

PART III:
Coping Skills
Exercises

Introduction

Coping responses vary in complexity and quality. They range from simple behavioural acts (such as avoiding a risky situation) to complicated cognitive strategies (such as managing negative thoughts). Some clients are able to cope as necessary to maintain their goals by relying on their existing strengths and resources, but most people will benefit from acquiring and practising a greater repertoire of coping responses.

A coping response can be defined as any response that enables a person to prevent—or minimize the severity of—a relapse. In other words, clients use coping strategies when they anticipate, and face, high-risk situations. Research has shown that people who practise a variety of coping skills tend to be at lower risk of relapse.

Clinical staff at CAMH have developed a number of coping skills exercises that can be used in a discussion format in individual or group sessions, or assigned to a client as homework. The following exercises are presented here:

Coping with Cravings.....	p. 81
Early Coping Strategies	p. 83
Increasing Social Support	p. 85
Refusing Alcohol and Other Drugs	p. 88
Dealing with Physical Discomfort	p. 89
Problem Solving.....	p. 91
Spirituality.....	p. 94
Assertiveness	p. 95
Anger Management	p. 98
Coping with Boredom.....	p. 100
Relaxation.....	p. 103
Coping with Unpleasant Feelings and Memories of Trauma	p. 105
Coping with Flashbacks and Unpleasant Emotions.....	p. 107
Coping with Anxiety	p. 109
Coping with Loss	p. 111
Healthy Relationships.....	p. 113
Sexual Relationships and Dating	p. 114
Money Issues.....	p. 118

The initial choice of topics should be guided by the client's perceptions of areas that present an immediate, serious risk for relapse. The IDTS-8 (page 24) and the Coping Skills Checklist (page 48) can also help you choose appropriate skills training exercises.

In our experience, these are the topics clients have found to be most useful in the early phase of treatment:

- Refusing Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Coping with Cravings
- Early Coping Strategies
- Increasing Social Support.

However, to keep clients engaged in treatment, a flexible approach and consideration of clients' preferences is recommended.