



# learn skills for tough times

**Sometimes life can be hard. From relationship issues, to work and study stress, to simply feeling low – we all go through stressful and emotional periods. When this happens, our coping strategies kick in – things we've learnt over time to help us cope.**

We all have different ways of coping with things. Some people use healthy ways of coping – like journaling, meditation or talking with family or friends. But for many of us, the strategies we turn to can actually leave us feeling worse. We may stop doing things we enjoy, turn to alcohol and other drugs, or disconnect from family and friends.

## How does learning skills for tough times help?

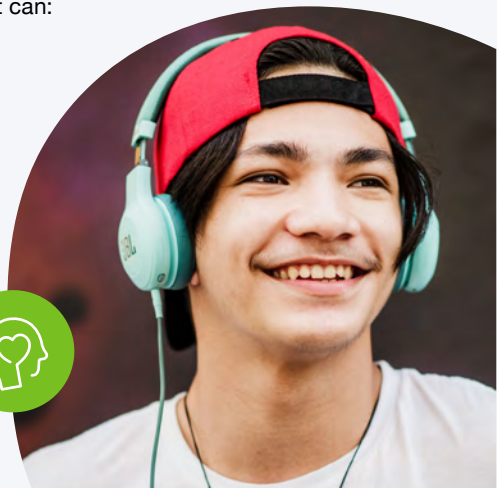
**Where should you start if you want to learn new ways to cope with tough times?**

Firstly, think about how you react to stress. Take time to understand what you do and why you do it. This builds your self awareness. It can also help you learn things about yourself that can help you handle tough times in the future. The more you understand yourself, the better you will be at applying positive strategies that work for you.

Here's how learning new and positive ways to handle tough times can help your headspace. It can:

- Improve your self-awareness
- Give you a sense of achievement
- Build your confidence
- Increase your energy levels
- Boost your mood
- Improve your motivation
- Allow you to identify strategies that might not be as helpful.

*Developing your own strategies that work for you can help build your resilience, your self-awareness and your confidence.*



## Ideas for how you can handle tough times:

- Journal – write a story or music
- Connect with country, family or friends, or your mob
- Express your feelings through artwork, song, and dance
- Write down your triggers or what you find difficult
- Schedule in regular catch ups with family and friends
- Do a digital detox or reduce screen time
- Spend time in nature – go for a swim, go fishing with friends, play sport
- Practise being kind to yourself
- Listen to things that make you feel happy, like a podcast or your favourite song
- Try meditation/relaxation exercises
- Try some breathing exercises
- Stay dead, strong and proud of who you are!



# How do I develop my own coping strategies?

Here are seven strategies you could use.

**1.**

## Notice what you do when you are going through a tough time.

Everyone copes with tough times in different ways. Noticing how you handle tough times is the first step towards changing things that aren't working for you. Pausing for a few seconds gives you the power to choose how you'd like to act, rather than reacting without thinking.

**2.**

## Reflect

Are your current coping strategies helpful? Thinking about this is not easy to do and can take some practice. To help, try these questions:

- Is the way I respond to tough times helpful, or not?
- How are my thoughts or feelings influencing what I do?
- Why do I respond in that way?
- How could I approach these challenges differently?

**3.**

## Start sooner rather than later

Try to build your coping strategies as soon as you notice you're having a rocky time.

**4.**

## Make it work for you

Your strategies might be very different to someone else, and that's OK! Everyone is different.

**5.**

## Get support

It can help to let those closest to you know your new coping strategies. That way, when you're distressed, and if you're not thinking clearly, they can support you with your new plan.

**6.**

## Notice the benefits

A lot of growth can come from how we manage the challenges that life throws at us. Noticing the benefits will help motivate you to continue trying new ways. Plus, it will help build your resilience!

**7.**

## Be kind to yourself

Trying out new skills can be tough and it's normal to have ups and downs. Remember it's a process and you learn something every time you try again.

## Getting support

There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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