2. Practise coping skills

**Group size**



Individually

**Suggested timing**

20 minutes

**Method**



Discussion and practise

**What you need**

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Sticky notes, pens and paper

Learning objectives

* Practise at least one short term and long term coping skill
* Practise considering wellbeing and coping when thinking about helping others

## Overview

In this activity, learners recap on what an immediate and longer-term coping skill is and practise some coping skill techniques.

## Preparation

Choose to practice one or more of the coping skills below. Ensure there are sticky notes, pens and paper for the learners to use. Optional: ask learners to choose or decide on some song lyrics that make them feel better or help them cope before the session.

Ground rules should be in place and referred to throughout the session. Assure learners are provided with opportunities to ask questions and have a space to ask anonymously if they wish to. For more details on making a class agreement and anonymous question boxes look at the guidance on [creating a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment](https://firstaidchampions.redcross.org.uk/secondary/guidance-and-support/).

## Delivering the activity

1. Start by asking learners to define “coping” – they should have covered this in the previous learn activity.
2. Explain that learners will practise some coping skill techniques they can use in any stressful or challenging situation. One technique can be used in an immediate situation such as giving first aid, and the others can be used to cope in the longer term.
3. First explain that they will be learning an immediate coping skill. Discuss with the group what an immediate coping skill might be – now think in terms of first aid, how might someone feel if they needed to give first aid: confident, worried, scared, ready? What might someone do to help themselves get into the best frame of mind to help the person? Discuss techniques young people think would be effective to help people act quickly to help someone in need of first aid.
4. Practice an immediate coping technique called **Bubble breathing**:
* Ask learners to close their eyes and notice their breathing.
* Now ask them to take in a deep breath and slowly release it, imagining they are blowing into a large bubble that is increasing in size.
* They can take another deep breath in and breathe slowly out make the bubble even bigger. Do this as many times as needed to feel calm.
* Now ask young people to open their eyes – how do they feel now? Calmer?
* Ask them when someone might use this technique, thinking about giving first aid and any other times they might find this technique useful, such as going into an exam or giving a speech.
1. Now discuss the idea of a longer-term coping skill – what types of things could help someone cope in the longer term? How might it help?
2. Choose from two longer-term coping skill options below: one using song lyrics as a basis for a creative writing or drawing activity, and the other a guided imagery script to help create feelings of calmness.
3. **Song lyrics**
* Identify some song lyrics, either before the session, or ask the learners to suggest some and either display or print them. For example, you could use the lyrics for Bridge over troubled water by Simon and Garfunkel. Allow some time for learners to read the lyrics.
* Once they have read through the lyrics, ask them to use sticky notes to write a word, phrase, or draw or write a metaphor/image/symbol that they think is the key message in the lyrics, and place them on one wall.
* Once everyone has added a sticky note, read aloud or describe the sticky notes, asking the learners to think about any themes or categories that are coming up in the words/drawings e.g. coping, resilience, friends, support, etc.
* Arrange the sticky notes into themes.
* After this, ask learners to consider what themes came out of the work. You could use the following prompt questions:
* What is happening in the song?
* Why might the person in the song be singing those lyrics? What are the feelings in the song?
* What message are the lyrics giving? What impression does the song leave you with?

## Stretch and challenge activities:

* Ask learners to create their own song, poem or drawing in response to the lyrics. Hand out paper and pens. Give time for writing or drawing. You could play the chosen song if you are able to, to inspire the learners. Once they have finished they can choose to share the efforts if you have time.
* Encourage them to reflect: How might writing, drawing, or doing another creative hobby help you cope with a challenging situation? Can they suggest any other ideas for creative activities to do when facing challenges?
* Ask learners to think of a song that they associate with coping and feeling good. You could look at the [playlist of songs created by young people here.](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5og8A5STazAG5esKgR0Drt?si=e3732cc67250439b) They could do this in their own time, and think about why it helps them feel better.
1. **Guided imagery.** Ask learners to sit in their seats or lay down on exercise mats or the floor.
* Explain that visualisations can be a positive way to relax, relieve stress or work through a challenging situation. Visualisations and guided imagery can help you to practice deep breathing which can improve well-being and help create feelings of calm.
* Ask learners to close their eyes and to notice their breathing. You could say: Notice your breathing. Notice how quickly, deeply, shallowly, or slowly you are breathing
* Ask learners to breathe normally. Read out the following:

“Breathing is a very important body activity that we do unconsciously most of the time. But breathing can also affect our emotions and stress.

We can consciously use breathing to help calm us down.

Chest breathing is one type of breathing. In emergency situations, we might breathe quickly into our chests. This can feel like taking shallow breaths and create tension in the chest this might lead to anxious feelings.

Abdominal breathing is different; this is when we breathe in deeply through our nose and diaphragm – right down into your stomach. When you are breathing this way, your stomach will rise and fall, because you will be taking breath into your abdomen. This can be a very relaxing form of breathing. We will practice this today.

Take in some deep breaths, filling your stomach up with air slowly, and then letting it go. Repeat that five times.”

* Slowly, with a calm voice, read the ‘Watch the world go by’ script below. Whilst you read the script ask the group to keep their eyes closed and once you have finished to take a few deep breathes.

**Watch the world go by script**

Take some deep, calming breaths. Try to let everything relax as you breathe, and focus on the images that come up during this visualisation exercise. You can stop at any time.

Imagine that you are walking up some stairs. At the top of the stairs, there is a closed door, and you know that on the other side of the door, there is a safe, calm room that you love.

As you open the door, you breathe in and out… the biggest breaths you have taken all day. You know you are safe in this room and that you can relax. The room is yours – it’s where you want it to be, it’s how you want it to look, it has all the things you want to be in there.

You walk to the wall in front of you, where there is a big, beautiful curtain. As you breathe in… and out… you draw back the curtain.

On the other side, through a huge floor to ceiling window, you can see all the goings on and happenings in your life and in the world around you.

You walk back, and relax down onto the softest, most comfortable chair or sofa you have ever sat on.

As you breathe in… and out… you relax more and more into this soft, comfortable, supportive sofa or chair. You have never felt more comfortable and relaxed.

You observe everything that is going on outside. You see things come by your window… people… cities… schools. You watch and you feel that you can slowly think through whatever it is you need to think through.

You watch the events unfold outside your window and you feel safe and calm inside… knowing that you have the time and the space you need, to think through anything that you need to.

You breathe in and out…. You feel more and more relaxed and your body keeps relaxing into the chair or sofa.

You start to roll your wrists… you roll your ankles… you take a few more deep, slow, long breaths.

And you open your eyes, ready to go back and join in the world.

* After the exercise hold group discussion – how did the learners feel during the visualisation/ guided imagery? Does taking time to breathe, visualise something and keep calm help during a stressful moment? When do you think you might to use an exercise like this?
1. At the end of the session ask learners if they feel more confident about coping with a difficult situation. Ask them to rank themselves from 1 to 10, 10 being very confident.

## Summing up

Ask learners to reflect personally on immediate and longer-term coping techniques – are there any that they would find useful in relation to first aid and helping others? Are there any they think that might help them in a range of situations?