learning to be G.L.A.D.

### **G: Something you were *grateful* for today.**

Think of something very basic for which you are grateful. It could be something as simple as the sunlight or the nourishing food you eat. Write it below.

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Now think of something truly important in your life like a meaningful relationship, kids, friends, or your health. Write it below.

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### **L: Something you *learned* today.**

Write down something positive you learned about yourself today. It might be something you already knew, but it came into focus today.

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Write down something you learned about another person today. Again, it might be something you were already aware of, but you were more aware of this quality today.

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Write down a fact you learned today that made you curious or more aware of the world around you.

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Write down how something you learned today which changed your perspective of yourself or the world around you in a positive way.

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### **A: One small *accomplishment* you did today.**

Many people feel that accomplishments have to be a big important task, but it's the little things that make a difference in your life. Perhaps you are working on a goal like exercising or eating healthier or finding a new job. Small steps towards your goal are important accomplishments.

Write down something you accomplished today.

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**D: Something that brought you *delight* today.**

What made you laugh or smile?

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What small thing of beauty did you see today?

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What did you hear today that lifted your spirits? A song? A child's voice? A joke?

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Now close your eyes and think of your day and what you wrote. Breathe deeply for a few minutes and visualize a positive image from the day. Write down something important from this exercise that you want to remember.

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## 16 Apps to Help Children and Teens With Anxiety

You're out with your son running errands, and you can see his anxiety getting bigger and bigger. You can't delay these errands, but you're noticing he looks like he's about to head into full meltdown mode. Unfortunately, you don't have his coping skills toolkit with you right now. What can you do? Maybe there's an app that could help.

Apps can help children and teens manage when they are feeling anxious. Some apps can also help children get through an anxious moment. And there are still other apps that can help by distracting them.

### **Mindfulness for Children** (Free version and Pro Version \$4.99/One Time Fee)

The free version has five guided meditations for children. They give more detailed information about each of their meditations and instructions on how to do mindfulness.

### **Relax Melodies** (Free version and paid Pro Version available)

Not specifically targeted for children, but can be used by people of all ages. There's a huge variety of sounds you can play, but there are also guided meditations. There are a lot more options in the pro version.

### **Calm** (Lite version or \$4.99/month for the year)

Calm is a popular app among adults for mindfulness and meditation. Did you know there's a section called Calm Kids? You can get access to it with a subscription. If you use the app for free, there's also a daily calm series inspired by the characters in Winnie the Pooh.

### **Positive Penguins** (\$0.99)

This is good for upper elementary children who are strong readers and typers. This app helps children figure out why they are feeling a certain way and then encourages them to think of things in a different way. There's also a five-minute guided meditation. Cool fact—this app was created by children!

### **Mindful Minutes by Oops Yay** (\$1.99)

Super cute and child friendly. This app has relaxing music and no ads. There are four different little minutes you can do—with a fish, a balloon, a star, and a gem. Children hold down the image as it goes up through relaxing scenery. This is super calming even for adults.

### **Bedtime Meditations for Kids by Christiane Kerr**

Can be helpful at bedtime to help children settle down and transition into sleep.

**Headspace** (Free limited access version, but you can upgrade for the full experience for \$7.92/month for a year, or \$12.99/monthly)

A popular one for adults, this also has a section just for children. It's divided by age (under 5, elementary children, and pre-teens) and covers topics like calm, focus, kindness, sleep, and wake up. There's an introduction video to help you get started.

**Stop, Breathe, and Think: Meditations** (Free, Premium version available starting at \$4.99)

This is another app that is for adults, but also has a family section with three guided meditations for families to use together.

**Recolor: Coloring Book for Kids** (Free)

A coloring app that's very easy to use. Just pick a picture and a color palette. Touch the color you want and tap the area of the picture you want to color in. You can zoom in on details. What a neat way to distract children!

**Tanzen Free** (Free)

Relaxing tangram puzzles. They have all the pieces out for you; all you have to do is arrange them.

**Blox** (Free)

This is a beautifully minimalist 3D physics game. Relax and enjoy the peaceful waves and calm sounds as you swipe away blocks from an endless tower. Be sure to keep the diamond on top while you move out the blocks below.

**Mekorama** (Free)

You lead a cute little robot through puzzles with no timers or buzzers. It's adorable!

**Breath of Light: Relaxing Puzzler** (\$1.99)

It's gorgeous and the background music is quite relaxing.

**Monument Valley** (\$3.99)

It's a puzzle game where you are changing the environment to get from a starting point to the end. The music is so soothing.

**Highlights Hidden Pictures** (\$3.99/month)

You can zoom in on pictures and find the images. You can do free play, timed play, or find the clues in a particular order.

**Audible** (\$14.95/month after free 30 day trial)

Listening to books can be a great way to distract children and have them focus on something else other than their anxiety. This app is connected to Amazon, and it's a way you can listen to audiobooks. There are a ton of books available. It can be used across devices, so you are always in the right place in a book. Children can listen to books such as *Harry Potter*, *Magic Tree House*, *Eragon*, and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

YOU WERE BORN  
TO BE REAL, NOT  
TO BE PERFECT.

IT'S  
OK.

The greatest weapon against stress is our  
ability to choose one thought over another.

KEEP GOING,  
YOU ARE  
GETTING  
THERE.



**“KNOW WHO YOU ARE  
AND KNOW IT’S ENOUGH.”**

You have to fight  
through some  
bad days  
to earn the  
best days  
of your life.

WHAT  
CONSUMES  
YOUR MIND,  
CONTROLS  
YOUR LIFE.

Change the way you see things,  
and the things you see will change

# Cognitive Distortions For Teens



**Mind Reading:** You assume you know what people thinking without having evidence or proof of their thoughts. “He thinks I’m an idiot.” “I’m not going to make the team”

**Future-Telling:** You predict the future – that things will get worse or that there’s danger ahead. “If I go, people will make fun of me.” “If I talk, I will mess up and not say what I mean.”



**Catastrophizing:** You believe what might happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won’t be able to stand it. “It would be terrible if I failed.” “If I make a bad grade then I will never get into a good college.”

**Labeling:** You assign general negative traits to yourself and others. “I’m disgusting.” “He’s horrible.” “She’s irrelevant.”



**Discounting Positives:** You claim that the positives that you or others have don’t matter. “That’s what I’m supposed to do, so it doesn’t count.” “Those successes were easy so they don’t matter.”

**Negative Filter:** You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. “Look at all the terrible things on the news.” “Girls never have anything nice to say.”



**Overgeneralizing:** You perceive the likelihood of a negative outcome based upon a single incident. “I fail all the time.”

**All-or-None Thinking:** You view events or people in all-or-none/black-and-white terms. “It was a waste of time.” “I get rejected by everyone.” “Nothing ever goes my way.”



**Shoulds:** You interpret events in terms of how things should be rather than simply focusing on what is. “I should do well; if I don’t, I’m a failure.”





**Personalizing:** You attribute a most of the blame to yourself for negative events and fail to see that certain situations are also caused by others. “My relationship ended because I wasn’t fun enough.” “It was my fault my group got a bad grade.”



**Blaming:** You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings and refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. “She’s to blame for the way I feel.” “My parents caused all my problems.” “My teacher is the reason I’m not doing well.”



**Judgment Focus:** You view yourself, others, and events in terms of evaluations of “good” and “bad” or “right” and “wrong” rather than simply describing, accepting, or understanding. “I didn’t perform well.” “I tried it, and I just kept doing it wrong.” “Look how successful she is, I’m not that successful.”



**Regret Orientation:** You focus on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather than on what you can do better now. “I could have had a better job if I had tried harder.” “I shouldn’t have said that.” “I always mess up.”



**What if:** You keep asking a series of questions about what if something happens, and fail to be satisfied with any of the answers. “Yeah, but what if I get anxious, and I can’t catch my breath.”



**Emotional Reasoning:** You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. “I feel sad, therefore I must be depressed.” “I feel anxious, therefore I must be in danger.”



**Inability to Disconfirm:** You reject any evidence or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts. “I’m unlovable – my friends hang out with me only because they must feel sorry for me.” “I’m a bad person – I only help others because it makes me feel better about myself.”



**Unfair Comparisons:** You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic. “Others did better than I did on the test.” “People my age are more successful than I am.”

# Unhelpful Thinking Styles

## All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

*If I'm not perfect I have failed*

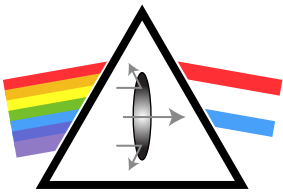
*Either I do it right or not at all*

## Over-generalising



Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

## Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

*Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes*

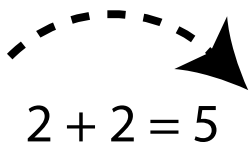
## Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

*That doesn't count*

## Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading**  
(imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling**  
(predicting the future)

## Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

## Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

*I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot*

# should must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

## Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser*  
*I'm completely useless*  
*They're such an idiot*

## Personalisation

# "this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

# Name the Pattern!

Negative Thought	Dysfunctional Pattern	Rational, Positive thought
<i>I got into trouble at school today. I just know they're going to kick me out tomorrow.</i>	<i>Jumping to Conclusions (Fortune-Telling)</i>  <i>(also a bit of Catastrophizing)</i>	<i>I did something at school today that I'm not proud of, but everyone makes mistakes and it's not the end of the world! I'll try harder tomorrow not to make the same mistake again.</i>
<i>My friend looked at his watch when I was talking today. He must be thinking I'm boring.</i>	<i>Personification</i>	<i>I can't know for certain why my coworker looked at his watch when I was talking. If he thought I was boring, he probably wouldn't come over to talk to me every day!</i>
<i>I got an award at the assembly yesterday, but that's no big deal. I'm not really that good of a student.</i>	<i>Minimizing Positives</i>	<i>I worked really hard to get that award! My hard work really paid off!</i>
<i>If I don't get a date to the homecoming dance, there's no way I could ever go back to school and face my classmates again!</i>	<i>Catastrophizing</i>	<i>It would be really difficult not to get a date to the dance, but I could still go with my friends and have a good time. Maybe there'll be other people there without dates!</i>
<i>There's no way I could ever be as talented as the star quarterback on the football team. I shouldn't even try.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Our star quarterback is really talented! Even if I'm never quite as good as he is, it doesn't mean I shouldn't play. There are lots of other things I'm good at!</i>

<i>I only got a B on my reading test. I always fail. I shouldn't have even tried.</i>	<i>All - Or - Nothing</i>	<i>Even though a B isn't what I was hoping for on that test, it's still pretty good! Next time I could study even more and see if can do even better!</i>
<i>I can't believe I gained 3 pounds. I'm so fat and ugly.</i>	<i>Maximizing Negatives</i>	<i>Wow. I didn't realize I've gained 3 pounds, but that doesn't define all of who I am. I'll just make sure to get my exercise in 3 times this week and stop having Mountain Dew with every meal.</i>
<i>My teacher didn't answer me when I said hello to her this morning. She's probably mad at me for something.</i>	<i>Jumping to Conclusions (Mind Reading)</i>	<i>My teacher didn't answer me when I said hello to her this morning. She might be upset with me, but I can't know that for sure unless she tells me so. May be she didn't hear me?</i>
<i>Another student called me a name once today. People are always making fun of me.</i>	<i>Overgeneralization</i>	<i>A student teased me today, but that's his problem! Lots of other people are friends with me. I don't need to dwell on one negative experience.</i>
<i>I must get all A's to be a good student.</i>	<i>Shoulds/Musts</i>	<i>I'm a good student as long as I do the best that I can and work hard each day. I don't have to be perfect.</i>
<i>I hate how I look, so I must look ugly to everyone else too.</i>	<i>Emotional Reasoning</i>	<i>Just because there are some things I don't like about my appearance doesn't mean everyone feels that way! No one is perfect!</i>

## Classroom Interventions for Anxiety

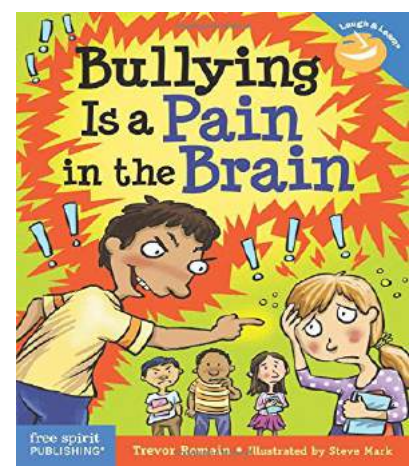
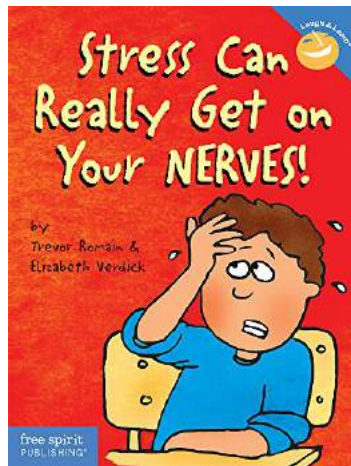
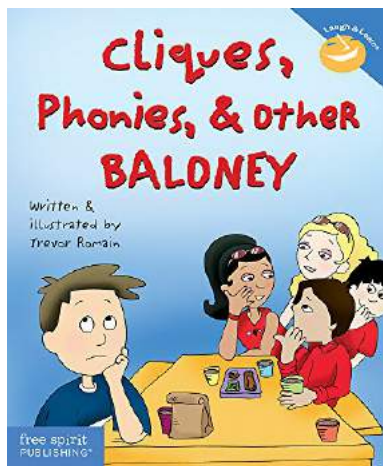
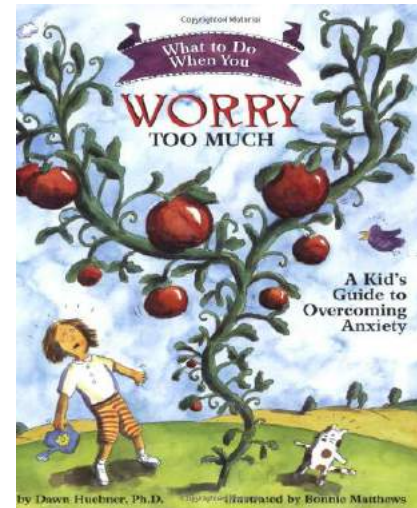
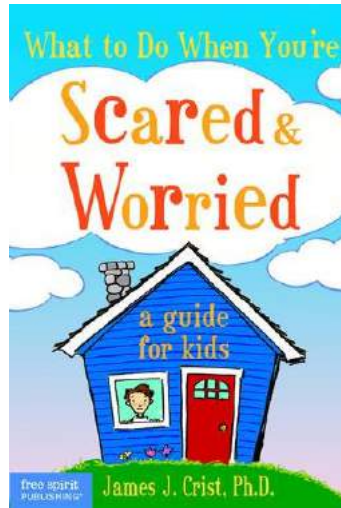
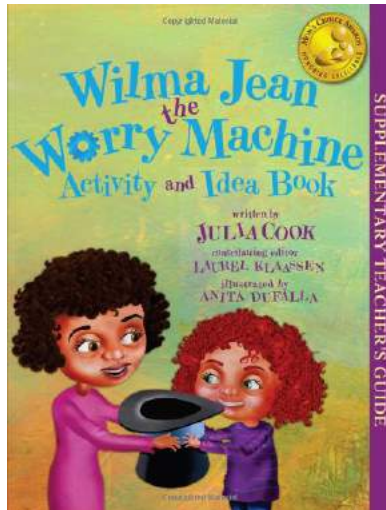
1. Create a “safe” place for the child to go when the symptoms are high.
2. Be aware of physical symptoms of anxiety and provide activities to distract the child.
3. Allow a few minutes at the beginning of the day for the child to transition into the school day.
4. Talk to the student about what interventions they would find helpful.
5. Teach the child relaxation techniques they can do at school.
6. For children avoiding school because of anxiety, offer suggestions such as coming to school for a shorter day.
7. Use small group activities throughout the day.
8. Reward effort by a student with anxiety.
9. Create group activities that role-play appropriate behaviors.
10. Decrease situations that induce stress.
11. Discuss anxiety symptoms privately with the student.
12. Discuss alternative ways of handling situations.
13. Find books that address children with anxiety.
14. Teach positive self-talk to the entire class.
15. Post the daily routine in the classroom and let students know in advance of any changes in the schedule.
16. Help students break assignments down into smaller segments.
17. Play soothing music during down time.
18. Incorporate exercise into the school day.
19. Use computerized reading programs.
20. Discuss what sections of a book will be read aloud with a student before calling on them to read.

Note: What interventions—if any—that will be used with a student should be made on a case-by-case scenario based upon the data.

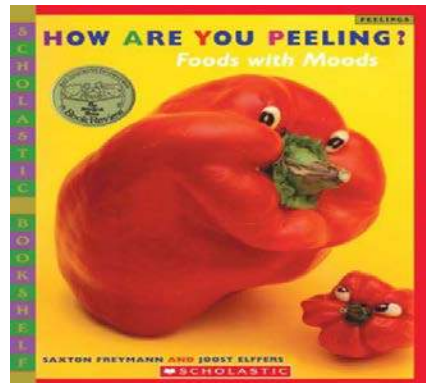
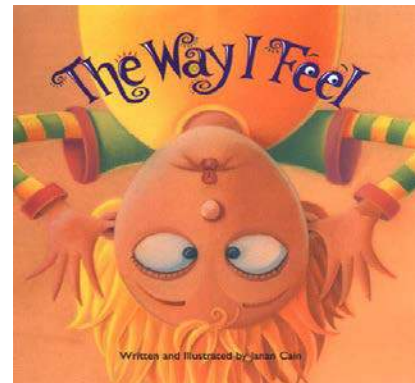
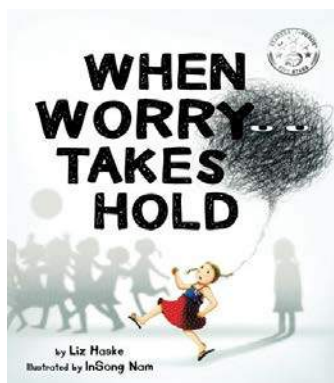
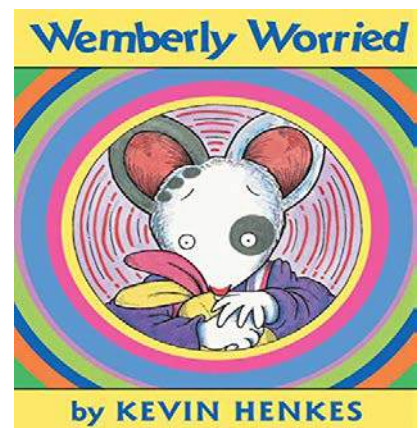
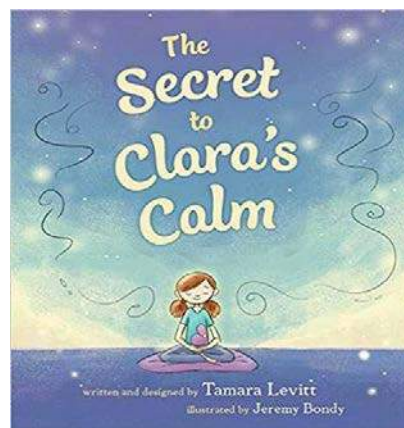
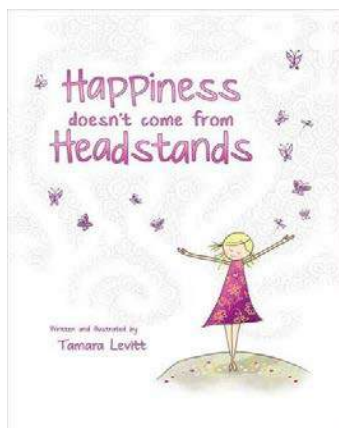
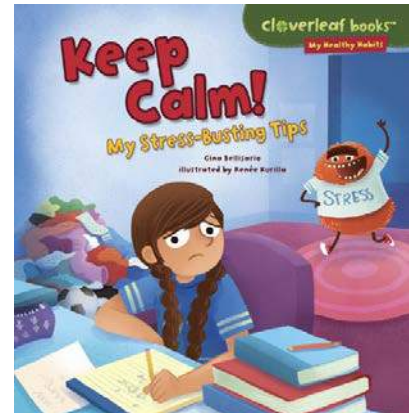
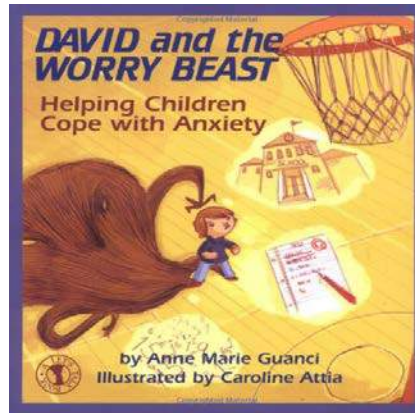
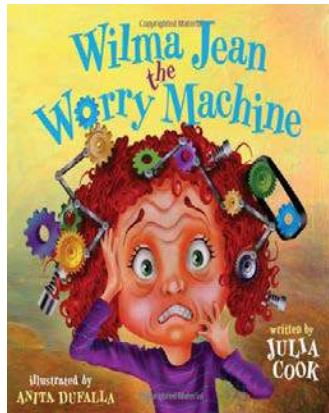


