



## Developing Coping Skills

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### Facilitator

- Ideally the person or persons in this role will already have had facilitator experience. This could be a club or student organization president or executive board member, a residence hall advisor, a peer-to-peer advocate or counselor, a staff counselor, or professor. If none of these are readily available, please contact us and we will provide guidance and assistance on next steps.

### Time Needed

- Lecture, Discussion, and Improv Exercises: 35 mins
- Question and Answer: 10 mins

### Audio Visual Needs

- PowerPoint slides have been provided for you in advance.
- A projector (a projector on a cart or a projector hanging from the ceiling).
- Projector screen (collapsible or hanging from the ceiling).
- In the event you don't have access to a computer or projector; a blackboard or whiteboard works, as does a flip chart.

**Learning Objectives...** or outcomes that show what participants will have learned as a result of attending this training.

## Objectives for Module 2: Developing Coping Skills

Main objective 1) Failure is a lesson on the way to success if we frame it that way.

Main objective 2) Developing healthy self-talk, eliminating unhealthy self-talk, and cultivating healthy coping skills are all key to creating “success” from “failure,” and in the long term they contribute to a healthy brain.

Sub-objectives:

- How to Develop Healthy Coping Skills
- How to Eliminate Unhealthy Coping Skills
- How to Cultivate Self-Coaching Skills
- How to Identify and Eliminate Unhealthy Self-Beliefs

## Suggested Follow Up

- Reading and Review Group Discussion Questions: 15 mins
- Personal Additions to Mental Health First Aid Kit™
- Exercise “Identifying and Managing Stress”
- Exercise “From Impossible to I’m Possible” (A Focus on Problem Solving)

## Handouts

- List of Coping Skills to Help You Live Mentally Well
- i’Mpossible Story on Coping with Failure

## Other Materials Needed

- Intake forms (handed out 2 weeks prior) – available as a printed form or via Survey Monkey
- Exit forms (handed out 6 weeks after) – available as a printed form or via Survey Monkey

*We realize it can be difficult to have people fill out one or both of these forms, so: have anyone who is absolutely committed to attending (your e-board, your dorm mates etc.) to fill these out; and/or offer and advertise that anyone who fills out both forms will be entered into a raffle to win a gift card or special prize. Gathering this data is important so you know and so we know how effective this programming is and what we can improve upon.*

### **FACILITATOR NOTE:**

At some point near the beginning of the session, it's important to make sure attendees know they have equity in the session. Something like: "This is a big group discussion and I'm helping guide it along. It's important that it's not only a lecture because everyone here is an expert (in something) and when experts get together, they are greater than the sum of their parts." This breaks down walls and builds trust and will enhance knowledge retention.

## **Opening-Introduction to Facilitator *You* 😊 - Option I (5mins)**



Slide 1 – Title of talk (Have this ready during setup, before you begin speaking)

I/we are here to talk mental health



*Fun stuff about facilitator and why you're here.* Topical Info on location. Your professional background.



Slide 2: Funny/fun picture of facilitator as a kid/teen/apropos to audience you're speaking to.



Facilitator's story with mental health/illness. Tie into Why Mental Health is important and particularly important to you (facilitator).

### **FACILITATOR NOTE:**

This is a great time to gauge the audience and get their thoughts on what coping skills are.

So, what are coping skills?



### Slide 3

Main objective (thesis): They are a combo of different tools to help you manage the things that life throws your way. Sometimes it's things you can't control. Sometimes it's things you can.



*Facilitator can further analogize here. We chose video games, but if you have something that speaks better to your audience, then use it. But coping skills are sorta like cheat codes in video games. It makes the hard levels easier to beat. And sometimes you get to skip a whole level because of coping skills.*



*Facilitator can make this next section anecdotal if they'd like: The foundation for coping skills is learning how to talk ourselves in a healthier way and self-coach ourselves through certain scenarios. From there, then it's easier to ask for help, because with better internal dialogue, we are able to actually believe that we can reach out for help.*

#### **FACILITATOR NOTE:**

Skip option 2 below and proceed to the sign: 

### **Opening - Option 2 *Without facilitator story* (5-7 mins)**



Slide 1 (Have this ready during setup, before you begin speaking)

- Facilitator introduces who they are, and briefly states that “we’re talking mental health,” and that “talking mental health is important ... but we’ll get to that in a little bit.” Facilitator makes sure audience knows this isn’t a traditional presentation. This is going to be a fun and interactive, and basically a big conversation. Facilitator states that the rules are pretty simple: “no one talks over anyone else, show others respect, and cell phones are on silent and put away.”



