

Coping Styles for Anxiety

If you are someone who experiences a lot of anxiety in your life, learning to cope with it can potentially be the most important thing you can do. Below are several major coping styles that you can apply to improve how to tackle your anxiety.

Model of Stress

Before discussing coping, it is important to highlight an overview of how people generally deal with stress. The first stage is that a stressful event is experienced. Next, the person appraises the event as positive, neutral, or negative, with the negative including potential harm, threat, or challenge. Third, the individual determines if the stressor is within personal control, and searches for coping strategies and how to deal with the stressor if possible. Finally, the stress response can include physiological changes, emotions, and a behavioral response.

Problem-Focused Coping

This coping style is focused on dealing with the stress itself to make changes and bring relief. For example, if you get a reduction in pay at work, it can cause stress and anxiety. A problem-focused approach would be to try and regain some of the pay at work or to find another job that would replace the income. This method is effective when the person actually has some control over the stressor, or can make adjustments to reduce the impact of it.

Emotion-Focused Coping

This style focuses on reexamining the stressor and dealing with the emotional response to it. One part of an emotion-focused approach is identifying feelings associated with the stressor. A second part is reframing the stressor as something that is less anxiety-provoking or stressful. An example would be a breakup. Identify the emotions associated with the breakup (sadness, anxiety, anger), and then think of ways to take away the power of this. Examples might be thinking that "This is a chance to do something new" or "It is for the best."

Avoidance Strategies

Many people use a variety of avoidance strategies to deal with stress and anxiety. Simply avoiding the problem, denying its existence, or minimizing it can be effective short-term strategies. But overall, they will prove to be ineffective in most situations. Learning to tolerate a temporary increase in stress and anxiety and employing one of the other strategies can let you experience a shorter duration of stress and anxiety overall.

Source:

Mastering the World of Psychology by Wood, Wood, & Boyd (2006). Boston: Pearson.