## Helpful Books for Children and Families

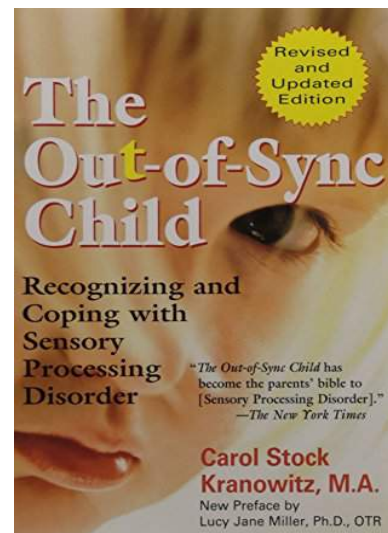
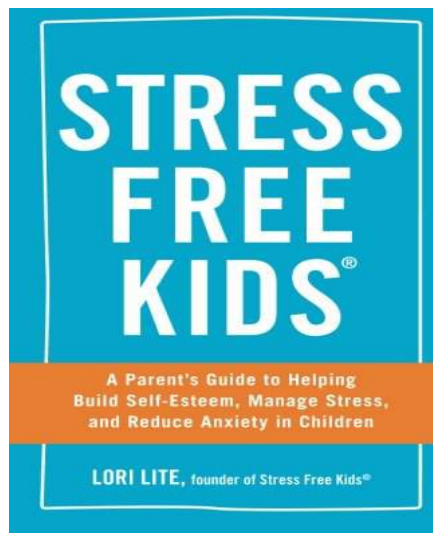
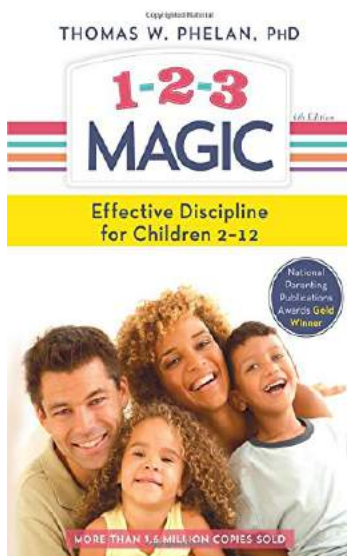
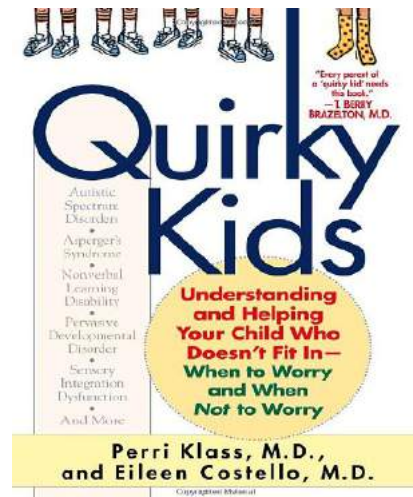
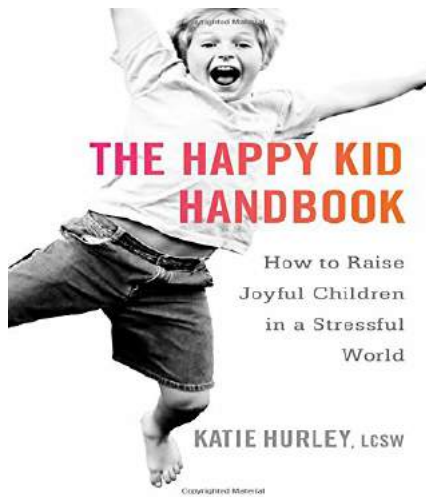
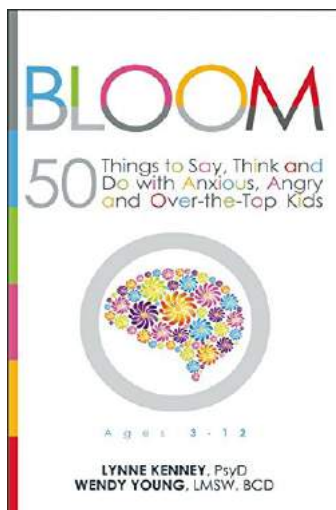
This is a collection of the best books for children to teach them how to deal with complex emotions. Included, too, are recommended books for parents to support their children and to help them understand their feelings and figuring out healthy strategies to use on a daily basis.



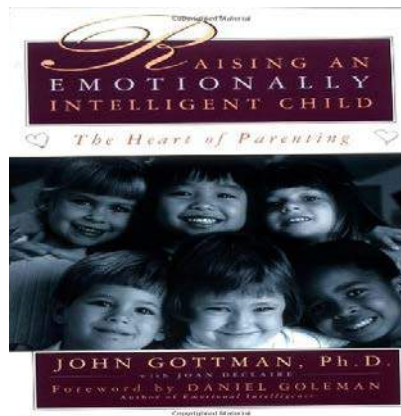
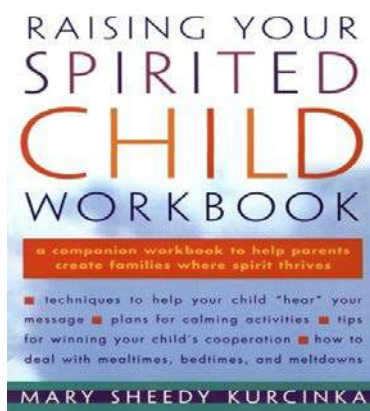
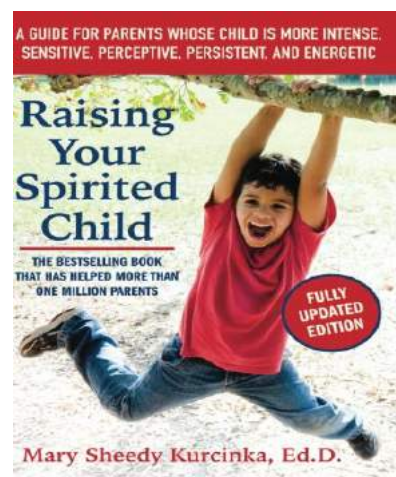
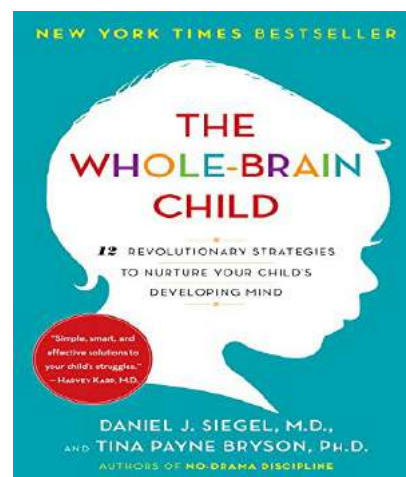
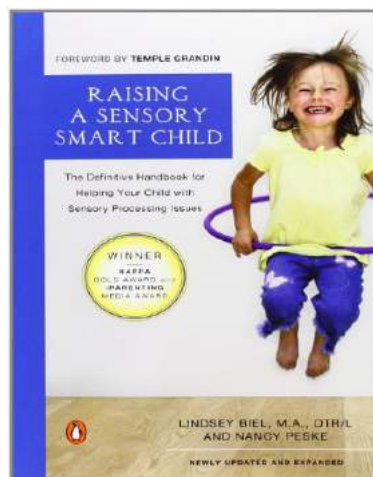
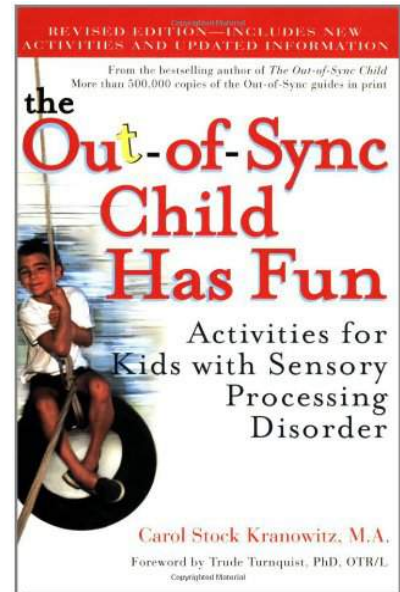
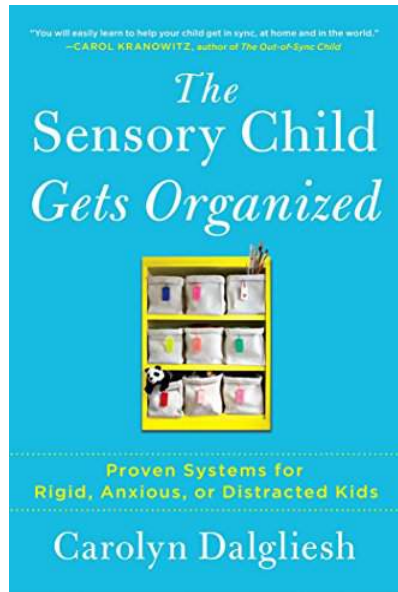
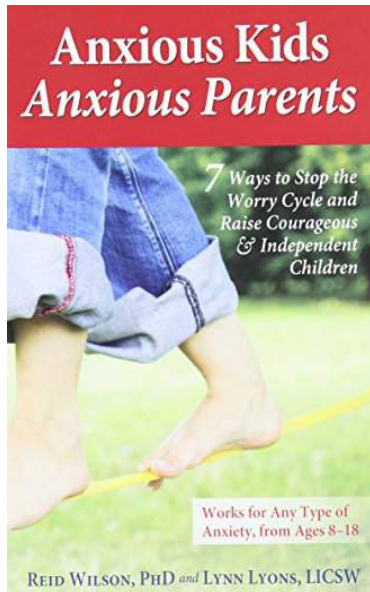




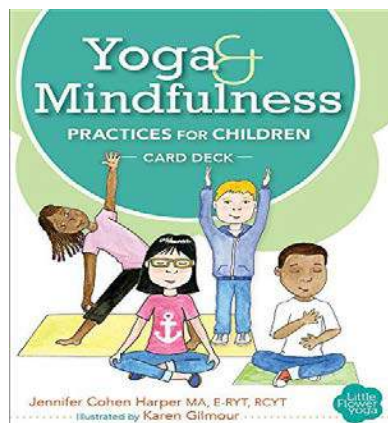
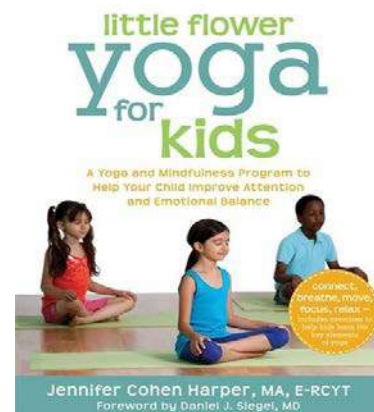
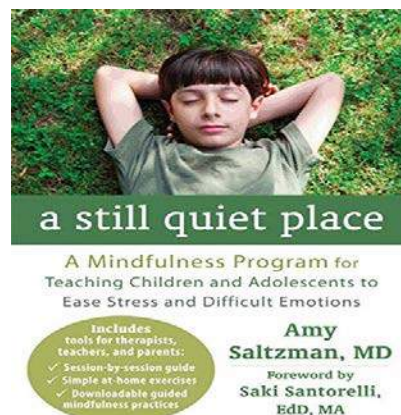
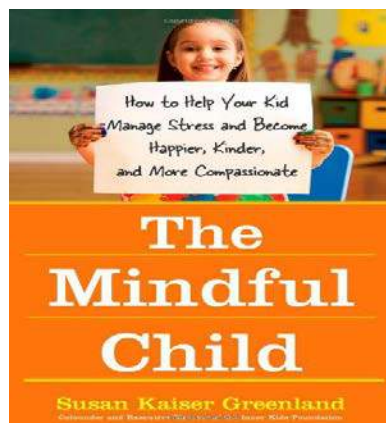
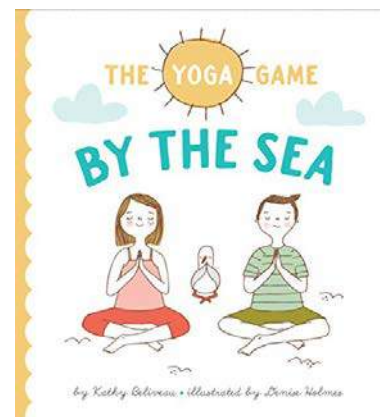
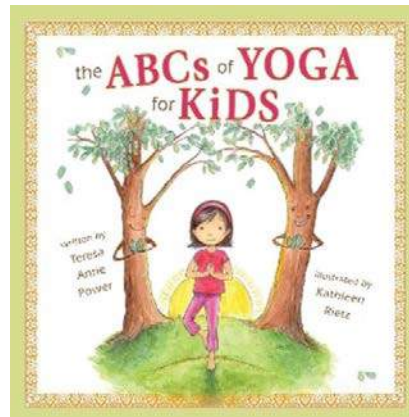
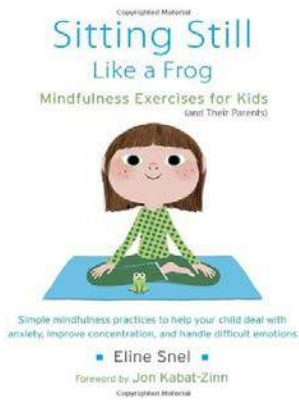
## Books for Families







## Yoga and Mindfulness for Children and Families





## Coping Skills for Kids

Coping Skills for Kids was founded in 2015 by Janine Halloran, a licensed mental health counselor and a mother of two.

As a counselor working primarily with children and adolescents for the last 15 years, Janine has seen the value of learning healthy coping skills early in life. Children who are able to cope in healthy ways will be more resilient and will manage stress better as adults.

As a parent of two elementary school age children, Janine has been teaching these coping skills at home to her own children. She understands from first-hand experience that it's not always perfect. She strives for making progress, however small a step it is.

Janine wanted to create a place where parents could get resources to teach their children how to cope. Coping Skills for Kids provides products and resources to help children learn to cope with the daily challenges of life. Janine has created digital products that can be downloaded immediately to help support children. The products are made to be used with either a family member or another trusted adult, like a school counselor or therapist.

In addition to those products, Janine has put together recommendations for other helpful and useful resources. There's a list of helpful books that can support both parents and children on the journey to finding healthy coping skills. There are also a variety of recommended products, like popular fidgets, toys, and games that can be coping skills for children to use to help manage their big feelings.

No one should feel ashamed or be embarrassed to seek help if their child is struggling. Mental health awareness is a passion of Janine's. Because of that, Coping Skills for Kids donates 5% of their profits to the National Alliance on Mental Illness—specifically to the Massachusetts chapter—where her business is based and where she has lived the majority of her life.

Additional information can be found on the website at [www.copingskillsforkids.com](http://www.copingskillsforkids.com).





# Teach kids coping skills!

These printables are designed to help you teach kids how to cope with difficult and overwhelming feelings, like anxiety, anger and stress.

Included in this set of printables:

- **Coping Skills Checklist** - a great starting point to figure out what coping skills a child already has, and which ones to try so they can be added to their list of regular coping skills
- **Skills to Try** - perfect for writing down the coping skills a child would like to try
- **My Coping Skills** - A place to keep a running list of all the coping skills that work for a child
- **Feelings Rules** - basic rules that are helpful for kids to be reminded of when they are experiencing big feelings
- **Blank Coping Skills Cue Cards** - make your own reminder cards for each coping skill
- **How do I feel?** - Help kids identify what they are feeling and how big those feelings are before they use a coping skill, then after they've tried using a skill



# Coping Skills Checklist

- Check off the ones that you do now
- Circle the ones you want to try
- Cross off the ones that don't work

## Calming Skills

- ☐ Deep breathing using a pinwheel
- ☐ Deep breathing with bubbles
- ☐ Deep breathing with a stuffed animal
- ☐ Deep breathing using a feather
- ☐ Take a mindful walk
- ☐ Yoga
- ☐ Imagine your favorite place
- ☐ Think of your favorite things
- ☐ Picture the people you care about
- ☐ Say the alphabet slowly
- ☐ Remember the words to a song you love
- ☐ Run water over your hands
- ☐ Carry a small object
- ☐ Touch things around you
- ☐ Move
- ☐ Make a fist then release It
- ☐ Positive Self-Talk
- ☐ Take a shower or bath
- ☐ Take a drink of water
- ☐ Counting
- ☐ Block out noises
- ☐ Take a break
- ☐ Calming Jar
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

## Distraction Skills

- ☐ Write a story
- ☐ Crossword/Sudoku Puzzles
- ☐ Bake or Cook
- ☐ Volunteer/Community Service
- ☐ Random Acts of Kindness
- ☐ Read
- ☐ Clean
- ☐ Play with a pet
- ☐ Play a board game
- ☐ Play video games
- ☐ Screen time
- ☐ Play with a friend
- ☐ Start a garden
- ☐ Creative Thinking
- ☐ Make up your own game
- ☐ Plan a fun event
- ☐ Start a new hobby
- ☐ Do a crafting project
- ☐ Your favorite things
- ☐ Be silly and laugh
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

# Coping Skills Checklist

Check off the ones that you do now, circle the ones you want to try,  
cross off the ones that don't work

## Physical Skills

- ☐ Squeeze something
- ☐ Use a stress balls
- ☐ Shred paper
- ☐ Bubble wrap
- ☐ Use a sand tray
- ☐ Jacob's Ladder
- ☐ Hold a small stone
- ☐ Shuffle cards
- ☐ Make something
- ☐ Use a fidget
- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Punch a safe surface
- ☐ Play at the Park
- ☐ Make an obstacle course
- ☐ Swing on a swing
- ☐ Jump on a trampoline
- ☐ Jump rope
- ☐ Scooter
- ☐ Go swimming
- ☐ Stretches
- ☐ Tumbling/Gymnastics
- ☐ Yoga
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

## Processing Skills

- ☐ Write in a journal
- ☐ Write songs
- ☐ Write poetry
- ☐ Write music
- ☐ Draw
- ☐ Talk to someone you trust
- ☐ Create a playlist
- ☐ Write what's bothering you and throw it away
- ☐ Write a letter to someone
- ☐ Use "I statements"
- ☐ Make a worry box
- ☐ Color
- ☐ Doodle
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# Skills to Try

# My Coping Skills



# It's okay to feel

**MAD**

WORRIED

SAD

ANXIOUS

FRUSTRATED

**but...**

Don't hurt yourself

Don't hurt others

Don't destroy property

# Coping Skills Cue Cards

Kids benefit from having visual cues to figure out what to do when they are angry, anxious or sad. Here is a printable you can use with kids to make their own personalized coping skills cue cards.

1. Identify which feeling(s) to focus on. Are they angry? Are they sad? Are there several feelings they need to work on learning to handle in healthy ways?
2. Print off the next page of this document as many times as you need to make as many cue cards as you need. Cut out the cards.
3. When kids are in a calm state, ask them what helps them relax, calm down or feel good. Do they like to draw? Listen to music? Play with putty? Read a book? If they are having a hard time coming up with ideas, suggest activities that they enjoy. These activities that calm and relax them are their coping skills.
4. Once you figure out their coping skills, make a card for each one. Fill in the feeling you are focused on helping them manage and one strategy on each card.
5. Make it visual! There are several ways to do this:
  - \*write the coping skill
  - \*take a picture of the item that the child can use
  - \*take a picture of the child using their coping skill
  - \*have your child draw a picture of their coping skill
  - \*Pick whichever one works best for you and your child.
6. Hole punch the cards, and place them on a key ring. Have the kids put the cards in an easy to access place, like a central location at home or in their room. The next time they are feeling upset, direct them to pick a coping skill from their cue cards.

As you discover new coping skills, you can always add in more cue cards. If certain skills are no longer effective, remove them from the ring.

HINT: To make more durable cards, use card stock instead of regular paper and laminate them

**When I feel \_\_\_\_\_,  
I can...**

**When I feel \_\_\_\_\_,  
I can...**

**When I feel \_\_\_\_\_,  
I can...**

**When I feel \_\_\_\_\_,  
I can...**

before

How do I feel?

frustrated

sad

upset

?

angry

anxious

worried

?

How big are my feelings?

big

medium

small

USE A COPING SKILL

after

How do I feel?

happy

anxious

sad

upset

angry

frustrated

worried

?

How big are my feelings?

big

medium

small



*Elementary Grades*  
*Grades K-6*



## Plum Tree Child and Adolescent Psychology

Located in St. Charles, Illinois, Plum Tree Child and Adolescent Psychology provides therapy for children and support for parents. They conduct psychological and neurological testing for academic, diagnostic, and clinical issues.

Plum Tree cares for children and teens with anxiety, depression, inattention, impulsivity, grief, and low self-esteem. They help children control their behaviors, feelings, and thoughts.

Plum Tree's Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) program helps self-injury or suicidal teens. In addition, ADHD coaching helps teens achieve better grades.

Additional information about Plum Tree Child and Adolescent Psychology can be found on their website at [www.theplumtree.net](http://www.theplumtree.net), or via telephone at 630.549.6245.