Slide 2 will be blank

- Exercise – demonstrating coping skills

Students/attendees, in advance, write down a one-line sentence on a pretend “failure.” Nothing inconsequential like, “I can’t turn my eyelids inside out,” and nothing traumatic like, “I ran over my dog twice.” More like, “I backed my car into my dad’s car before coming to school.” Facilitator will call on roughly 10 people (depending on time constraints) and will screen each person’s failure after they’ve called on the person (meaning the person doesn’t get to announce their failure until facilitator has screened it). Person will announce with pride their failure, take a bow, and then other attendees will give that person a round of applause. Make sure the person soaks in the applause.

Facilitator will debrief after the 10 people are called upon. “We want to create a new relationship with what we think of as ‘failure,’ and how we deal with it.” Facilitator might reference one or two of the pretend failures that were announced and then say that each of those scenarios could be awful or maybe devastating in the right circumstances. But these scenarios don’t have to be devastating.

Failing also means we’re taking risks and means it can lead to possibilities we never would have imagined—something to celebrate. What would it be like if we celebrated our failures?

What would it be like if we knew how to navigate our failures and made it so we learned from them and made it so failures didn’t hurt so bad?

We can learn from failure, we can celebrate failure, and we can make sure failure doesn’t sting so bad. We can do all this by developing coping skills.



### Slide 3

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healthier way and self-coach ourselves through certain scenarios. From there, then it's easier to ask for help, because with better internal dialogue, we are able to actually believe that we can reach out for help.



## But what is healthy self-talk?

I think it would be better to illustrate it before we talk about it. Is anyone familiar with improv theater or Saturday Night Live? I want to demonstrate healthy self-talk through improv. I'm going to need two volunteers.

### **FACILITATOR NOTE:**

It would be best to pre-select these two volunteers beforehand—either from a recommendation from an advisor or teacher or the event planner. You might be able to pre-select by asking two attendees/volunteers prior to the start of the event/module. This exercise does not work with more than two volunteers. We've tried. It gets awkward and too rowdy. Only one person involved in the exercise (in addition to the facilitator) is okay but it can be a little drab. With two people, one strong improviser can cover up an improviser who isn't confident or not as strong.

You need to stress to your volunteers (pre-selected or otherwise) that they will in no way look stupid up on stage. Meaning it's your job to save them. When Josh presents, he ensures that "if anyone is going to look stupid, it's going to be me. You have nothing to worry about." If you are short on time, you can discuss the exercise rather than implement it. Lastly, instruct volunteers not to mention "I want to die/kill myself," or anything suicidal (could be triggering and unsafe language without context of hope/healing).

## Improv Exercise



Facilitator follows the template for this improv to a "t" but can fill in with their own brand of poignancy/humor.

- Facilitator is having a bad day/something very bad happened.

- Two students/attendees are given the roles of facilitator's conscience/mind and to deal with facilitator by beating him up emotionally, and they lay it on thick.
- Things get worse for facilitator.
- Facilitator stops. Thanks students.
- Facilitator then instructs students to give new responses to the same ordeal, but this time they have deal with him/her in a more positive light, reframing failure and being more encouraging.

Facilitator asks audience questions:

- Which of those are typical responses to how you or others deal with themselves when bad things happen? Raise hands for unhealthy responses. Raise hands for healthy responses.
- Are healthier responses presented in the improv possibilities for you and others in how to deal with oneself after something bad happens in life
- What are some other methods/means to be more encouraging with oneself and reframing failure?

