

**Coping Strategies**

(Adapted from The Credit Valley Hospital “Behavioural Strategies for Eating Disorder Symptoms”, Eating Disorders Program, Mississauga, ON)

1. Distraction

Do things that take your mind off of urges \*.

- ❖ List out examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Delay

Put off responding to your urges. Try a specific time, after which you can evaluate your urge with a different perspective. With each occurrence, try to extend the length of time.

3. Motivational Mantra

It can be helpful to have a phrase in mind that you find positive and motivating. Say the statement out loud or write it down and keep it with you. Check out the following website for ideas

[www.inspirational-quotes.info](http://www.inspirational-quotes.info)

- ❖ Write out some phrases \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Breaking down your behaviours

Often you may feel that you suddenly find yourself in a behavior. The reality however is that your behavior is a chain of events, where you make conscious decisions. What this implies is that your symptoms can be interrupted.

- ❖ Write out a behavior chain and attempt to work out alternate routes that may work \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Limiting Opportunities

Make a conscious decision to only allow your symptoms at limited times that may be unpleasant to experience

6. Try new ways as an experiment

It can be difficult to change a maladaptive coping strategy (e.g. bingeing/purging, drinking) that has been helping you to cope for a long time. In part, because the initial stage of change feels very uncomfortable. It is best to acknowledge that the first steps of change may feel worse. It is best to give yourself a time-frame that you will commit to, while reminding yourself that it will get better with time, this way you can really try out the experiment of recovery. You can always go back to your old ways if the experiment does not work.

7. Doing it mechanically

When you are caught in a routine pattern of behaviours you can not rely on yourself to make decisions moment to moment. It is more effective to plan out your new routine and follow it with out reservation. For example, with eating disorders many will have either lost their hunger cues or they will be inaccurately linked with particular emotions. In this case, it is best to eat according to a schedule.

8. Treat new ways as medicine for recovery

If you had an infection, you would take antibiotics to heal yourself. In the case of eating disorders “food is your medicine” and your prescription is eating 3 non-dieting meals and 2 -3 snacks per day. You can determine your specific caloric intake with a registered dietitian, however, the average woman should be eating roughly 2000 calories per day.

9. Identify high risk situations and plan for them

We may find that certain situations trigger particular behaviours. It is helpful to think through high risk situations and determine a plan for how you can manage them. For instance, you may find that you always binge after a family celebration. In this case, you need to think through what is actually triggering at the family celebration and then plan for how to manage your strong binge urges following the event. In this case, you could e.g. ask to stay with a friend or family member to reduce your opportunity for a binge.

- ❖ Write out examples of high risk situations and how you could plan to manage them \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. Grocery Shopping

There are few things to keep in mind when you grocery shop.

- a) make a list of what you will need
- b) do not shop when you are hungry
- c) at the outset it may help to start with shopping for one day at a time if you find you are bingeing on extra food in the house
- d) purchase only non-dieting foods \*\*
- e) shop with a support person

11. Eating forbidden foods

It is important to eat all foods, even the foods that you may consider “bad” or “junk”, that you typically binge on, or that make you feel anxious. You need the exposure so you can normalize your experience with these foods. When you do this, it can be helpful to buy single portions or to do it with a support person.

12. Make your environment safe

Sometimes our home environment can harbor triggering items. It is best to either get rid of these items or store them away. Some triggering items include the scale, diet pills, laxatives, clothing that does not fit, workout equipment and running shoes.

- ❖ List out your triggering items and what you will do with them

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13. Avoid strong cues

For a short period of time, it may help to avoid highly triggering events or situation that you know will lead to symptoms.

- ❖ List out situations that you are best to avoid right now \_\_\_\_\_

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\*urges

Urges are feelings that you have that feel as though they are compelling you to do follow through on a behaviour

\*\*non-dieting foods In order to work through an eating disorder you must work to changing your mentality about eating and about food products e.g. a healthy food thought is that non-diet foods tend to be more satiating and therefore may reduce binge urges.