# Ideas for Child Body Outline Worksheet

1. Draw what it is like to feel:

- a. Happy
- b. Sad
- c. Mad
- d. Nervous
- e. Proud

2. Draw a diary of your school day:

- a. This made my head mad
- b. This made my hands busy
- c. This made my feet move-y
- d. This made my tummy nervous
- e. Nice/Mean words my mouth said
- f. Nice/Mean words my ears heard

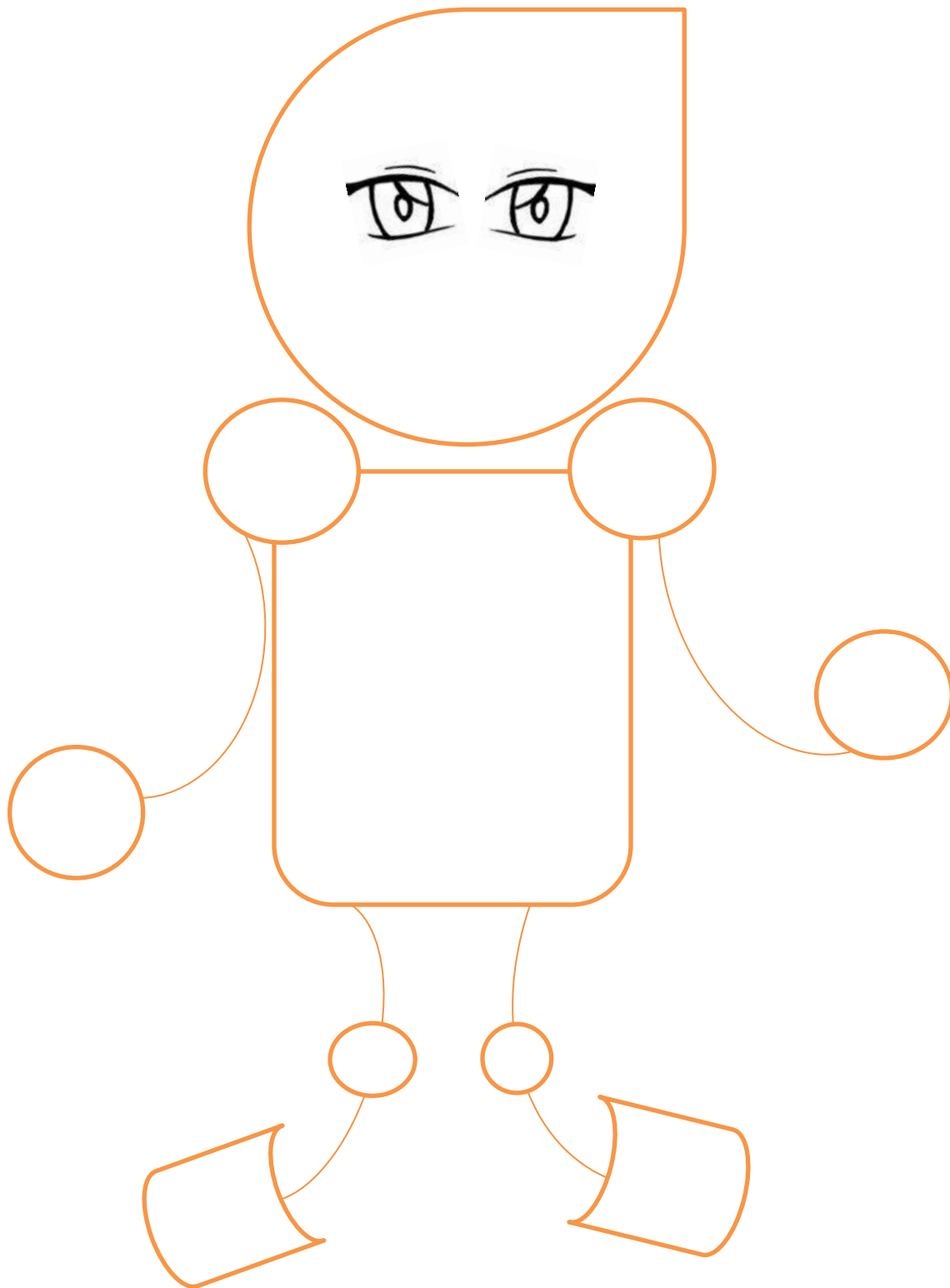
Body Part	May Represent
Head	Ideas, worries, hopes, fears
Eyes	Sights (past, present, future)
Ears	Sounds (past, present, future)
Mouth	Spoken words (past, present, future)
Hands	Actions
Chest	Feelings
Stomach	Instincts, urges, I wanted to...
Feet	Movement

3. Draw a line, in the middle, from the head to the feet. Use halves to compare:

- a. Pluses vs. Minuses (e.g., how busy hands are a strength and weakness)
- b. Good days vs. Bad days (things I experience/do on each kind of day)
- c. How I handled a situation vs. How I will handle it next time
- d. How people treat me vs. How I want to be treated (what they say, do)
- e. How I see myself vs. How I want to see myself

4. Kids may come up with lots of ideas how to use the worksheet. Anything goes, since it is all “grist for the mill”—stuff for you and your child to talk about together, to help them learn about themselves.





630.549.6245

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# Teaching Your Child How to “Deep Breathe”

(read aloud with your child)

1. *Deep Breathing* helps you feel better when you are angry or nervous. Because you are the boss of your body, you can relax and feel better.
2. Check if you are breathing now. Good! You are an expert at breathing! Wow, *Deep Breathing* will be pretty easy for you to learn.
3. Make the air come in through your nose and out of your mouth. Practice that. (If your nose is plugged up, just use your mouth).
4. Now, make sure you are sitting up straight. Make sure your feet are down. This makes the air better for you.
5. *Deep Breathing* is a long, slow tunnel of air coming into your nose. Can you practice that?
6. *Deep Breathing* is a long, slow tunnel of air comes out of your mouth. Practice that.
7. Remember to breathe in and out, slow and long. Sometimes, moving your hands with the air can help.
8. The job is to do 5 deep breaths. Let’s do them together.
9. Great job! *Deep Breathing* is like a super-secret skill that you can use right in front of people and they might NEVER EVEN NOTICE! When you feel angry or nervous, you should do *Deep Breathing*.
10. The last thing to know is: You HAVE to practice *Deep Breathing* or it won’t work. Just like you practice (baseball, piano, reading, tying your shoes), you have to practice *Deep Breathing* to get good at it. You should practice it when you feel good and happy. That way, you will be an expert deep breather when you get angry or nervous.
11. Remember, you are the boss of your body. You can feel better by *Deep Breathing*.



# Teaching Your Child How to “Rex Flex”

(read aloud with your child).

**This will only work if your child has seen Toy Story and remembers Rex the Dinosaur.**

1. I am going to teach you to *Rex Flex*. Remember Rex from Toy Story? That big dinosaur that gets really nervous and panicky? Even though he is really strong and smart and kind, he sometimes feels very scared, even if there is no danger! That happens to you sometimes, too, right? (Have your child tell you a story of panic). Well, when you are panicky and nervous, your brain gets like Rex. It does not let your ideas work. So when you do *Rex Flex*, you can feel braver and calmer. Remember, you are the boss of your body.
2. The first job in *Rex Flex* to know what happens to your brain when you are nervous. Your Rex brain tells you “DANGER, DANGER, DANGER!” even if there is none.
3. When you are panicky, look around to see if there is danger. If there is no danger, bring the picture of Rex in your head. Say, “I have Rex brain now.” Once you say that, you are ready to do *Rex Flex*.
4. In *Rex Flex*, you stand like a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Feet wide, arms up, claws out! Can you show me that now?
5. Good, now make mad eyes and teeth mean. Take a deep breath and ROAR! Roar as loud and long as you can! You can even stomp around! That is *Rex Flex*! (Encourage your child to do this around the room for a minute). *Rex Flex* makes you feel brave and strong! If a nervous feeling comes back, you have to roar even louder!
6. If you get scared in the dark, or worry about being late, or get scared about making a mistake or (add item particular to your child), then do *Rex Flex*!
7. The last thing to know is: You HAVE to practice *Rex Flex* or it won’t work. Just like you practice (baseball, piano, reading, tying your shoes), you have to practice *Rex Flex* to get good at it. You should practice it when you feel good and happy. That way, you will be an expert Rexer Flexer when you get nervous.
8. Remember, you are the boss of your body. You can feel better by doing *Rex Flex*.



# Teaching Your Child How to “Spaghetti Body”

(read aloud with your child)

1. Sometimes, your body gets too tight. This happens when you are mad or nervous. *Spaghetti Body* is something you do to get your body loose. That makes you feel better. Since you are the boss of your body, you can make the tight go away.
2. Have you seen wet spaghetti noodles? They are wiggly, not tight. You can make your body like spaghetti noodles.
3. Okay, this is the cool part. To get your Spaghetti Body, first you have to make your body very tight all over! Let's practice. Scrunch your hands very tight. You can even grunt if that helps. And now, spaghetti your hands very loose. Great job.
4. Stand up now. When I say a body part, you scrunch it very tight. Count to 3. Then make it Spaghetti loose. So you will scrunch, hold for 3, then relax it like a noodle. What will you do? (Have child repeat directions).
5. Scrunch your feet. 1,2,3. Now Spaghetti! Scrunch your legs. 1,2,3. Now Spaghetti! Scrunch your bottom! Laughing is okay, but keep scrunching. 1,2,3. Now Spaghetti. You want to do your bottom again, right? Okay, go ahead. (Repeat for stomach, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, face, eyes).
6. Great job! You did Spaghetti Body! You should feel pretty loose and wiggly all over. Doing *Spaghetti Body* helps your body feel less sad or nervous. This means you will feel better.
7. The last thing to know is: You HAVE to practice *Spaghetti Body* or it won't work. Just like you practice (baseball, piano, reading, tying your shoes), you have to practice *Spaghetti Body* to get good at it. You should practice it when you feel good and happy. That way, you will be an expert spaghetti kid when you get mad or nervous.
8. Remember, you are the boss of your body. You can feel better by doing *Spaghetti Body*.



[www.theplumtree.net](http://www.theplumtree.net)

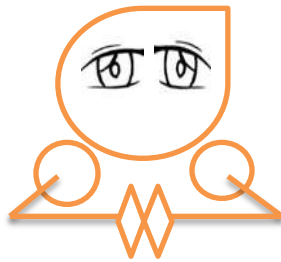
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# Teaching Your Child How to “Stress Press”

(read aloud with your child)

1. *Stress Press* helps you feel better when you are mad. And that’s good, because when you’re mad, sometimes you make bad choices and get into trouble. So *Stress Press* can help you NOT get into trouble. Do you know what stress is? Stress is when something happened, and you didn’t like it, and your body got mad. Like, maybe your face got hot and your muscles got tight, and your eyebrows got mean. Stress is not good. But you can make it go away, because you are the boss of your body.
2. Okay, hold out your hands and show me your palms. Did you know your palms have heels, just like your feet? They are here (bottom part of hand, just above wrist). Circle your palm heels with your fingers. Good. Now, make your hands like a knife, with straight, tight fingers. And press your palm heels together. Put your elbows out—straight as a line! Don’t let your hands touch your chest.



3. Press your palm heels together as hard as you can. Your arms should go a little shaky if you press for long enough. That is the *Stress Press*. Let’s do it together, and I want you to count out loud to 10 while we do it.
4. Great job! You did the *Stress Press*! It helps you calm down when you’re mad. It doesn’t fix the problem that made you mad, BUT it helps you make better choices about the problem. Do you understand?
5. The last thing to know is: You HAVE to practice *Stress Press* or it won’t work. Just like you practice (baseball, piano, reading, tying your shoes), you have to practice *Stress Press* to get good at it. You should practice it when you feel good and happy. That way, you will be an expert stresser-presser when you get mad. Remember, you are the boss of your body. You can feel better by doing *Stress Press*.





# Teaching Your Child “Turtle”

(read aloud with your child)

1. I am going to show you the *Turtle*. Not an actual, live turtle! I will show you how to do a thing called *Turtle*. It is what to do when you have extra energy, like running all over the place, or feeling very mad. Too much energy or too much mad sometimes gets you into trouble. The reason to do *Turtle* is because it helps you feel better, and stay out of trouble. Because you are the boss of your body, you can relax and feel better.
2. First, stand with your feet a little bit apart, and shoulders normal tall.
3. Next, bring your bottom all the way down to your heels. But don't sit down! If you topple, just try again.
4. Now, bring one arm across your legs and the other arm across your knees.



5. If you want, you can put your chin or your nose on your knees. Everything should feel scrunched up. But it should not hurt. Be gentle.
6. Now, staying there, give yourself the biggest hug ever. THAT is the *Turtle*. Stay there, and count to 5 while you do the *Turtle*.
7. Great job! You can do the *Turtle* as long as you need to or want to. You may stop when your body feels calm and safe.
8. The last thing to know is: You HAVE to practice *Turtle* or it won't work. Just like you practice (baseball, piano, reading, tying your shoes), you have to practice *Turtle* to get good at it. You should practice it when you feel good and happy. That way, you will be an expert *Turtle* when you get too much energy or too much anger.
9. Remember, you are the boss of your body. You can feel better by doing *Turtle*.





## Closet Counselor

Closet Counselor is a therapist who has 10 years of experience working with children between the ages of 2-19 who have a mental health diagnosis. She is currently licensed as an LICSW. She has experience in residential settings, day treatment, an extended day treatment, in-home therapy, outpatient therapy, and school based therapy. In addition, she is an adoptive parent of two teenagers.

All of this experience has helped her better understand at-risk children and how to creatively help them get their needs met. She currently works with children with anxiety, ADHD, depression, trauma, and ASD and family change. She also works with adoption and children in foster care.

The Closet Counselor strives to create therapeutic interventions that both a child and an adult will be excited to do. She strives to create interventions that are narrative, CBT, or experiential. She is passionate about finding and creating resources and activities that teach skills to children at an age appropriate level.

Additional resources that have been created by Closet Counselor are available on <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Closet-Counselor>.

# Cope-Cake

Coping Skills Worksheets

And

Game



# Cope-Cake

**Objective:** Teach children how to self-regulate and to identify coping skills that work for each individual child

**Coping Skills Social Story**

**Coping Skills Coloring Sheet/ Poster**

**Cope-cake recipe:** Fill in this card to help children create a plan to manage their anxiety or anger.

**List the child's coping skills**

**Cope-Cake Matching-** healthy and unhealthy cope-cakes matching

**What is the size?-** Can be used to identify how helpful a skill is (bigger the cupcake the more helpful of a skill or use it to help identify the size of the trigger.



# What is a Cope-Cake?

A cope-cake is another way of saying **coping skill**.

A **coping skill** is something that makes me feel better when I am mad, worried or sad.

Some **coping skills** are healthy. I can take deep breaths, go for a walk or take a nap.

Some **coping skills** are unhealthy. Unhealthy coping skills are yelling, hitting and hurting myself.

When I choose to do a healthy **coping skill** I am making a good choice.

When I am feeling calm I can return to what I was doing before I was upset.

When I used **healthy coping skills** I am proud of myself and those around me are proud of me too.



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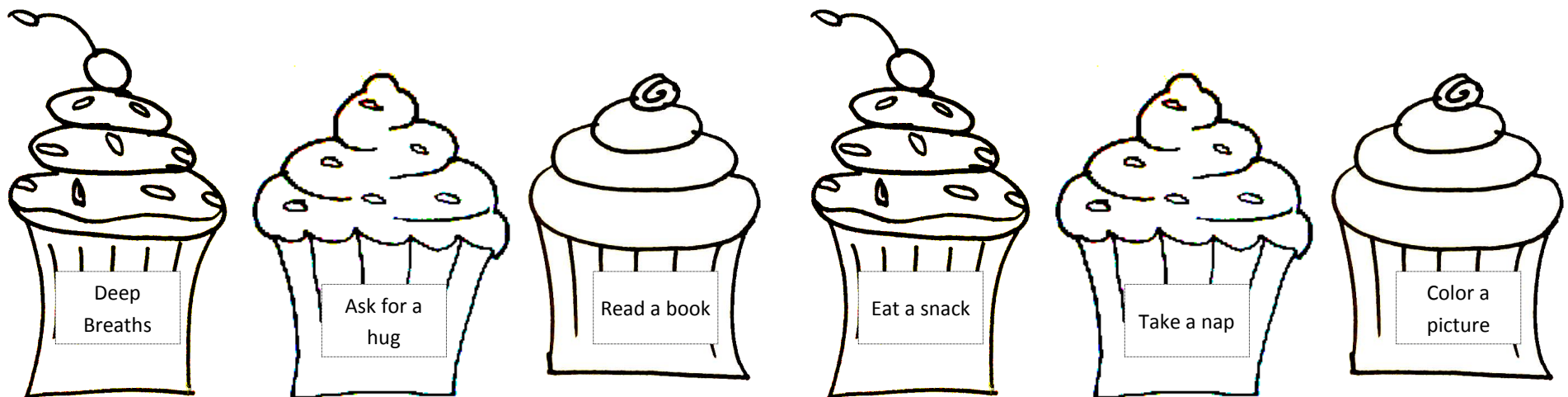
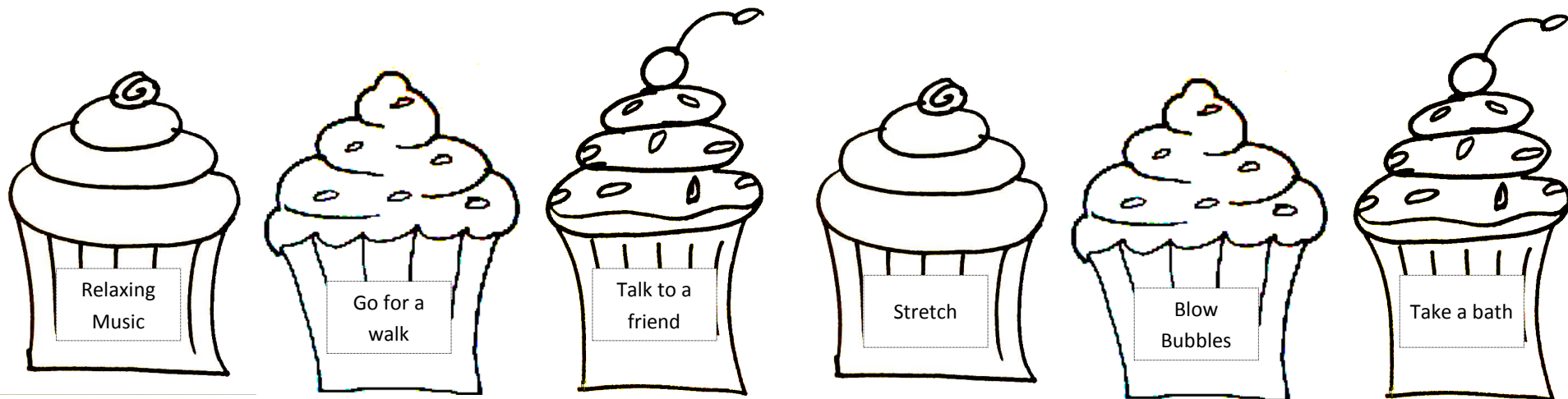
When I choose to do a healthy **coping skill** I am making a good choice.

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# A Dozen Cope-Cake Flavors





# A Dozen Cope-Cake Flavors





# Cope = Cake Recipe



**Ingredients:**

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**Directions:**

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# Cope = Cake Recipe



## Ingredients:

3 deep breaths

4 jumping jacks

1 positive thought- I am trying my hardest

1 hug from my mom

## Directions:

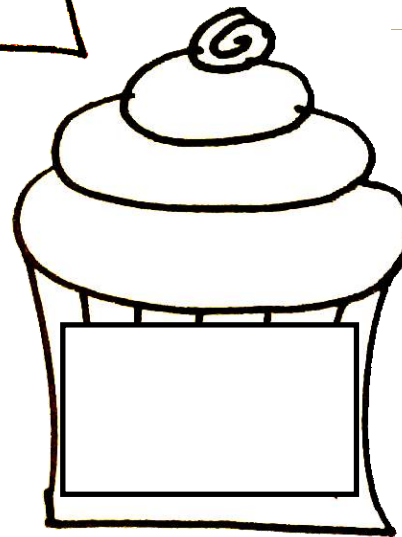
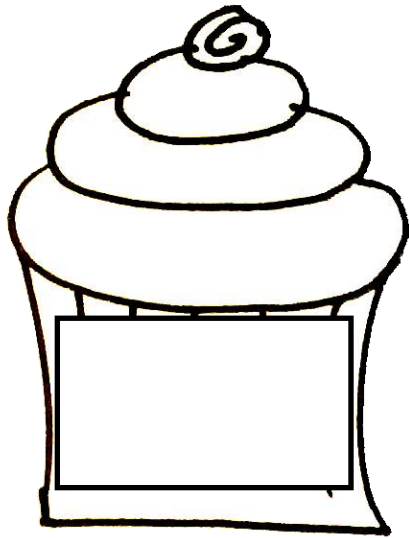
When I feel my fist starting I will take 3 deep breaths.

If this does not calm me I will do 4 jumping jacks while thinking about positive thoughts.

After this I will ask my mom for a hug. When I feel calm I will go back to my school work.

# My Cope-Cakes

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# My Cope-Cakes

---



# My Cope-Cakes

---



# Cope-Cake Matching

There are coping skills that are healthy and skills that are not healthy for children to use.  
Match the healthy and unhealthy cope-cakes to the matching box.



Healthy Coping Skill

Unhealthy Coping Skill



# Cope-Cake Matching

There are coping skills that are healthy and skills that are not healthy for children to use.  
Match the healthy and unhealthy cope-cakes to the matching box.