## How to Cultivate Healthy Self-Talk and Self-Coaching



### Slide 4 – What is Healthy Self Talk

Healthy self-talk is the stuff that makes you feel good about yourself and the things that are going on in your life. It is like having an optimistic voice in your head that always looks on the bright side.

Example – “These clothes look pretty awesome on me,” “I can totally make it through this exam,” “I don’t feel great right now but things could be worse!”



### Slide 5 – What is Unhealthy Self Talk

Unhealthy self-talk is the stuff that makes you feel pretty badly about yourself and things that are going on. It can put a downer on anything, whether it is good or bad.

Example- “I look stupid in these clothes”, “everyone thinks I’m an idiot”, “everything is garbage and nothing is going to get better”

Unhealthy self-talk is particularly difficult as it brings you down all the time. It can impact on recovery from mental health difficulties and tends to make people pretty miserable. But being healthy all the time isn’t achievable either, and “think positive” isn’t helpful all the time. So how can you make your self-talk work for you?



## Slide 6 – How to Have Healthier Self Talk

There are three things you can do that can help with changing the direction of your self-talk.

- 1 Listen to what you’re saying to yourself- we don’t always consciously take note of that we’re saying in our minds. The first step in improving your self-talk is to actually notice what your inner voice is saying. Take some time each day to listen, and even write down, what you’re thinking.
- 2 Monitor your self-talk- Is your self-talk healthy or unhealthy? Start questioning your self-talk asking things like:
  - o Is there actual evidence for what I’m thinking?
  - o What would I say if a friend were in a similar situation?
  - o Is there a healthier way of looking at this?
  - o Am I keeping everything in perspective?
  - o Can I do anything to change what I’m feeling bad about?
- 3 Change your self-talk - Easier said than done, but definitely worth working on. Try by countering your unhealthy thoughts with healthy ones. For example, if you think “I’ll never be able to do this”, ask yourself “is there anything I can do that will help me be able to do this?” Avoid speaking in finite language and try and look for things that might add a better spin to a tough situation.

Self-talk can be used to motivate and instruct, to help lessen the blow of when something bad happens, and then lead to how you find your next coping skill. *A la “I know she broke up with me, I don’t need to fight anyone right now. I need to talk to my best friend and then get into therapy tomorrow.*



Daily affirmations can be a very help way to get ahead of the game. Some people, every morning when they wake say: “I can get through this,” “I am strong and resilient,” “I’m a unicorn, and unicorns always win.”



Slide 7 – Healthier self-talk takes time to develop. Be gentle with yourself!



Slide 8 – More on Self Talk

So, healthier self-talk is a good base but it doesn't complete the circle. You need to start developing coping skills on top of it, to be able to better handle what life throws at you. And there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to coping skills. For everyone it's different. And coping skills take some time and energy to develop.

### How to Develop Healthy Coping Skills *(when failure seems overwhelming or insurmountable)*



Slide 9 – Healthy Coping Skills



Here facilitator can give personal examples of their own coping skills

- Support system (in depth coverage in module 3)
- Healthy distractions (sports, workout, things you enjoy)
- Relax (meditation, pets, limited TV time)
- Consider downsizing or reducing your load.
- What does the bigger picture look like (keeping in mind to eliminate/manage self-limiting beliefs and working on healthy self-talk) Being mindful that this is not the end. (Fill in the blank bad moment) is not a death sentence or the end of your life, even though it may seem that way. This ties into healthy self-talk. — especially the idea that:



Slide 10 – (Can include some of facilitator's coping skills)

## Conclusion

Failure is a lesson on the way to success if we frame it properly. Developing healthy self-talk, eliminating unhealthy self-talk, and cultivating healthy coping skills are all key to creating “success” from “failure,” and in the long term they contribute to a healthy brain.

I want to offer some additional resources:



### Slide 11 – (resources/handouts)

Offer resources. Handouts. Talk about handouts:

1. List of Coping Skills to Help You Live Mentally Well
2. i'Mpossible Story on Reframing Failure and Group-Discussion/Self-Reflection Questions

Thank the attendees

If there's time left over, you can do additional Q&A: clarity on any concepts covered. This can be driven by the facilitator or come straight from the attendees.