

Coping Skills and Strategies for PMAD Symptoms



Grounding Skills:

- 54321
- Describe an object
- Spend time in nature
- Journalling
- Yoga
- Petting an animal
- Hugging meditation
- Eat something mindfully, noticing all the texture and flavour
- Deep breathing, box breathing
- Listen to music
- Mindfulness; simply observe the present moment without judgement

Ideas for activating the Vagus Nerve/Closing the stress response cycle:

- Gargle
- Hum or sing
- Have a good cry
- Splash cold water on your face or take a cold shower
- Rub an ice cub on your face or neck
- Jump on the spot - get your heart rate up
- Shake out your hands and feet
- Orgasm
- Deep breathing
- Connect with a friend or loved one
- Creative Expression
- Laugh
- Touch (if you're feeling touched out then don't try this one)
- Yoga
- Foot massage/massage your clavicle, neck and ear lobe
- Sun exposure
- Hard exercise such as a HIIT workout

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Coping Skills for depression and/or dissociation:

- Try to reconnect to your body, ie. progressive muscle relaxation
- Have someone talk to you about anything to bring you back to the present moment
- Distraction (making sure to come back to your emotions later, when you feel more able to)
- Drink a glass of water or eat some food mindfully
- Take a shower and really notice how the water feels on your body
- Engage in pleasurable activities, ie. read a favourite book, talk to a friend, eat a favourite food, listen to your favourite music, watch a comedy
- Connect with a friend or loved one
- Connect with nature
- Move your body in a way that feels good/realistic for you
- Connect to your spirituality or spiritual practices

Coping Skills for nightmares/flashbacks/Panic Attacks:

- Acknowledge that you are having a nightmare, flashback or panic attack
- Take deep breaths and ground yourself by putting your feet on the floor, feel your back on your chair or notice what is around you (54321)
- Try not to analyze the nightmare or flashback, continue to focus on the present moment and what is around you, tell yourself you are not in danger currently
- Engage in self-soothing afterwards, connect with a friend or loved one

Other Ideas:

- Scaling your symptoms (1/10 is not activated - 10/10 is a panic attack) and choosing coping skills for each level (5/10 - Focus on my breathing and engage in healthy distraction)
- Step away/take a break
- Come back to the Self and give yourself permission to prioritize your needs and self-care
- Talk to your support person
- Consider individual therapy

Remember the essentials; food, water, sleep, connection. Taking care of the essentials will help to reduce your overall symptoms and open your window of tolerance; improve your capacity for coping in moments of distress.

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