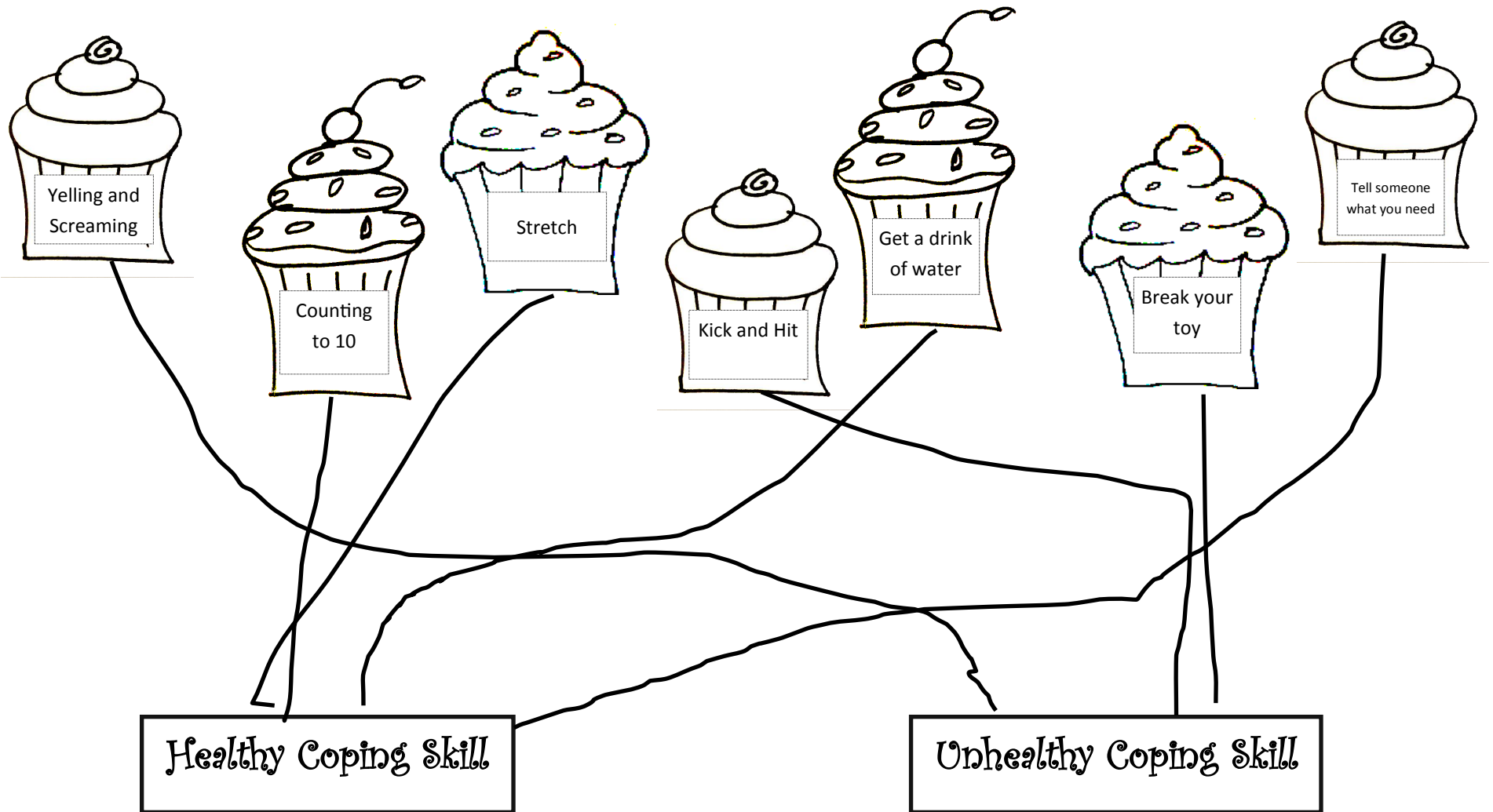


Healthy Coping Skill

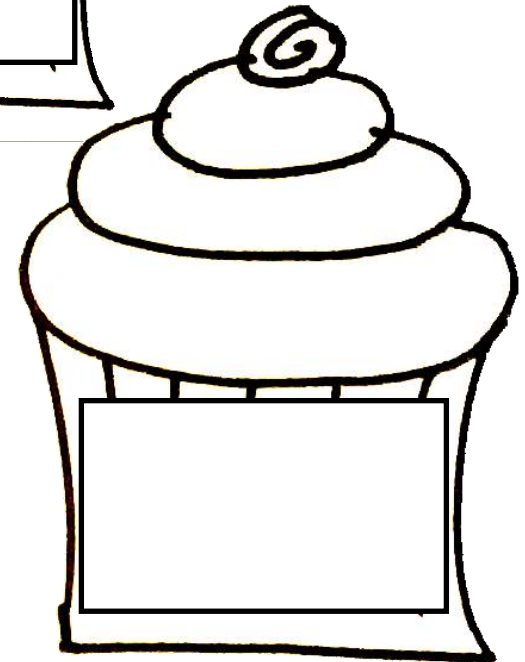
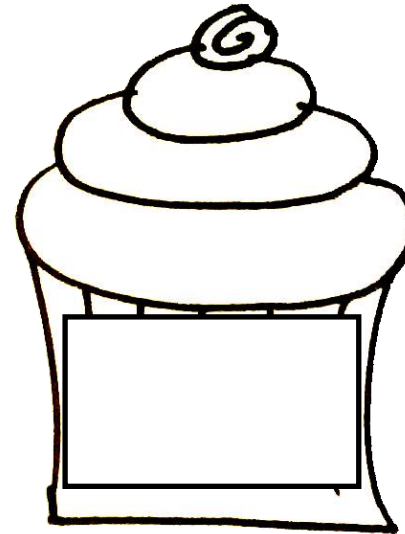
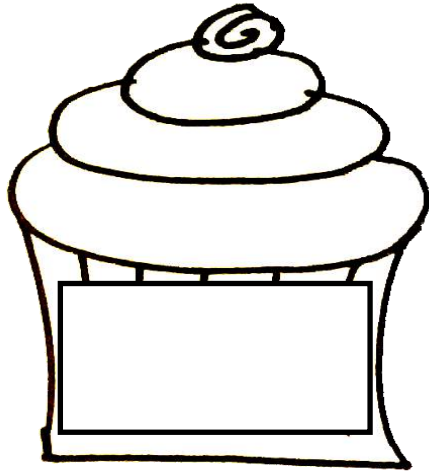
Unhealthy Coping Skill

# Cope-Cake Matching

There are coping skills that are healthy and skills that are not healthy for children to use.  
Match the healthy and unhealthy cope-cakes to the matching box.



What is the size?



## How to play the cope-cake game:

1. Print out the different cupcake pieces (you will need to print enough for everyone to have at least 1 liner, cupcake top, flag, and many of the other pieces) You can have the child color them or print them on color.

There are giant cupcakes and small cupcakes  
paper

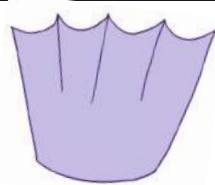
2. Roll the dice, when you roll a shape follow the directions and decorate your cupcake

3. the game ends when your cupcake has enough toppings

4. Student can take it home or use them for a super cute classroom decoration

### Fun Hint:

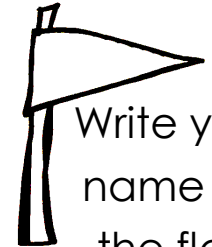
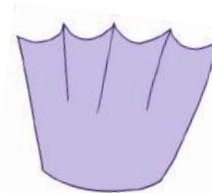
This dice game could be done with real cupcakes and sprinkles



Name a place that makes you feel calm or safe



Practice smelling your cupcake by taking a deep breath through your nose.



Write your name on the flag



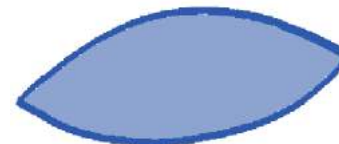
Write a person who helps you on hard days



Write down a positive thought



Fill in this blank  
I am \_\_\_\_\_



Write down a coping skill

## My Cope-Cake

People who help me on hard days:

Mom Paul  
Jenna

My Coping Skills:

drawing, +v, +talk to  
a friend, nap

I feel safe and calm

in my room  
at school

I am

I am smart  
I am creative

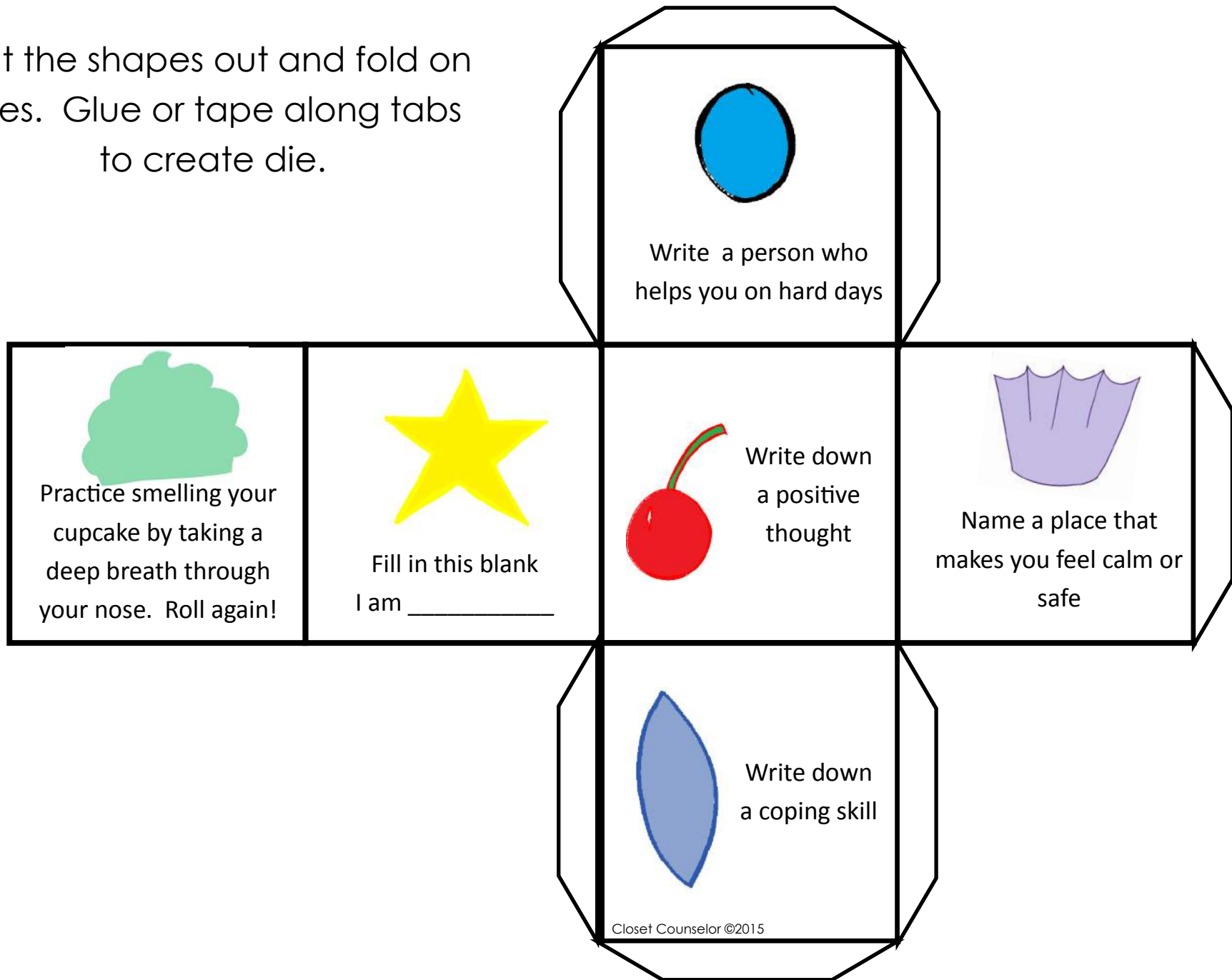
My positive thoughts

I can do anything!  
Even when it is hard-  
I am Strong.

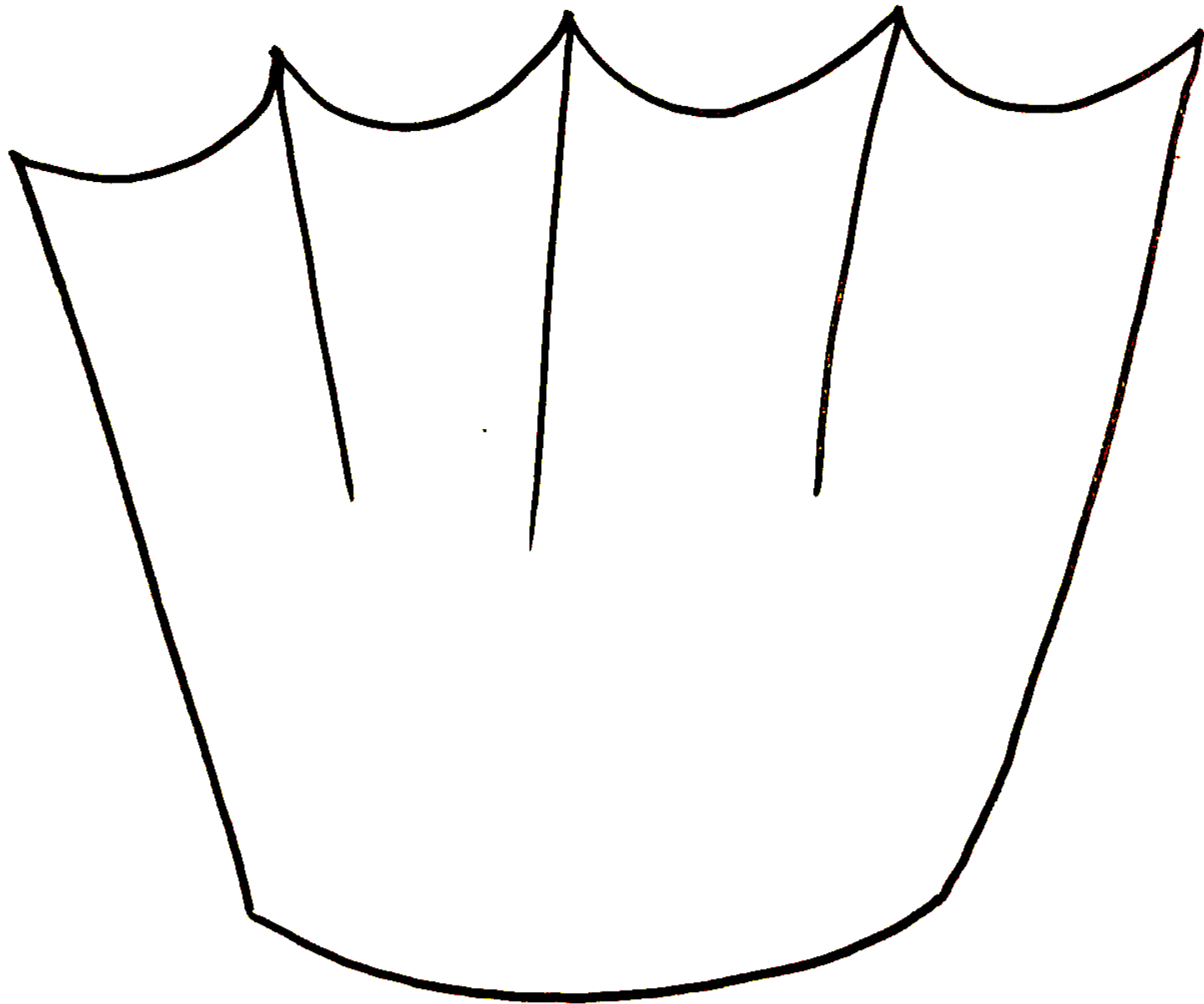


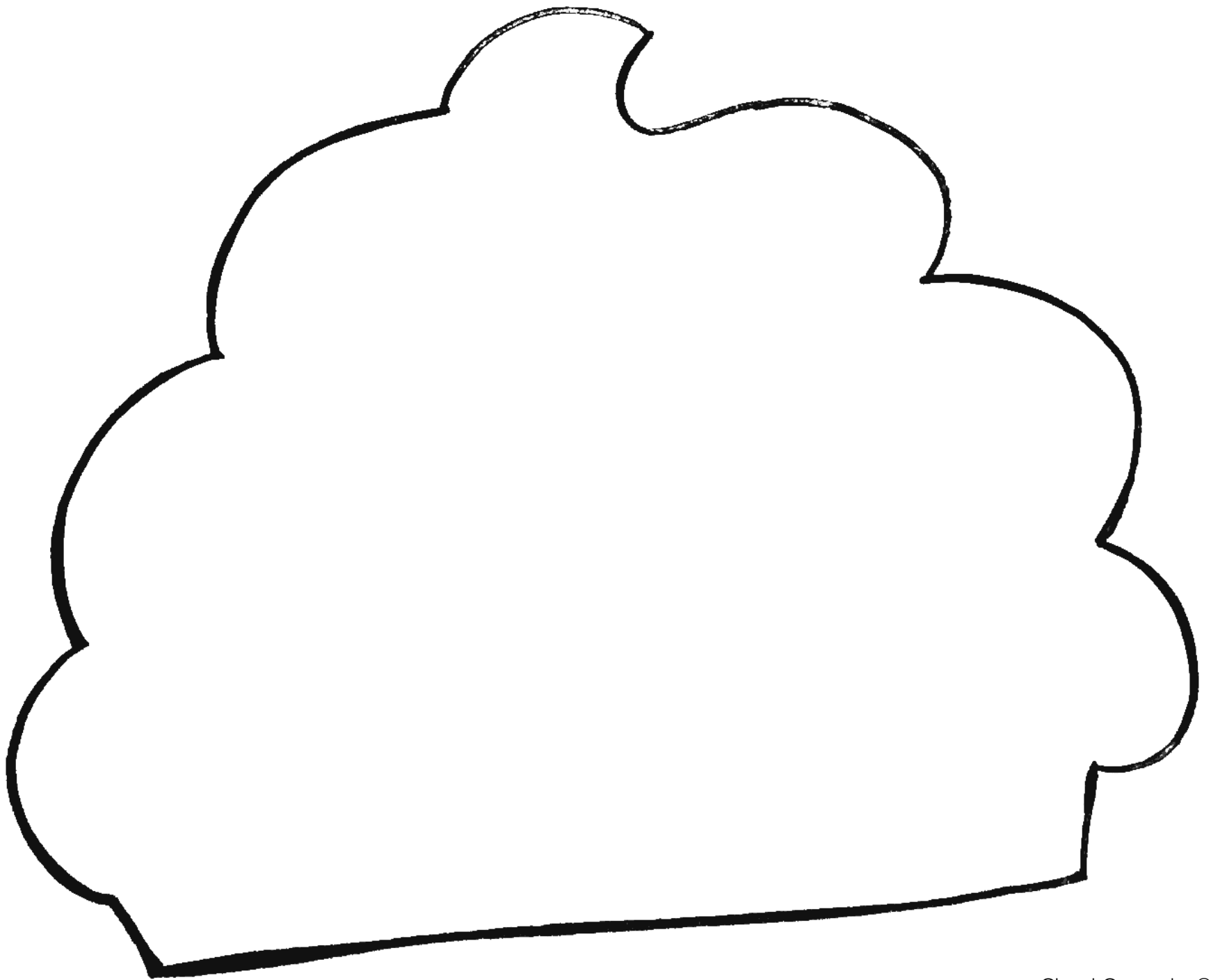
Use the last pages to either color in the skills and the game ends when all the parts are colored, otherwise use the small cupcake and glue the pieces on the paper to create a poster for the child. You could also use stickers instead of the provided sprinkles to reduce the amount you need to cut.

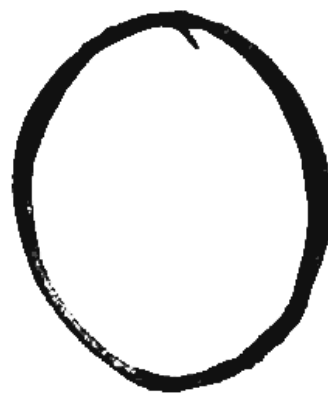
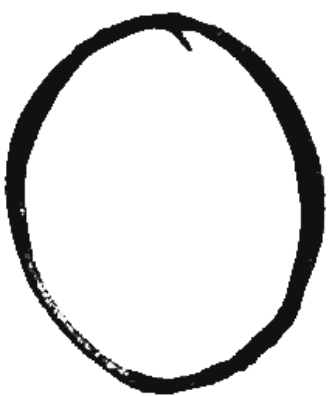
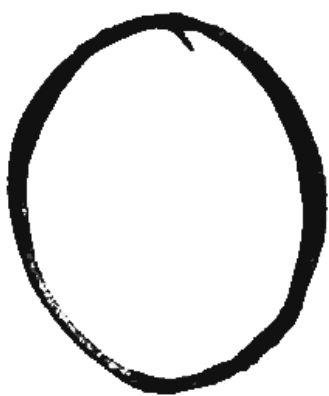
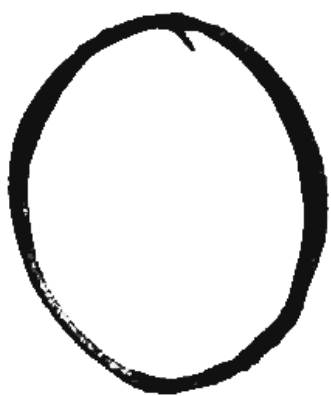
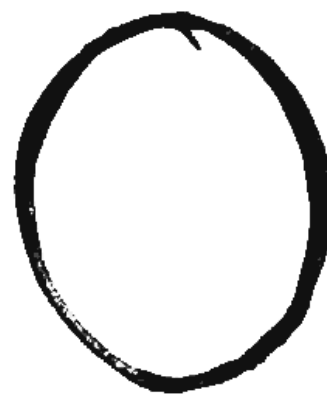
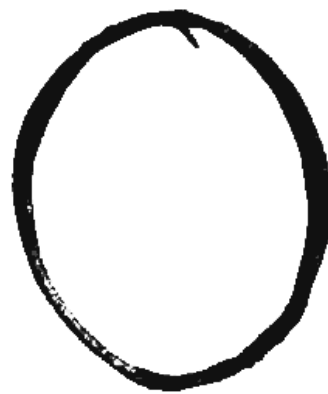
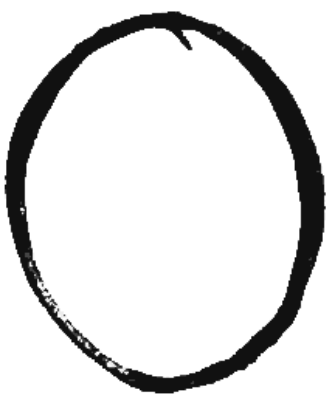
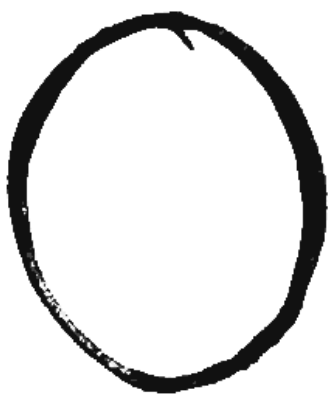
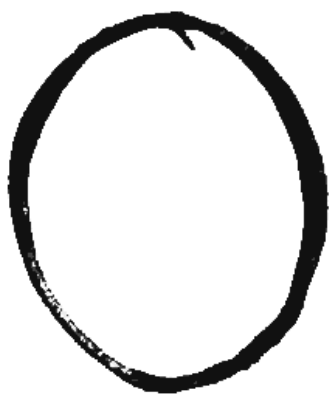
Cut the shapes out and fold on lines. Glue or tape along tabs to create die.



