

Coping Plans

From time to time things will go wrong, whether you worry or not, however hard you try, because that's just the way life is.

You have a choice: you can either worry about things that might go wrong or you can make plans for how you will deal with them. If you have some idea of how you might cope, you will feel less anxious and you will cope much better than if you simply let your anxiety take over.

A coping plan is simply a list of steps you think out ahead of time that help you manage a difficult situation.

1. **List** what has to be done.
2. **Decide** what must be done first.
3. **Recruit** others who could help.
4. **Give** tasks to each helper.
5. **Focus** only on the task you are doing right at this moment.
6. **Delay** emotional reactions until you have done what needs to be done.
7. **Pause** no matter how much there is to do; you will cope better after a short break.
8. **Do** take care of yourself. Eat, drink plenty of fluids, and get adequate sleep.
9. **Reduce** alcohol and other drugs. They will make you less efficient at coping.
10. **Accept** that this will be a difficult time.
11. **Tell** yourself "I will find a path through this, one step at a time."

If you find yourself worrying about something that might go wrong, write out a coping plan using these steps and put it away in a safe place. Whenever you start to worry about the problem, remind yourself "I have planned as best I can for this. I refuse to think about it anymore."

Coping is a step-by-step process. Looking at the big picture and seeing every detail can overwhelm people. It is more calming and effective to think of coping with a situation one small chunk at a time. Concentrating on small pieces of the situation gives you a greater sense of control, which gives you space and time to use your best coping skills.