

Dr. Saunders Top Ten helpful exercises for enhancing your Coping Skills:

1. Breathe. Breath often becomes shallow and short when we are filled with anxiety following a tragic situation. Try the 6-7-8 breathing exercise. Sit up straight in a chair or lay down with your head and knees elevated with a pillow. Breath in for a count of 6. Hold for a Count of 7. Breathe out for a count of 8. Repeat three times and rest for three-five minutes. Repeat again. Notice your breathing. Breathe out negative energy. Imagine a beautiful light filling you with positive energy as you breathe in.

2. Sleep. Good sleep is restorative to the brain and the body. Try Melatonin or a herbal tea for sleep if you're having trouble. Get good sleep by practicing good sleep hygiene. No electronic screens in bed. Paint your bedroom soft soothing colors or neutral colors. Use the bed for sleep or sex only. Don't use the bed for work or recreation such as watching TV.

3. Exercise. Minimum you should walk 30 minutes per day, at least three times a week. If you're not able to walk then talk to your physician or healthcare provider about a exercise program that suits your needs. Exercise is good for anxiety, depression and has positive effects on sleep and your overall health.

4. Eat. The Mediterranean diet (good fats, high in fruits/veggies) has been shown to be helpful for stress and depression. Eating healthy, staying away from excessive alcohol or other drugs in an effort to inappropriately self medicate, is important. Drink plenty of water. Enjoy yourself.

5. Talk. Talking with friends or a therapist is very effective in reducing stress, depression and anxiety.

6. Surround yourself with positive support. Don't isolate alone. Select friends and support systems that lift you up and keep you on the path toward healing and wholeness.

7. Engage your spirit. Studies show that those with a strong spiritual sense and have a community of support tend to live longer, are sick less, and have fewer mental health issues. Meditate and read uplifting literature from inspired books.

8. Take the 45 day gratitude challenge! Keep a gratitude journal for 45 days. Everyday write at least one thing your grateful for. Studies show an attitude of gratitude keeps you focused on the positive and sets up positive thinking and emotional habits.

9. Get back to nature. Spending time in nature has been shown to enhance well being and a positive sense of one's place in the world. Those who spend a few hours every week walking in the woods, park, beach, or just outside have less depressive episodes and fewer panic attacks.

10. Perspective. Talk to your grandparents or trusted older person who has lived a long full life. Realize, all things pass. Nothing bad ever lasts. What's the story of your favorite hero overcoming life struggles? You're the hero of your own life. One day, you'll be telling your grandchildren about the great obstacles you overcame and how strong it made you.

---Dr. W. Steven Saunders, is a licensed psychologist and a faculty member at UCF. His practice can help connect you with a counselor or other mental health resources. 352-365-2243 or centralfloridapsychology.com