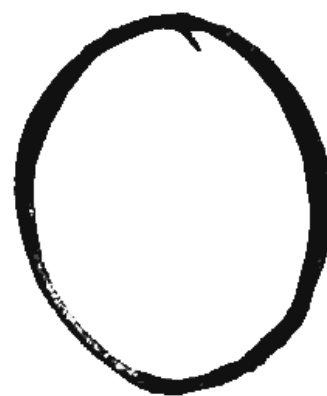
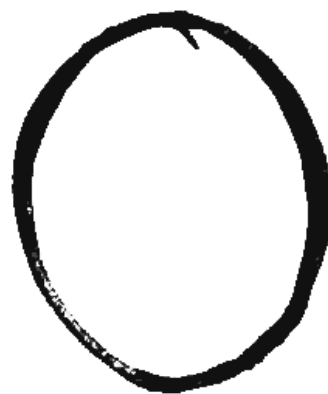
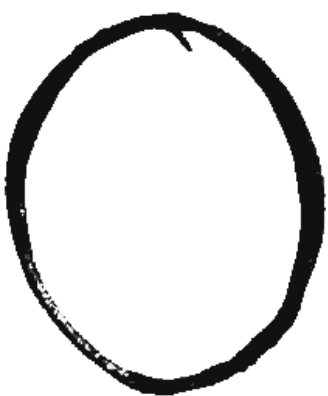
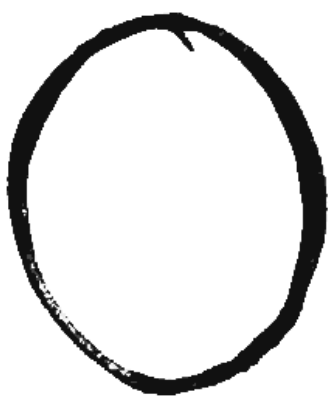
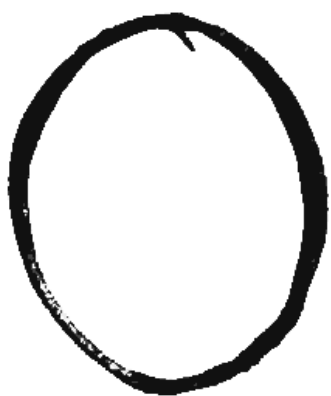


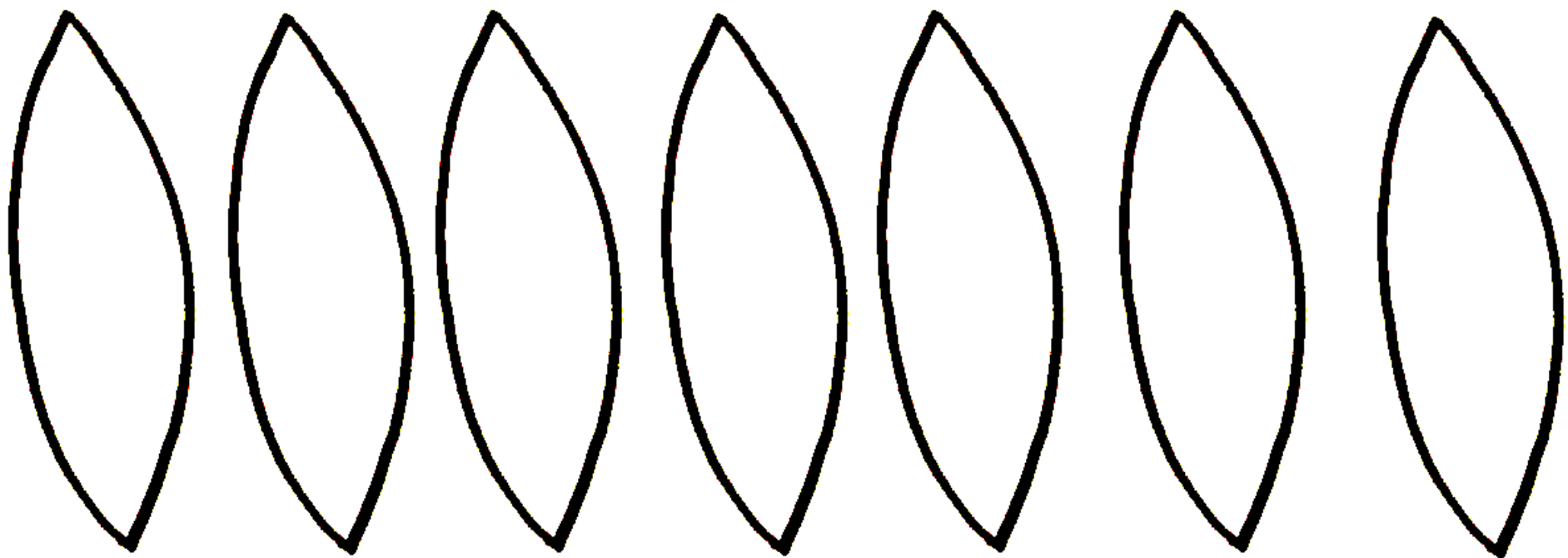




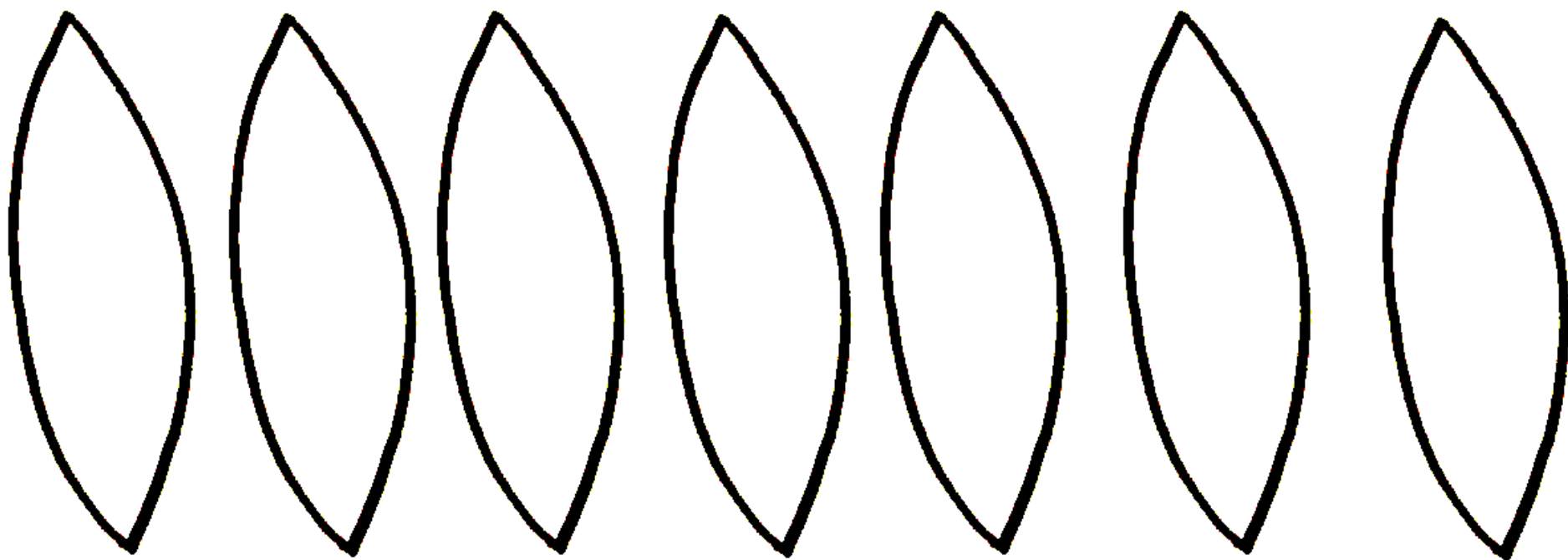


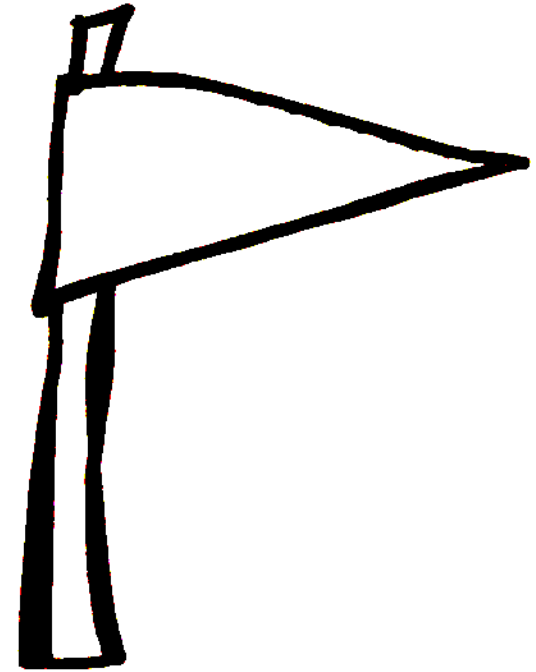
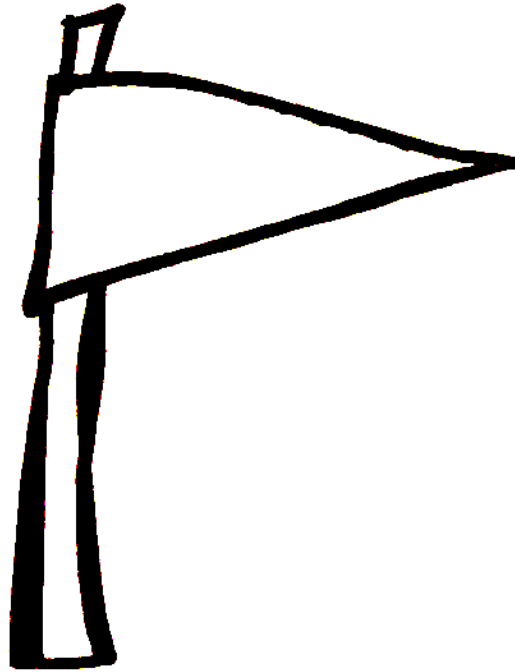
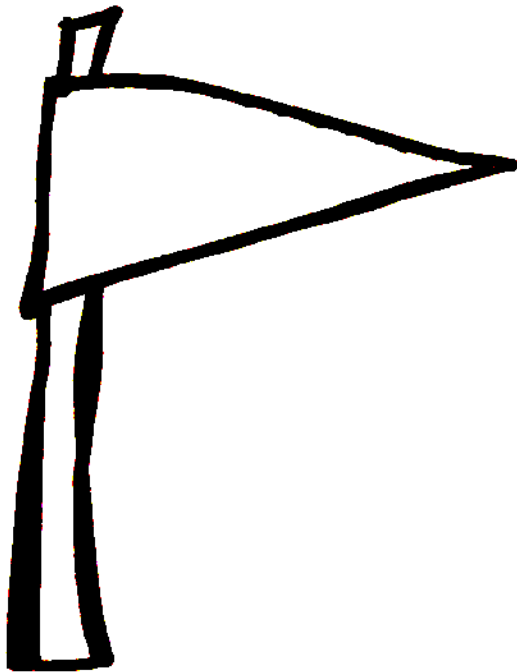
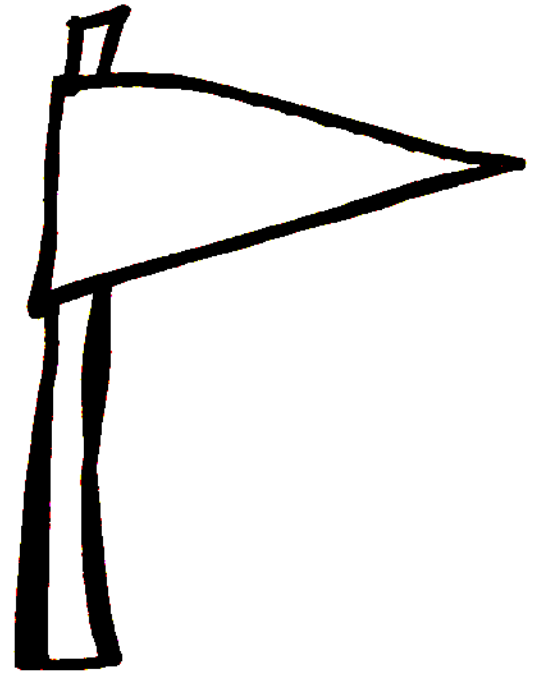
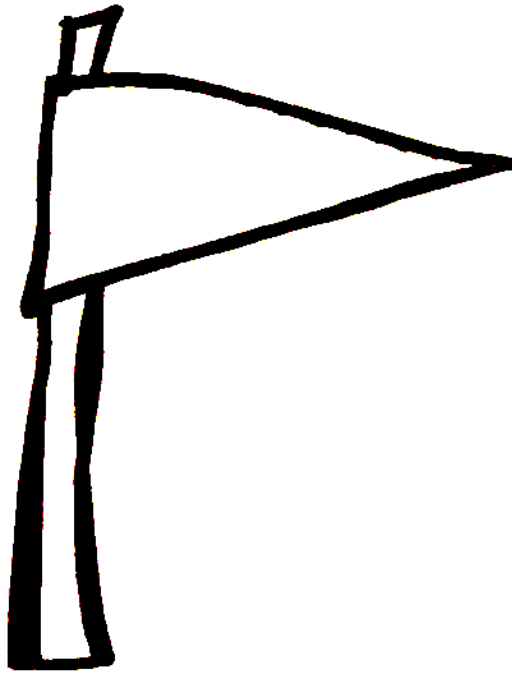
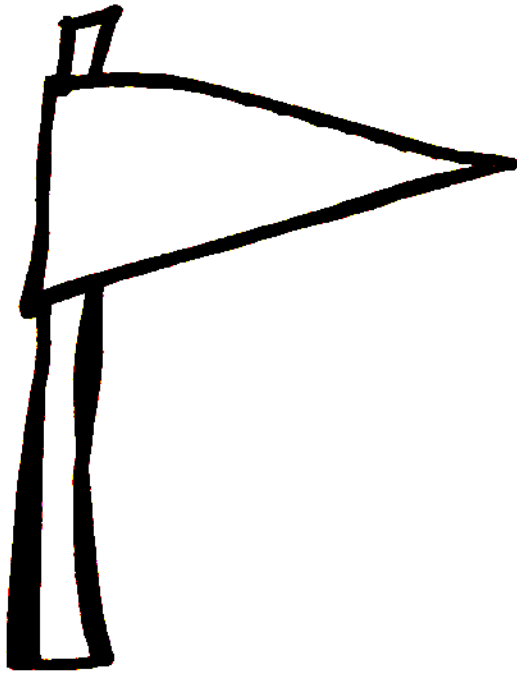
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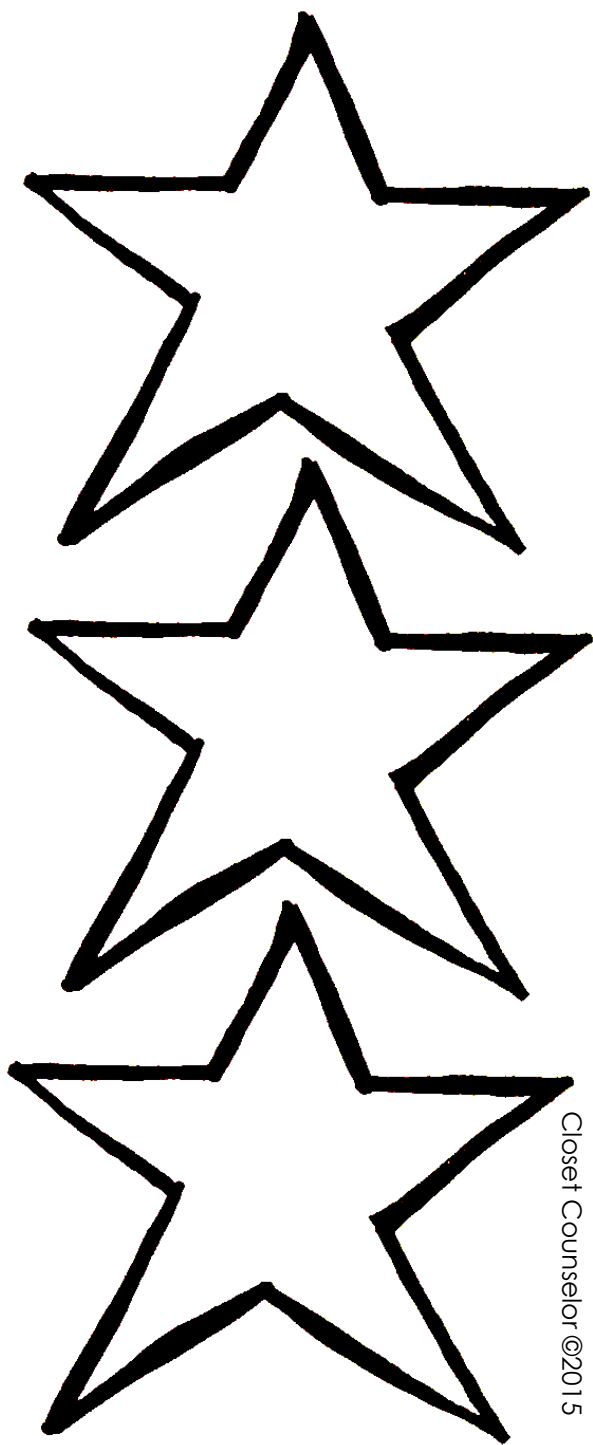
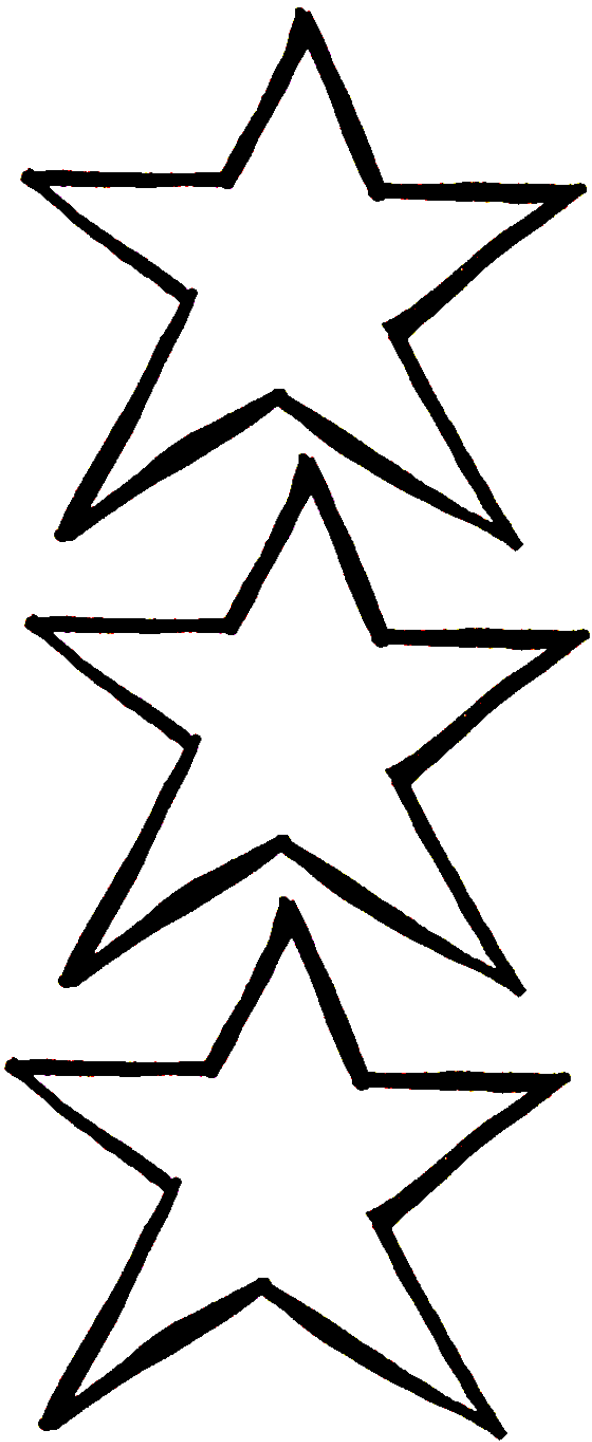
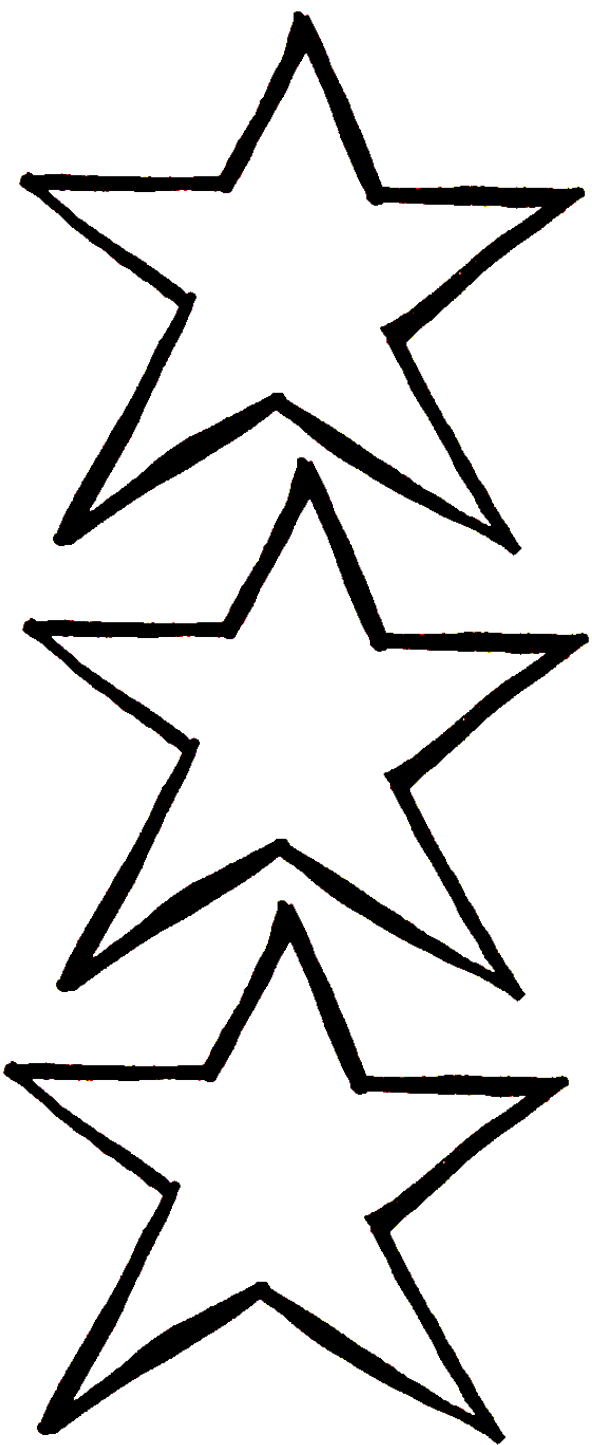




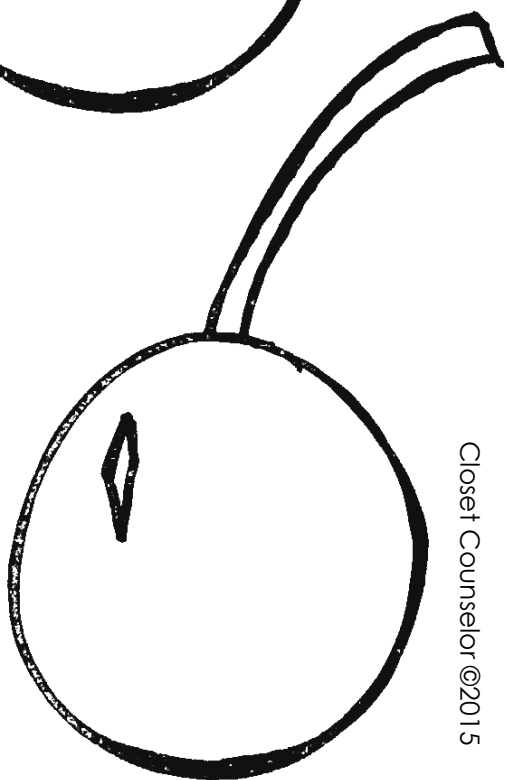
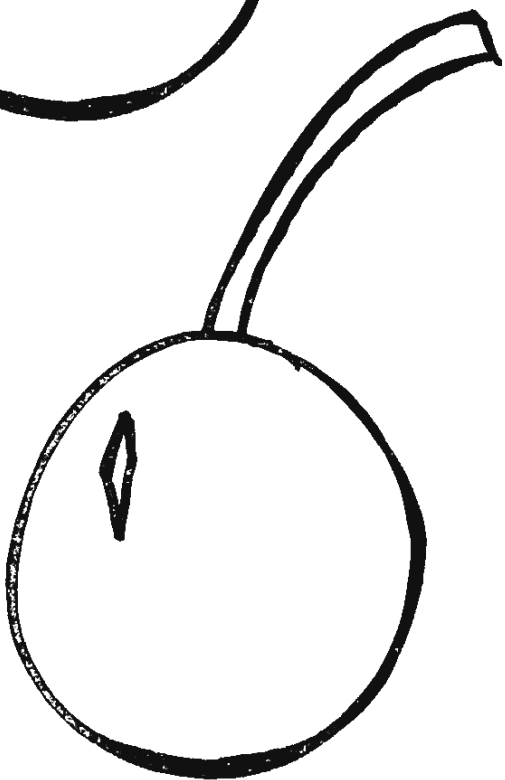
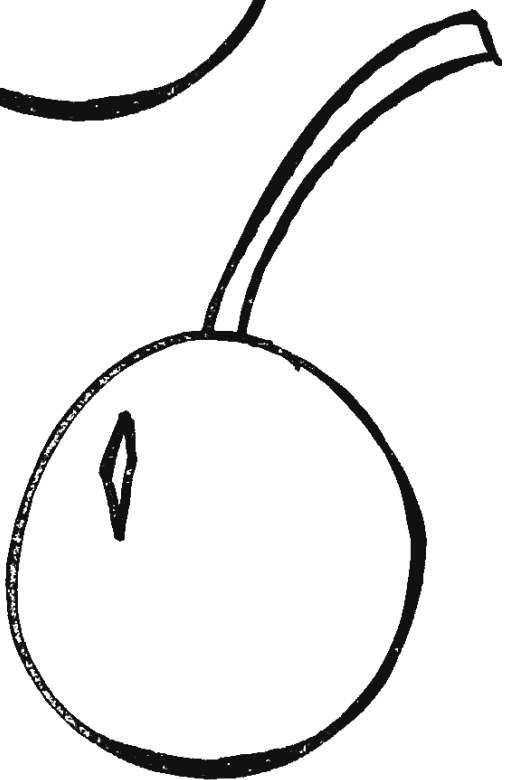
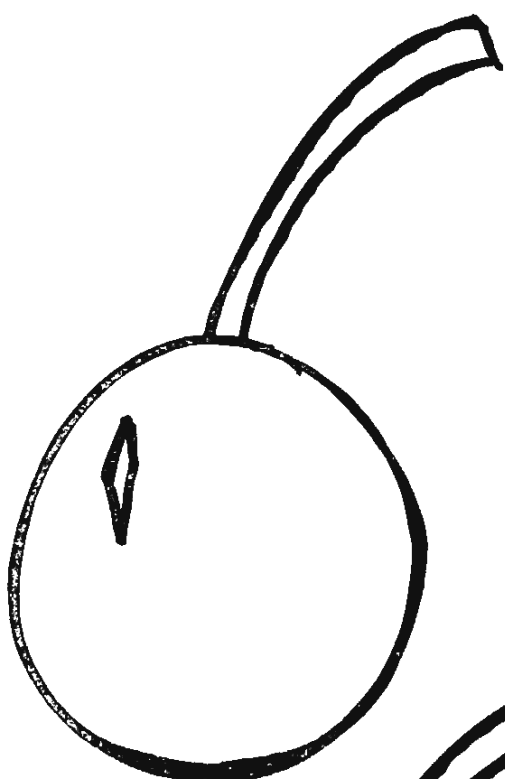
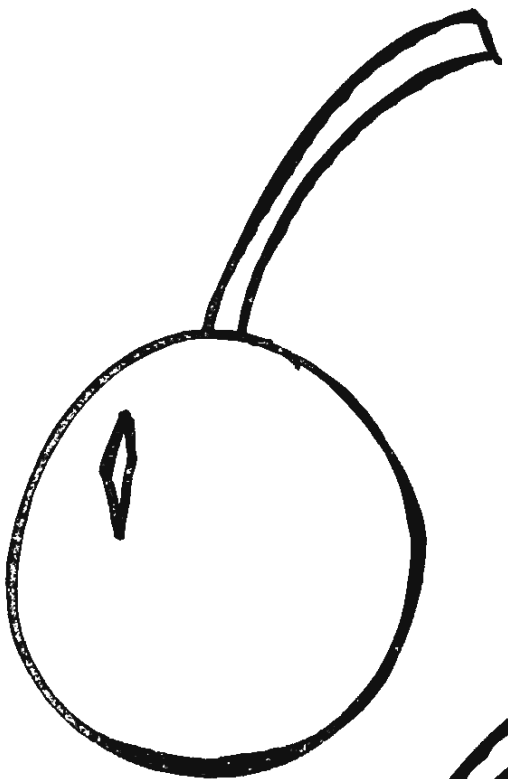
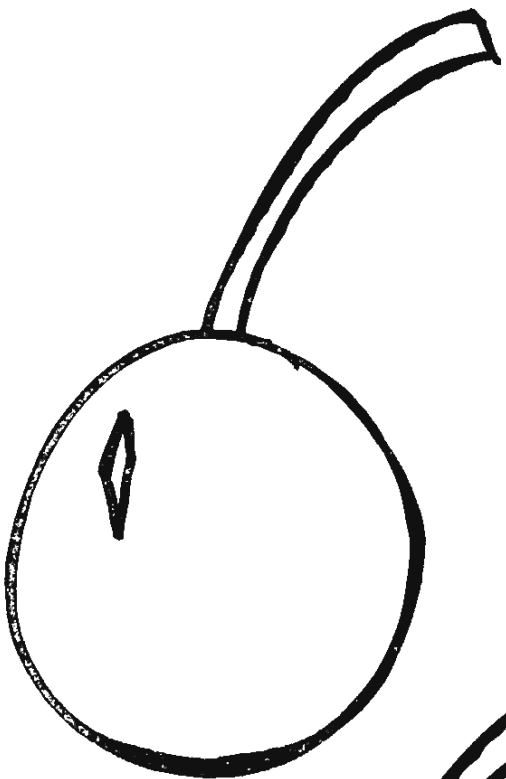
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# My Cope-Cake

People who help me on hard days:

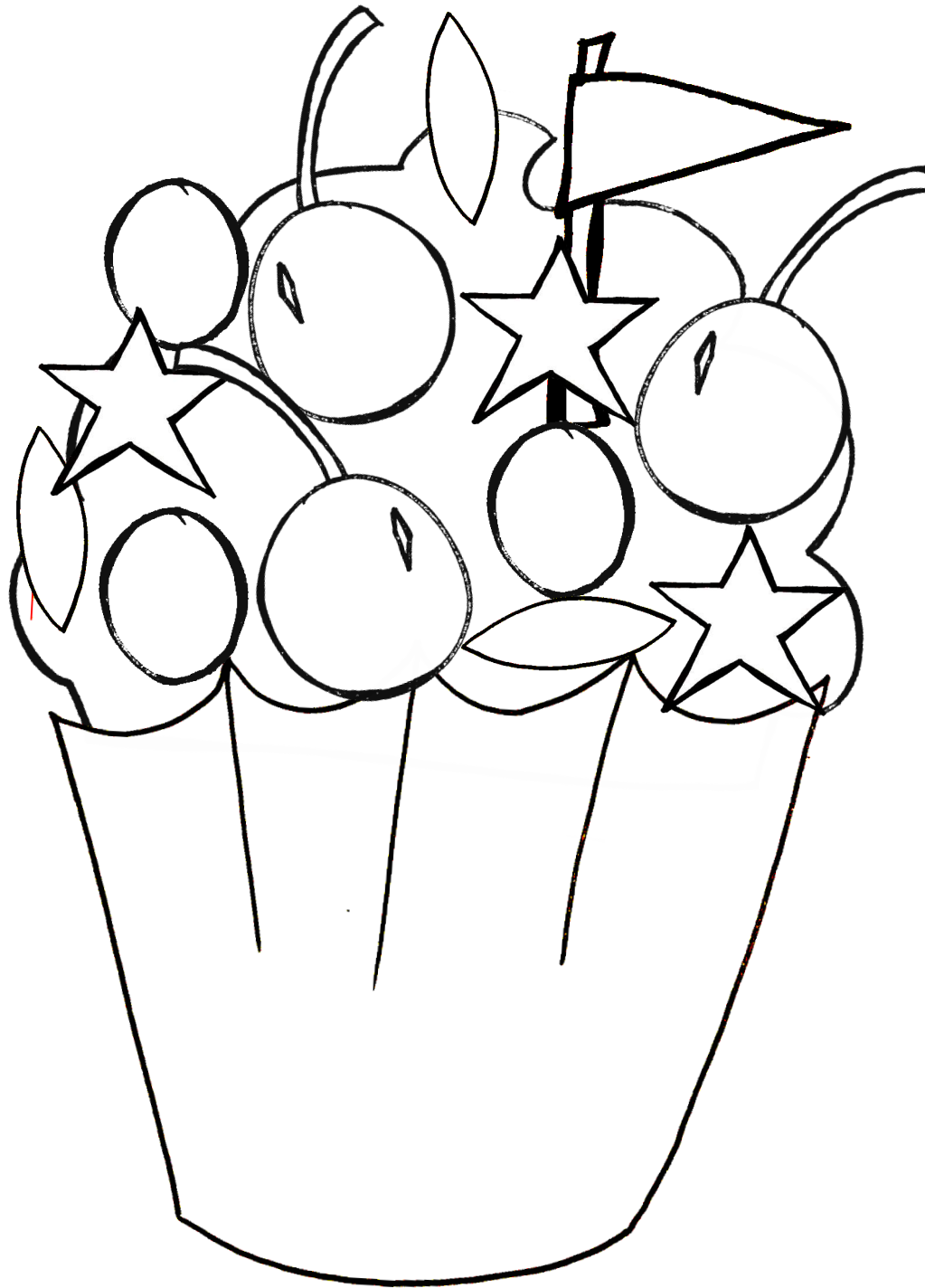
My Coping Skills:

I feel safe and calm

I am

My positive thoughts

# My Cope-Cake



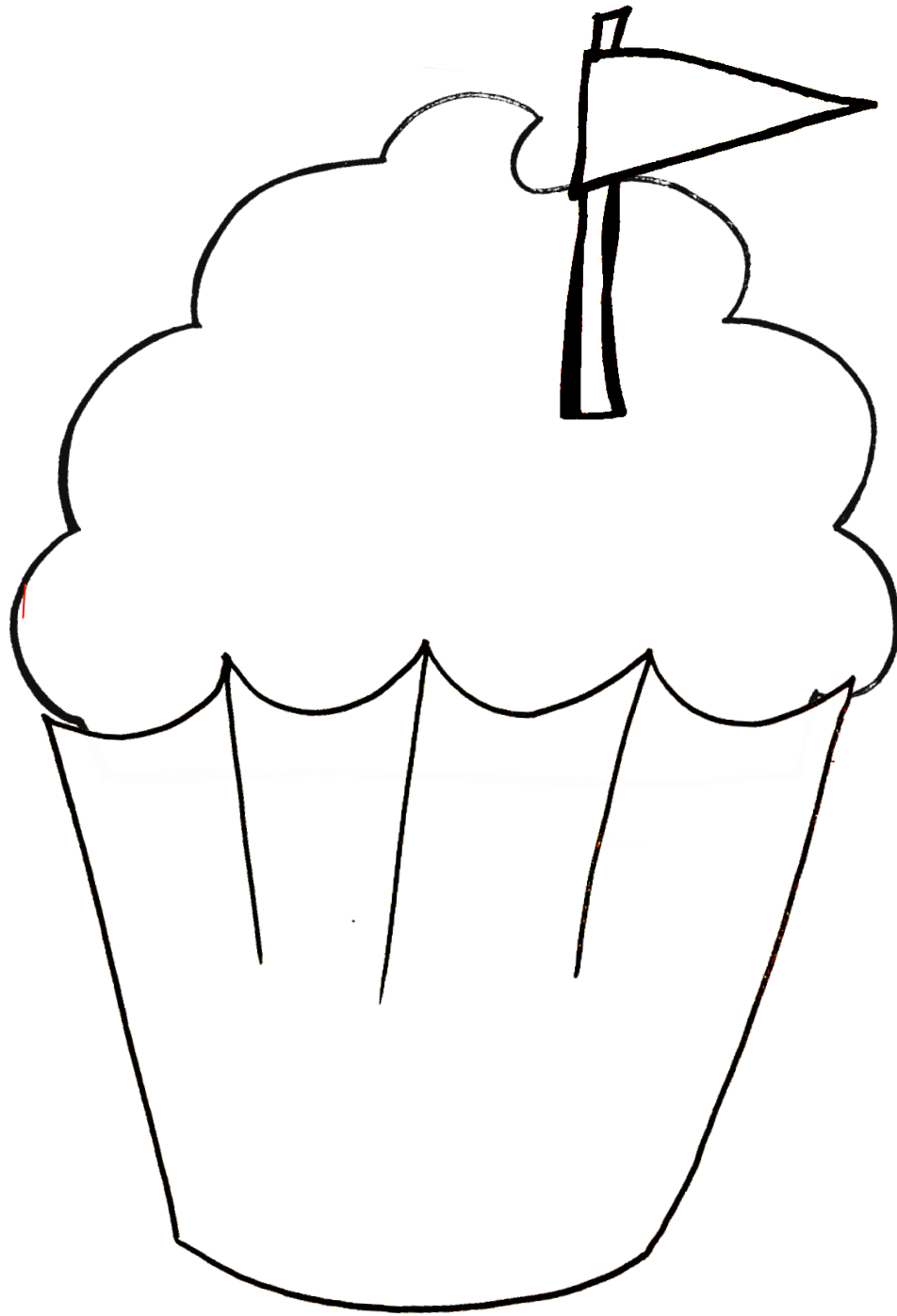
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# My Cope-Cake

People who help me on hard days:

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*Secondary Grades*  
*Grades 7-12*



## Plum Tree Child and Adolescent Psychology

Located in St. Charles, Illinois, Plum Tree Child and Adolescent Psychology provides therapy for children and support for parents. They conduct psychological and neurological testing for academic, diagnostic, and clinical issues.

Plum Tree cares for children and teens with anxiety, depression, inattention, impulsivity, grief, and low self-esteem. They help children control their behaviors, feelings, and thoughts.

Plum Tree's Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) program helps self-injury or suicidal teens. In addition, ADHD coaching helps teens achieve better grades.

Additional information about Plum Tree Child and Adolescent Psychology can be found on their website at [www.theplumtree.net](http://www.theplumtree.net), or via telephone at 630.549.6245.

Stop your pan from boiling over!  
Use coping skills. Coping skills are things you do to stay happy and safe. You use different skills, depending on how hot your pan is. Adults help you by doing things that match how upset you are. Write 3 skills for YOU and for ADULTS to use for each pan.

### SIMMER

Good Mood  
Happy Thoughts  
Nice Behaviors



### ROLLING BOIL

Low Mood  
Angry Thoughts  
Oops! Behaviors



### BOILING OVER

Terrible Mood  
Out-of-Control Thoughts  
Unsafe Behaviors



### My Coping Skills



Goal: Keep pan simmering

Goal: Return to simmer

Goal: Return to simmer

### How Adults Help Me



Goal: Maintain simmer

Goal: Lower heat, gently stir food, add something to decrease boiling

Goal: Immediately remove pan from heat, protect from hot food spilling out, call help into the kitchen.

# Imagery

1. Imagery is just daydreaming, but a little more structured and purposeful. It can be very helpful when you're upset or stressed out. The rule of thumb for imagery should be "more than a minute, less than an hour." It is a short escape from an upsetting situation.
2. There are lots of ways to use imagery to relax. You can imagine any one of these:
  - a. Relaxing place
  - b. Soothing person
  - c. Secret lockbox
3. There are two KEYS to effective imagery:
  - a. Get all your senses involved: sight, sound, taste, touch, smell. The more sensorily-rich your imagery is, the more effective and relaxing it can be.
  - b. Breathe deeply and calmly throughout
4. For **relaxing place**: Think of a place you have been to, or seen in a movie, or read about in a book, or otherwise imagined. This place should be safe. Some people like to think of the beach, a forest, or grandma's porch swing, for example. Once you have that place in mind, really focus on what it feels like to be there. What are you wearing? What do you hear? What are the smells? Focus on the space between your feet and the floor. Now what do you hear? Is there a taste in your mouth? Focus on the space between your teeth and tongue. Are there people around? Is there a breeze? Ask and answer these questions gently, as they come up. And if you don't like the answers, imagine them changing.
5. For **soothing person**: Imagine someone who is kind, sees the best in you, and is never cruel. (Crushes don't work for this; the person is probably an adult or close friend). This might be someone in your life right now. Or a fictional character. Or, if you believe in a higher power, it could be this, too. Once you have the person in mind, imagine in detail what they look like, what they are saying, and what you feel like with them.
6. For **secret lockbox**: Imagine—in great detail—a place in your mind where you keep what is most special to you: your favorite memories, your good feelings, your hopes and dreams. Very clearly construct in your mind what the lockbox looks like, and where you keep it. Open the box (do you need a key? A code? Is it at the bottom of the ocean?) and sift through the lockbox, finding some or all of the pleasant things you keep in there.



# Pluses & Minuses

When you have a tough decision to make, complete this chart. It can help you decide what to do.

When you're done, show this worksheet to someone you trust, who loves you, to help with your decision.

CHOICE 1: \_\_\_\_\_

CHOICE 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Pluses of Choice 1

Pluses of Choice 2

Minuses of Choice 1

Minuses of Choice 2

Pluses of NOT doing Choice 1

Pluses of NOT doing Choice 2

Minuses of NOT doing Choice 1

Minuses of NOT doing Choice 2



[www.theplumtree.net](http://www.theplumtree.net)

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# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation is good to do when you are stressed out, sad, angry, or nervous. It buys you time to calm down and prepare good solutions to your problems. You can do it quickly (in a couple minutes), or take your time (20 minutes). You can do this in public, since it's not very noticeable. However, it is usually more effective when you're alone. (If you're in a crowded place, steal away to a restroom stall, if possible...)
2. Sit or stand comfortably, but straight.
3. Close your eyes. (Oops, once you have the rest of this memorized...)
4. Take three deep breaths—in and out—through your nose.
5. Starting at your feet, feel them TOTALLY relax, and become even floaty-feeling.
6. Then, think of each body part as you move up your body. As you do, each part relaxes.
7. VERY SLOWLY, think of and relax—ankles, calves, shins, knees, thighs, hamstrings, bottom, abdomen, lower back, stomach, middle back, spine, chest, upper back, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, wrists, hands, fingers, neck, chin, tongue, eyes, forehead, top-of-your-head.
8. If you want to go back down again, that can be even better.
9. The only way Progressive Muscle Relaxation can be effective is if you practice it when you're not upset. That way it becomes a kind of habit. You can train yourself to automatically think of it when you're stressed out, mad, sad, angry, or nervous. It's also a great way to fall asleep...
10. When you're upset, your brain has difficulties coming up with good ideas. It is usually not how upset you feel that makes a situation terrible. What makes things really bad is when you react to situations while you're upset. It is absolutely worth it to take a couple minutes to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Then, come back to the situation with a clearer head, and problem-solving is a little easier.







Since 1964, CHOC Children's Hospital has been steadfastly committed to providing the highest quality medical care to children. Affiliated with the University of California, Irvine, the regional pediatric healthcare network includes a state-of-the-art 316-bed main hospital facility in the City of Orange, and a hospital-within-a-hospital in Mission Viejo.

CHOC also offers many primary and specialty care clinics, more than 100 additional programs and services, a pediatric residency program, and four centers of excellence—The CHOC Children's Heart, Neuroscience, Orthopedic, and Hyundai Cancer Institutes.

CHOC is the first hospital devoted exclusively to caring for children in Orange County. Since opening its doors, CHOC has led the way in many areas of pediatric health care.

# COPING SKILLS



# BELLY BREATHING



**Helps with:** Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger

**What is it?** Belly breathing is a special way of controlling your breathing that can help you relax, feel better and help your body to work its best.

**What do I need?** You really don't need any tools but yourself to make this work, but some things that may help are:

- A comfortable place.
- Your hand.
- Items such as a book, a pinwheel, bubbles or a harmonica.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## **When to use it?**

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry or are in pain. You can use it when you first notice these feelings, while you have these feelings or after the feelings to help keep them away.
- You can use it to help you feel more comfortable with many things.
- Try to practice 2-3 times per day. In order for this to work at stressful times, you must practice breathing techniques frequently when you are calm. By becoming aware of your breathing and learning to use belly breathing it will become more natural and automatic.

## **How do I do it?**

1. Get into a comfortable position and let all of your muscles be soft and loose.
2. Imagine that your belly is a balloon and that right now it's deflated.
3. Put your hand on top of your belly.
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose while you count to 3. Feel the balloon fill with air as it raises the hand on your belly.
5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth while you count to 5. Feel the balloon get flat as the hand on your belly lowers.
6. Try to breathe out for longer (5-6 seconds) than you breathe in (3-4 seconds.)
7. Imagine that the uncomfortable feelings leave your body as you breathe out.



### Tips:

- To check whether you are doing belly breathing or chest breathing, you may find it helpful to place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. The hand on your belly should be moving up and down while the hand on your chest shouldn't move at all.
- Some kids might want to lie down on the floor with a small toy, book or paper cup on their belly. With each breath, the object should move up and down.
- While you are exhaling slowly, you can:
  - Keep a pinwheel spinning for 3-4 seconds.
  - Blow out through the straw part of a pinwheel (take the top off) to help slow down your breathing.
  - Blow long, slow streams of bubbles from a bubble wand.
  - Hold a note while blowing on a harmonica for 3- 4 seconds.

**How can this help me?** Breathing calms the mind and produces a state of relaxation in your body. This is because when you breathe deeply, the message "calm down and relax" gets sent your brain. Then your brain sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as a fast heart rate and quick breathing, all decrease as you breathe deeply. For example, Belly Breathing relaxes your muscles, calms your nerves and helps release chemicals (called endorphins) in your body that reduce pain.

# GUIDED IMAGERY



**Helps with:** Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Fatigue

**What is it?** Guided Imagery is a tool that helps your body by letting your mind take you to healthy places that feel good. It uses your imagination to change your thoughts by focusing on your senses (sound, vision, smell, taste, touch, movement.) It's like daydreaming – when your mind begins to wander and you imagine that you are doing something fun. You can decide what to think about and what to imagine and the best part is that your brain will listen.

**What do I need?** The main things you need are your brain and your imagination. Other things you may use:

- A favorite memory or pictures of things you like doing or places you wish you could be.
- A favorite smell or scent.
- A CD with a visualization or imagery script.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry, worried or are in pain.
- You can use it during times you wish you could go or be somewhere else because you are uncomfortable.

## How do I do it?

1. Close your eyes.
2. Take 3-5 deep belly breaths (see card #1: Belly Breathing.)
3. It's time to imagine you are going to your special place. Where would you like to go? If you could be anywhere in the world at this moment, where would you be? At the beach with family, out with friends, at a sports game, somewhere feeling healthy?
4. When you have picked out a place, picture yourself there. Through your mind, you can be at this place as if this were really happening.
5. Use all of your daydreaming skills and think about every little thing that makes this place and experience just as you like it.
  - a. What do you see?
  - b. What does it smell like?
  - c. What does it taste like?
  - d. What sounds do you hear?

- e. What do things that you can touch feel like?
- f. How does your body feel as it moves (or rests) just the way you want it to?
6. Be aware of how comfortable your body feels when you are imagining yourself in this place. You may notice your breathing slow down and your muscles feel looser as your whole body starts to relax.

**Tips:**

- A favorite smell or scent can make your imagination activity more enjoyable and bring your special place to life. Using a special scent before or during the imagery activity can help you to feel even more comfortable and relaxed.
- Sometimes people find it difficult to do this imagination activity on their own. If this is the case for you, you may be able to use a photograph or a picture from a book or the computer to help jump start your imagination. It may be helpful to have someone, like your mom or dad, lead you through this activity. Or maybe you already have a CD that describes a special, relaxing place to you. You can listen to this CD and use it to help your mind picture yourself there. Or, if you are in the hospital, the Child Life department can loan you a CD.

**How can this help me?** Have you noticed that when you think about sad stuff you feel sad or when you think about things you are worried about you feel nervous or when you actually think about your pain, you hurt more? Fortunately, just like your body and brain listen to you when you are thinking about bad stuff you can start to think about good stuff to feel better. Usually when you think about good stuff, you start to feel better and more comfortable. It's like changing the channel on your TV to something you really want to watch or turning the volume up or down in your body to a level that is more comfortable for you. If you're sad or afraid, your mind can bring you to places that feel happy and calm. If you have pain, for example, your mind can help you picture yourself comfortable and relaxed. You can find the places in your mind where you're in control of your body and where you feel happy and relaxed.



# JOURNALING



**Helps with:** Everything.

**What is it?** You can use a journal or computer to write about your experiences. It's a way to get your thoughts and feelings out. You can keep these writings to look back on yourself or to share with others. Or you can tear them up or delete them right away. It doesn't matter what you do because the most important part is just to release the feelings and better understand them for yourself.

**What do I need?** A piece of paper and a pen or pencil is all you need. However, other things you might want to use are:

- A special notebook.
- A computer.
- An audio or video recorder.
- Crayons or markers, stickers, pictures.
- If you are in the hospital, the Child Life department can provide you with a notebook, computer or crayons/markers and stickers.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it

- When you can't seem to get things off your mind.
- When you are feeling scared, nervous, upset, sad or angry about something.
- When you want to share with others about what is going on with you.
- When you are excited about something that just happened or is about to happen.
- When you want to encourage, help or inspire others.

## How do I do it?

1. You can write, type, draw or even talk about your thoughts and feelings.
2. Be open and honest.
3. Consider writing about an upsetting emotional experience, especially if it is something that you haven't talked about before.
4. It is helpful to keep a balanced view, writing about both the positive and negative feelings you are having.
5. You can tell about the lessons or things you've learned through a particular experience. What would you want other kids who are going through the same thing to know? Who knows, maybe you or someone else might learn from your experience.

6. You can also talk about things you are looking forward to, things you are proud of, or goals for your future.
7. Try not to spend too much time writing about the details of the situation. Writing about your feelings is what really pays off. Really let go and explore your deepest thoughts and feelings about this experience. As you are writing, you may discover ways that this experience connects with past situations, feelings or relationships.
8. If you can, try to journal for about 15 minutes each day for 10 days and then twice weekly for the next month. You can write about the same experience for several days or about different emotional experiences each day.

### **Tips:**

- Remember that at first you might find it upsetting to write about some topics or experiences. But those feelings will usually settle down within a day or two. Often, after only a few days of writing, many people find surprising and unexpected insights that can lead to important changes in the way you feel from day-to-day.
- A special notebook can hold all of your experiences. Place this somewhere you will always know where it is so you are never searching around the house for paper.
- If you don't like writing with a pen and paper, using a computer for keeping an electronic journal may be the way to go for you. You may also consider blogging (but remember, blogs are not private and you are sharing your information with the world.)
- Another option if you don't like writing with a pen and paper is to use an audio or video recorder for a media journal.
- Some people draw in their journal to express their feelings through art. If this sounds like you, grab some crayons, markers or color pencils and add drawings to your journal.
- You may want pictures, photographs or stickers to add to your journal entries to fully capture the experience in a way that is meaningful to you.

**How can this help me?** Getting your feelings out, as you can through journaling, can help you to better understand the problems you are dealing with and to find good solutions that can help you feel better. Did you also know that stress from any part of life (including school, friends, and family) has an effect on our physical health? Research shows that the effect of stress on our health is the biggest when these issues and feelings are not directly expressed. So, finding a way to “get your feelings out” cannot only help with your feelings but also with your physical health.

# GETTING ACTIVE



**Helps with:** Pain, Sleeping, Fatigue, Sadness, Anger, Anxiety or Worries, Improving Health

**What is it?** Getting active means exercising or moving your body.

**What do I need?** Depending on the activity you choose, some things can be done without any tools.

(If you have any medical problems, talk to your doctor first about what activities are safe for you.)


- Have comfortable athletic shoes that fit well.
- Make sure to use protective equipment (like a helmet for bike riding or skateboarding.)
- Some activities require special equipment (like a bike, a football, baseball and mitt, music for dancing, a DVD for yoga, just to name a few.)

## **When to use it?**

- Do this anytime.
- When you are bored or tired.
- When you have extra energy.
- When you are sad or nervous about something.
- When you are angry and need to blow off some steam.

**What can I do?** There are so many ways to be active. The possibilities are endless.

- Go for a walk.
- Ride your bike.
- Jump rope.
- Go for a swim.
- Do yoga.
- Go rollerblading.
- Go hiking.
- Play a sport with friends, like basketball, soccer, kickball or tennis.
- Wii Fit games.
- Dance
- Do housework or chores.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator (little changes help in big ways over time.)

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- If you are in the hospital, talk to your doctor about what you can do to stay active while hospitalized.

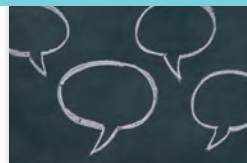
### **How do I do it?**

1. Try different activities to figure out what you enjoy doing. It will be easier to make things that you like to do a part of your routine.
2. Start out slowly, especially if you haven't been active in a while.
3. Slowly increase the amount of time you spend doing your enjoyable activities.
4. Notice how great it feels as your body gets stronger and stronger.
5. Work your way up to exercising 3 times per week for at least 30 minutes.

### **Tips:**

- Ask a family member to get active with you. Ask a friend to be your exercise buddy. This can help you get motivated, makes exercise more fun and give you time to spend time with others.

**How can this help me?** Research shows that physical activity can help you feel stronger, have more energy, sleep better, improve mood, improve memory and concentration, decrease pain, decrease stress and improve health in general.



# TALK BACK TO YOURSELF

**Helps with:** Pain, Fatigue, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Sadness, Frustration

**What is it?** Talking back to yourself (also known as positive self-talk) is a way to change your thoughts to be more positive, hopeful and optimistic, even when it seems impossible to do because you are going through such a tough time.

**What do I need?** Just yourself and your amazing brain! Some things that may help are:

- Pictures of people, quotes or other things that inspire you and make you feel good.
- Someone who is very positive or who you like to be around.
- A notebook.
- You can find a variety of inspirational quotes online or in books (check your library or bookstore). You can ask your parents or Child Life Specialist for help.


*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## **When to use it?**

- Do this anytime you want to feel better. You can use it when you are feeling nervous, stressed, tired, crabby, frustrated, sad, angry or are in pain.
- You can use it to help you feel more comfortable with many things. Try using these thoughts before a situation that makes you nervous, stressed or uncomfortable to make it easier to face and get through it.
- You can use it at home, in school, with friends, during a sporting event or practice, at the doctor's office or at the hospital.

## **How do I do it?**

1. In your mind, tell yourself positive things about what has happened, is currently happening or will happen in the future.
2. Make positive statements about yourself to yourself.
3. Catch yourself when you are thinking negative thoughts and STOP (it may help to think of a big stop sign whenever you catch yourself thinking negatively.)

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4. Tell yourself that something good will happen or that things will go well.  
You'll see that if you think it, it is more likely to happen.
  5. You are your best cheerleader. Some things you can say to yourself are:
    - a. I can do this. I've been through harder things than this!
    - b. I am refreshed, energized and ready to go!
    - c. I can shrink my pain. I can turn down the volume on my pain.
    - d. I can relax. I can feel good.
    - e. I will be ok.

### **Tips:**

- Photographs of people, quotes or other things that inspire you can help you to think of positive things to say to yourself and to feel more hopeful.
- Someone who is very positive or who you like to be around can help you to think more positively. When talking to someone who has an optimistic view, you can start to gain some of their energy and see things more positively. When talking to someone who you trust, they can help to challenge some of your negative thoughts and help you to reframe those thoughts in a more positive and hopeful way.
- You may want to use a notebook or journal to write down your favorite quotes or the positive thoughts that work the best for you. It may help to think about what negative thoughts pop into your head most often, then write down the opposite thought. Focus on that thought and practice saying it to yourself.

### **How can this help me?**

Have you ever found yourself thinking that things are going to go badly? Because you have already decided that things aren't going to work out, you may actually behave in ways that make it more likely the situation will turn out poorly. These negative or pessimistic thoughts can make you feel tense, nervous and upset. They may even cause you to not try your best. When this happens and it's your time to do your thing, it's hard for your body to make things go well. When we are tense, stressed, upset or expecting bad things to happen, we feel pain more strongly and can feel sicker.

Your brain listens to your body and your body listens to your brain. We know that if you think about something, you can make your body do it – like kicking a ball or doing homework. During positive self-talk, you tell your mind to think positively. Because focusing on positive things and the feeling of hopefulness that good things will happen, you can also increase the likelihood that positive things will happen. You will also feel better when doing this. This works even if you are not sure you believe it.



# GIVING THANKS



**Helps with:** Worries, Anger, Sadness, Frustration, Boredom

**What is it?** Being thankful for what you have, things that have happened to you or for the people in your life.

## What do I need?

- Paper and a pen or pencil.
- A journal or notebook.
- Markers, stickers, scrapbook supplies.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- Do this anytime you want to feel better. You can use it when you are feeling stressed, crabby, frustrated, sad or angry.
- You can even use these activities when you are feeling fine in order to remember all the great things about your life.

## How do I do it?

1. Write a letter to someone who has been very nice to you, but you haven't said thank you to yet.
  - Give or mail this letter to the person. Or you can read it to them in person or over the telephone.
2. Write three good things that happen to you each day.
  - Keep doing this everyday for one week.
  - Some examples are you made a new friend, you feel healthy, you got to do your favorite activity or you did well on a test at school.
  - Be sure to write about what caused the good thing to happen or why it happened. For example, did you meet a new friend because you said hello or tried a new activity? Did you do well on a test because it's a subject you are really good at or because you studied a lot?
3. Send someone kind thoughts. Write down all the things you wish for someone. Send these kind thoughts to someone in your home and then to someone not in your home.



### Tips:

- Markers, stickers and other scrapbook material can help you to make these thank you cards your own. Decorate them with things that remind you of the person you are thanking or of things that remind you of being thankful in general.
- Keeping a journal of the good things that happen to you over time is a great idea. Try writing in it for one week every month. When you are feeling down, go back and read about all of the good things that have happened to you and how your strength and courage helped it to happen.
- Write down all of your kind thoughts on a big piece of paper or write them on little pieces of paper and place them in a small jar for the other person to read one at a time.

### How can this help me?

Giving thanks activities help you to remember the good things that have happened to you. Telling others that you appreciate them or are thankful for something they have done can help you to feel good. When you focus on the good things instead of the bad things, you feel better. When you feel thankful, you feel happier. If you feel and express thanks often, you may wake up each day feeling more positive and wanting to be around others more.

# MUSCLE RELAXATION



**Helps with:** Sleeping, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Pain

**What is it?** Squeezing and then relaxing each muscle of your body from head to toe.

**What do I need?** You really don't need any tools but yourself and a comfortable place to make this work. Some other things that may help are:

- A squeeze/stress ball.
- A relaxation script or CD.


*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- 2-3 times per day to relieve stress or to keep you calm and relaxed.
- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry or upset.
- Before things that make you nervous (like getting a shot.)
- Before, during or after uncomfortable situations like a long medical treatment.

## How do I do it?

1. Get into a comfortable position.
2. Start by taking 5-10 belly breaths.
3. Squeeze all of the muscles in your face – eyes, cheeks, nose, forehead—(scrunch up your face). Hold it tight and count to 10. Then let go of the tightness and feel the muscles in your face melt into relaxation.
4. Now do the same thing with each muscle in your body working your way down from your face:
  - a. Jaw (clench your teeth, bite down like you have a jawbreaker in your mouth.)
  - b. Shoulders and neck (lift your shoulders up to your ears.)
  - c. Back (arch your back and try to touch your shoulders together.)
  - d. Stomach (make your stomach hard like a rock.)
  - e. Arms (lift your arms up to the ceiling or squeeze them against your body.)
  - f. Hands (pretend you're are squeezing something tight in your hand.)
  - g. Legs.
  - h. Feet and toes.

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5. Imagine a nice feeling of warmth or heaviness moving through our body as you relax the muscles.
  6. Notice the difference between how your body and muscles feel when they are tight and when they are loose and relaxed. Do you feel like a stiff robot when you are tight? Do you feel like an old, sloppy stuffed animal or a wet, cooked string of spaghetti when you are loose and relaxed?

### **Tips:**

- Use your stress ball each time you are supposed to make your muscles tight, especially when you are focusing on the muscles in your arms and hands or squeezing all of the muscles in your body at the same time.
- If this is hard for you to do on your own, ask your mom or dad to lead you through a muscle relaxation exercise. Maybe you and your parents can put your heads together to imagine situations that can help you to tighten your muscles. For example, pretending you have a jawbreaker in your mouth can help you to tighten your jaw or pretending that you are a turtle and need to pull your head into your shell can help you to tighten your shoulders and neck.

### **How can this help me?**

The muscles in your body can all get very tight when you are stressed, worried and angry. When you are in pain in one area of your body, you also may notice that the muscles in other areas of your body get tight. When you squeeze a muscle as tight as you can and then let it go, it actually relaxes your muscle more than it was before. Your muscle actually does not have a choice—when you make a muscle tight and then let that tightness go, it has to relax. This is great because it gives us a little bit of control over the state of our bodies. After you tighten and relax your muscles, the muscle may feel warm and tingly afterward which is just a sign that it is letting go of the tension and relaxing. When you do this to all the muscle groups in your body, your whole body will feel relaxed.

Relaxed muscles need less oxygen. When your muscles are relaxed, your breathing will slow down and your heart will beat slower. And this all works together to help you feel calm and relaxed.

# PAY IT FORWARD



**Helps with:** Sadness, Loneliness, Boredom

**What is it?** Being kind to another person or animal that could use a helping hand. Volunteer with a group or organization.

## What do I need?

- Paper and a pen or pencil.
- A journal or notebook.
- Markers, stickers, scrapbook supplies.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- Do this any time you want to feel better and happier about yourself. You can do it when you are feeling sad and lonely or even angry.
- You can also use these activities when you notice someone else around you needs help or is feeling down.

## How do I do it?

1. Look around your community and find an organization or a person that could use a helping hand.
2. Help them even though they are not expecting it and you will not get any payment or reward for it.
3. Examples of things you could do **outside** the hospital:
  - Donate food to a food bank.
  - Read a book to a younger sibling or friend.
  - Visit a senior citizens center to brighten their day.
  - Organize some friends to help clean up trash in your neighborhood, school or park.
  - Bring a meal or treat to someone who is sick.
  - Offer to babysit for a parent who needs to work late.
  - Help with yard work for an elderly neighbor.
  - Volunteer to walk your neighbor's dog.
  - Volunteer at a local community organization.
  - Put change in someone else's parking meter.
4. Examples of things you could do **inside** the hospital:
  - Cheer someone up in the play room by offering to play a game together.
  - Make a card for another patient to help brighten their day.



### Tips:

- If you want a little extra inspiration, try watching the movie “Pay it Forward” (PG-13) with Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt and Haley Joel Osment.
- Some acts of kindness have motivated other people to pay it forward too. For instance, there was a news story about a person who paid for the next person in line’s coffee at a coffee shop. That person then chose to keep the sharing going and paid for the person behind her who paid for the person behind him and so on.

### How can this help me?

Doing an unexpected act of kindness for another person not only helps the other person but makes you feel better by decreasing feelings of sadness and anger and by increasing feelings of happiness, connection and love. It also helps you learn about other people and become more sensitive to their thoughts and feelings.

# ACUPRESSURE



**Helps with:** Pain, Fatigue, Anxiety, Worries, Nausea

**What is it?** Acupuncture and acupressure are part of the art of the traditional Chinese medicine system that has been used for more than 5000 years. In Chinese medicine the body is viewed as having channels or pathways where energy travels. When there are problems in the body, these channels don't function well and the energy gets stuck like a traffic jam. This is when symptoms like pain or nausea occur. Applying pressure to specific points on the body will open the channels and help your energy flow smoothly. This can help pain, nausea and anxiety go away. For example, if you feel nauseous, there is a very powerful point on your wrist that can make you feel better just by pushing on it.

**What do I need?** Just yourself, although, you might want to ask someone else (like your mom or dad) to help.

- Acupressure points can be turned on by applying pressure to them with a finger.

## When to use it?

- As often as possible—the great thing about this is that you can't do it too much.
- Do it before symptoms start, during the symptoms and after you feel better.
- Begin before any procedure or receiving medical treatment (i.e., chemo.)
- Use it to prevent stress, anxiety, nausea or pain—any time you want to feel more relaxed.

## How do I do it?

1. Breathing and pressure are important parts of opening the energy channels.
  - Pick the appropriate pressure point and take 3 deep breaths before you start.
  - If someone is applying the pressure for you, take the deep breaths together.
  - Close your eyes and imagine something that flows smoothly like water.
  - Apply pressure with a gentle circular motion for about one minute.
  - Take 3 more deep breaths and repeat.
2. Specific pressure points on the body are activated to help with different types of symptoms
  - Ears: You can treat pain in your tummy by rubbing your ears. Remember start with your 3 big breaths! Bring your thumb and finger together at the top of your ear. Gently rub massaging in a downward motion to your earlobe. If you find a spot that feels really good, keep rubbing it. This is your body telling you where it wants some attention.



- **Tips of the finger & toes:** The most powerful points to activate the flow of energy are located in the tips of your fingers and toes. Did you know that when people bite their nails they are moving stuck energy by activating these points? Start with your 3 big breaths. Gently rub the tips of all five fingers and all five toes. If one of these points feels really good, stick with it. Your body is telling you "That's the spot".
- **For Pain:** A main point for pain control is located in the webbing between the thumb and index finger. Bring your thumb and finger together and notice the top of the area that protrudes. Start with your 3 big breaths. Pinch the webbing between your thumb and index finger together with a gentle but firm pressure for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat as needed. This point is very helpful for headaches.
- **For Nausea:** The main point is located on the underside of your forearm. To find it measure two finger widths down from the middle of your wrist crease. The point is located between the two tendons in the middle of your forearm. (Tendons are the bands you can see when you wiggle your wrist). It is important to use your child's fingers when measuring to find the point.
- **For Anxiety:** One point for anxiety is between your eyebrows. To activate this point, close your eyes, place your palms together, bring your hands up toward your face. Press on the point with the tips of your middle and index fingers. Take slow deep breaths and hold this pose for a minute. You will feel calm and relaxed.

### **Tips:**

- Remember to keep practicing this regularly, even when you are feeling healthy, so that you're comfortable with it. Practicing and being comfortable with acupressure will also help it to work better when you need it, like when you are in pain.

**How can this help me?** According to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, acupuncture regulates the flow of vital energy through the body. It is believed that each acupressure point is connected through your nervous system to a place in your brain that is in charge of a specific symptom (like headaches, nausea.) Pressing on these spots helps the body to make feel-good chemicals (endorphins) to ease the not-so-good feelings. Applying pressure to these points also relaxes muscles and allows better blood flow, which helps oxygen and nutrients move through your body and helps your immune system work better too. Research to test scientific theories about how acupuncture might work to relieve pain is under way.

# AROMATHERAPY



**Helps with:** Stress, Pain, Anxiety, Fatigue, Sleep

**What is it?** Have you ever noticed how a special smell can bring back memories? Scents can be very powerful and affect our moods and feelings. For example, how do you feel when you walk into a kitchen and smell chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven? Even if it was a stressful day, you probably felt more relaxed and cozy after being greeted by that smell, right? That is the power of aromatherapy. Certain scents can make us feel better—for example they can make us feel sleepy, relaxed or alert. In aromatherapy, the scents come from essential oils that are made from different plants like lavender, peppermint and orange. There are many different types of essential oils; each has a different scent and effect on the body. These oils can be smelled or dispersed in a room by a special device called a diffuser.

**What do I need?** You may wish to consult with a clinician who specializes in aromatherapy. However, you don't have to meet with an aromatherapy specialist or use essential oils in order to enjoy the benefits of scent on your own feelings of well-being. Consider natural ways to use specific smells to help you feel better and experience the benefits of these commonly used aromatherapy scents. For example:

- A fresh lemon or orange.
- A sprig of spearmint.
- A few stems of lavender.
- Any other item that produces a smell you enjoy and find helpful.

## **When to use it?**

- We recommend you use inhaled essential oils up to 6 times daily.
- Use it before symptoms start, during the symptoms and/or after you feel better.
- They can be used when you are in getting ready for bed to help with sleep.
- Use them throughout the day to prevent stress, anxiety or pain.

**How do I do it?** Everyone is different and each person may find a different scent that works best for them. Try a few different smells in order to see what works best for you. Below are common scents frequently used to help specific symptoms:

- Pain: lavender, sweet orange, peppermint.
- Insomnia: sweet orange, lavender.
- Worries/Anxiety: lavender, sweet orange.
- Fatigue: lemon, peppermint.



### Tips:

- Aromatherapy can work very well when used together with belly breathing and guided imagery.
- You may need to try different smells to find the right one that works for your body.

**How can this help me?** The idea of aromatherapy is that smelling essential oils activates the part of the brain connected to smell—the olfactory system. Then it sends a signal to the part of the brain that controls emotions and connects to memories (limbic system). This causes chemicals to be released which make the person feel relaxed, calm or stimulated.

Many patients and their families have found aromatherapy to be helpful. Scientific research has also shown some benefits and more research is underway to better understand the possible benefits.

**Are there any risks of aromatherapy?** Aromatherapy is considered quite safe when the essential oils are properly diluted by a trained professional. Using aromatherapy by smelling the essential oil has no known side effects. It is important to always use as instructed. Concentrated essential oils may be poisonous if swallowed and should be handled with care. **Don't ever drink an essential oil.** We recommend only using aromatherapy with children who are at least 6 years old.



# Healing from Depression and Anxiety: Five Areas of Therapeutic Self-Care\*

**The Goal:** To experience a better mood free from depression and anxiety.

## Physical Self-Care

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Water intake
- Hydrotherapy
- Natural light
- Sleep
- Medication
- Supplements
- Herbs
- Acupuncture
- Breathing
- Yoga
- Touch

## Spiritual Connection

- Prayer
- Meditation
- Spiritual community
- Inspirational texts
- Forgiveness
- The 12 steps of AA
- Finding purpose and meaning

Activities that  
support my  
vision of  
wellness

## Social Support

- Family
- Friends
- Psychiatrist/therapist
- Minister/rabbi
- Support group
- Day treatment
- Volunteer work
- Pets and animals

## Lifestyle Habits

- Structure/routine
- Time in nature
- Fulfilling work
- Setting goals
- Relaxation
- Pleasurable activities
- Humor
- Music therapy
- Creative self-expression
- Time for beauty
- Stress reduction
- Time management

## Mental and Emotional Self-Care

- Restructuring cognitive processes
- Practicing daily affirmations
- Releasing negative beliefs
- Taming the inner critic
- Charting your moods
- Feeling your feelings
- Thinking like an optimist
- Keeping a gratitude journal
- Overcoming the stigma of depression
- Self-forgiveness
- Psychotherapy
- Healing family of origin issues
- Working through grief

\*This program is meant to support, not replace, any medical treatment you may be receiving.



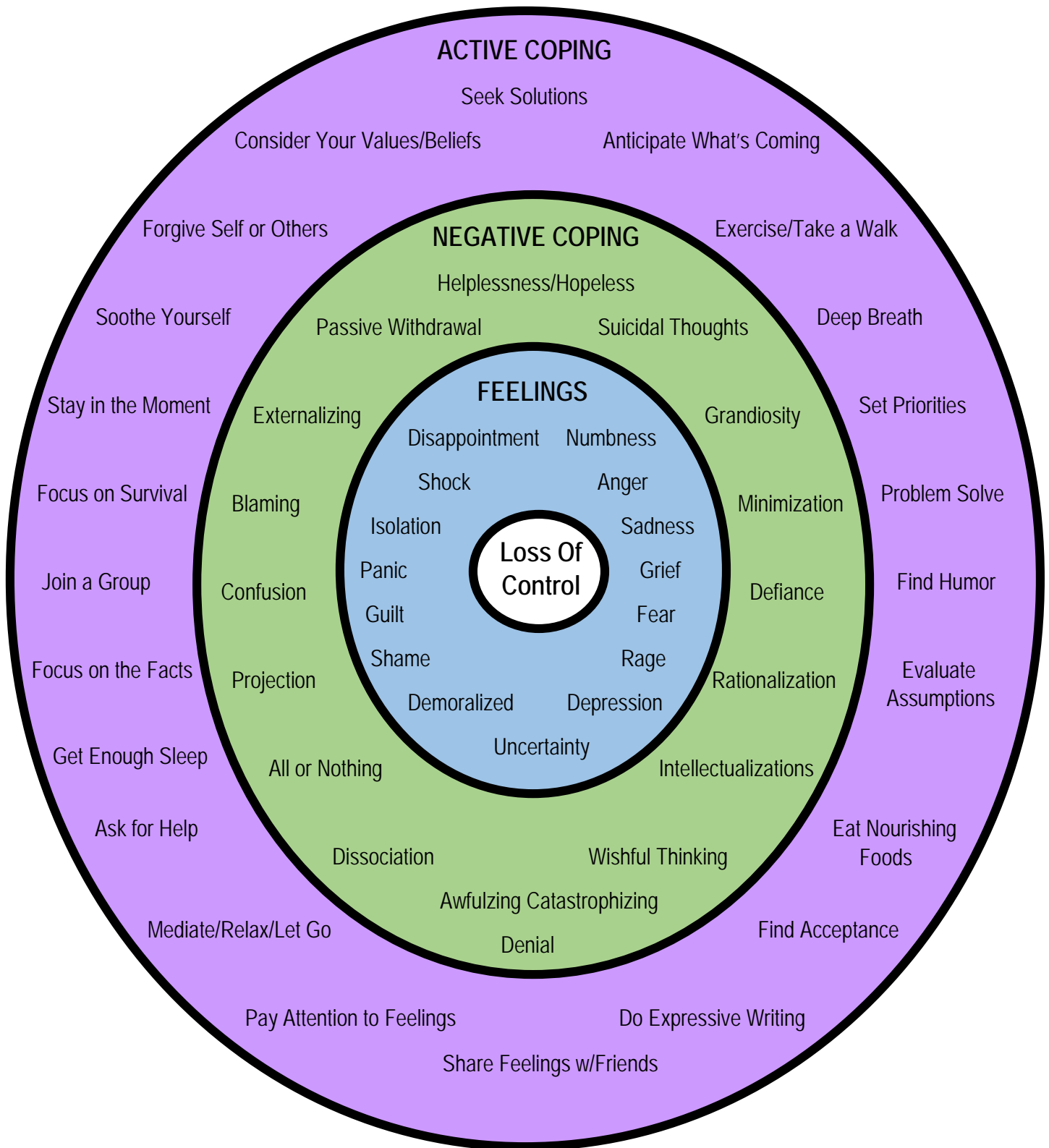
## Coping Circle Pinwheel

The Coping Engine is a teaching tool intended to help people handle moments of distress with greater ease. Originally developed in the 1990's by Patricia Fobair, LCSW, MPH, the current Coping Engine was built on the work of Robert Matano, Ph.D.

The coping circle will help you find solutions to problems that are causing you emotional distress. Sometimes, all we know is that we feel upset or out of control. This is not comfortable, and we do not want those feelings to last. The coping circle pinwheel is a tool that you may use to help you start feeling better on today. Take these steps to face your emotions, manage your fear, and move towards choices that will help you feel better and direct you towards solutions to the underlying problem.

When you click on the hyperlink included on the home page of the Coping Engine website ([www.copingengine.com](http://www.copingengine.com)), you will be directed to consider a problem that you are having. Next, you will place your curser (arrow) over each of the 16 definitions of negative feelings. Choose one that comes closest to expressing your feeling of distress. When you click on the *feeling*, it will turn red.

## Coping Skills Pinwheel





# Coping Skills

Coping skills help us get through difficult times - they can give us an important break from mental and emotional distress, and sometimes they are literally life-saving.

Keep this list of coping skills handy for when you need it... folded up in your wallet or bag or post it up on the wall somewhere handy at home.

**Make this list work for you**

Use a highlighter pen to mark the skills that work best for you & add your own ideas over the page.

## Distraction

Absorb your mind in something else

Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, computer games, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts.

### Pros

Gives your heart & mind a break.  
Great for short term relief.  
Great to get through a crisis.

### Cons

Can't do it for too long.  
Doesn't resolve any underlying issues. Meds can make it hard to concentrate.

## Grounding

Get out of your head & into your body & the world

Use body & senses: smell fragrances, slowly taste food, notice the colours around you. Walk on the grass barefoot, squeeze clay or mud, do yoga, meditate, exercise.

### Pros

Helps slow or stop 'dissociation' (feeling numb, floaty or disconnected).  
Reduces physicality of anxiety.

### Cons

Sometimes it's better to stay a bit dissociated (that's how your mind protects you).

## Emotional Release

Let it out!

Yell, scream, run! Try a cold shower. Let yourself cry... and sob. Put on a funny DVD and let yourself laugh! Try boxing, popping balloons, or crank up some music & dance crazy!

### Pros

Great for anger and fear.  
Releases the pressure of overwhelming emotion.

### Cons

Hard to do in every situation. Feels odd. Some people might think you're acting 'crazier' (be selective with how & where you do this)

## Self Love

Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, cook a special meal, clean your house (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, buy a small treat.

### Pros

Become your own best friend, your own support worker.  
Great for guilt or shame.  
You deserve it!

### Cons

Sometimes can feel really hard to do, or feel superficial (but it's not).

## Thought Challenge

Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts - what advice would you give them?

### Pros

Can help to shift long-term, negative thinking habits.  
Trying to be more logical can help reduce extreme emotion.

### Cons

The more emotional you feel, the harder this is to do. In particular, feelings of shame can make this very hard.

## Access your higher self

Help someone else, smile at strangers (see how many smiles you get back), pray, volunteer, do randomly kind things for others, pat dogs at the local park, join a cause

### Pros

Reminds us that everyone has value and that purpose can be found in small as well as large things.

### Cons

Don't get stuck trying to save everyone else and forget about you!

# Your Personal Coping Skills List

Use this page to write your own list of coping skills. You might take some from my list, some that you already know, and others may still be out there for you to discover...

## Distraction

Absorb your  
mind in  
something else



## Grounding

Get out of  
your head &  
into your  
body

## Emotional Release

Let it out!

## Self Love

## Thought challenge

## Access your higher self

# Coping Skills

Coping skills are things we can do to make ourselves feel better when we are going through difficult times.

The activities listed below are things you can do to help you feel better when you are upset.

## Take Care of Yourself:

- Eat Healthy Food
- Sleep Well
- Understand How You Feel

## Exercise:

- Go for a Walk
- Ride a Bike
- Do Yoga

## Do Things You Enjoy:

- Draw
- Enjoy Nature
- Laugh
- Sing
- Hang Out with Friends
- Play a Game
- Watch a Movie
- Paint
- Listen to Music
- Make a Playlist
- Make a List of Things You Like

## Get Help:

- Talk to a Friend
- Talk to a Trusted Adult

## Get Away from the Problem:

## Change Your Thoughts by Using different Parts of Your Brain:

- Read
- Write a Story or Poem
- Set a Goal
- Learn Something New
- Journal

## Keep a Positive Attitude:

- Make a List of Things You Like
- Focus on What You Can Control
- Say Positive Affirmations

## Use a Stress Ball

## Take 10 Deep Breaths

## Helping Other People Can Shift Our Focus and Make Us Feel Better.

- Perform a Random Act of Kindness

# 101 Stress Relievers

Need a quick—or  
not so quick—  
stress-break?  
Fresh out of ideas?  
Try one of these:

*Stop and  
look out the window.*

Work a crossword puzzle.

ANGRY? TALK TO A FRIEND ABOUT IT.

Apologize for a mistake. **Meditate.**  
Stand up and stretch.

**Ask for help.**

Call up an old friend. **Run.**



Build a model ship.

**TELL** someone "I love you."  
a joke.

**STOP AND YAWN.**

*Change coffee break to exercise break.*

**Close your  
eyes. What  
do you see?**

**Count to ten—or 1000—before exploding.**  
Count your blessings—make a list.

**CLIMB A MOUNTAIN.**

Cut back on caffeine.

**WATCH A REALLY GOOD MOVIE.**

Plan ahead.

**DAYDREAM** spend your coffee break  
at the beach.

**Do one thing at a time.**



Eat a good breakfast.

**Forgive someone.**

Fly a kite. Get a massage. Get a pet.

**Find someone you're grateful to and thank them.**

Get a good night's sleep.

Get up fifteen minutes early.

*Keep a journal of thoughts and feelings.*

**GO**

for a brisk walk.

swimming.

to work a different way.

**Go fishing.**

Play with  
your dog.



**Hug a tree.**

**Hug someone  
you love.**

**Laugh at something you did.**

Leave the car at home and take the bus.

*Lie in a  
hammock.*

**Look** at the big picture.

closely at a flower, leaf, blade of grass or tree trunk.

off into the distance.

Read a good book.

**READ SOMETHING  
FUNNY EVERY DAY.**

WASH THE CAR. Plant a flower.

Smell a rose.

Ride your bike  
to work.

*Share feelings with  
someone.*

*Sit by a  
fountain or  
stream. Close  
your eyes and  
hear the water.*

**Practice  
Yoga.**

**Work out  
at the gym.**

Do a good deed.

**WEAR EARPLUGS  
WHEN IT'S NOISY.**

**Lift weights.**

Listen to the birds.

*Make love.*

**Make a list.** **Then follow it.**

- ✓ Take a child to the playground.
- ✓ Take a deep breath and let it all out.
- ✓ Take a leisurely stroll.
- ✓ Take a long bath.
- ✓ Take a nap.
- ✓ Take an herb tea break.
- ✓ Take one day at a time.
- ✓ Take the back roads.
- ✓ Take the stairs.
- ✓ Take time for the sunset—or sunrise.
- ✓ Take up knitting.

**Massage  
your  
temples.**

**Quit  
smoking.**

*Write a poem.*

**Write a letter  
to the editor.**

**TALK TO YOURSELF: "I CAN DO A GREAT JOB." "I CAN STAY CALM UNDER PRESSURE."**

Paint a peaceful scene—in your imagination.

**Make time for play.**

*Spend an  
evening  
without TV.*

*Write...* down your fears.  
down your dreams.  
your congressman.

Watch a cloud for 5 minutes. Watch an ant or other insect for 5 minutes.

Sit by a fire.



Turn cocktail hour into exercise hour.

*Walk barefoot in the grass.*

**SING A SONG.**

Roll your shoulders up and around in a circular motion.

CLASP YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR HEAD AND STRETCH YOUR SHOULDERS.

**PRACTICE  
LAUGHING  
OUT LOUD.**