

COPING SKILLS

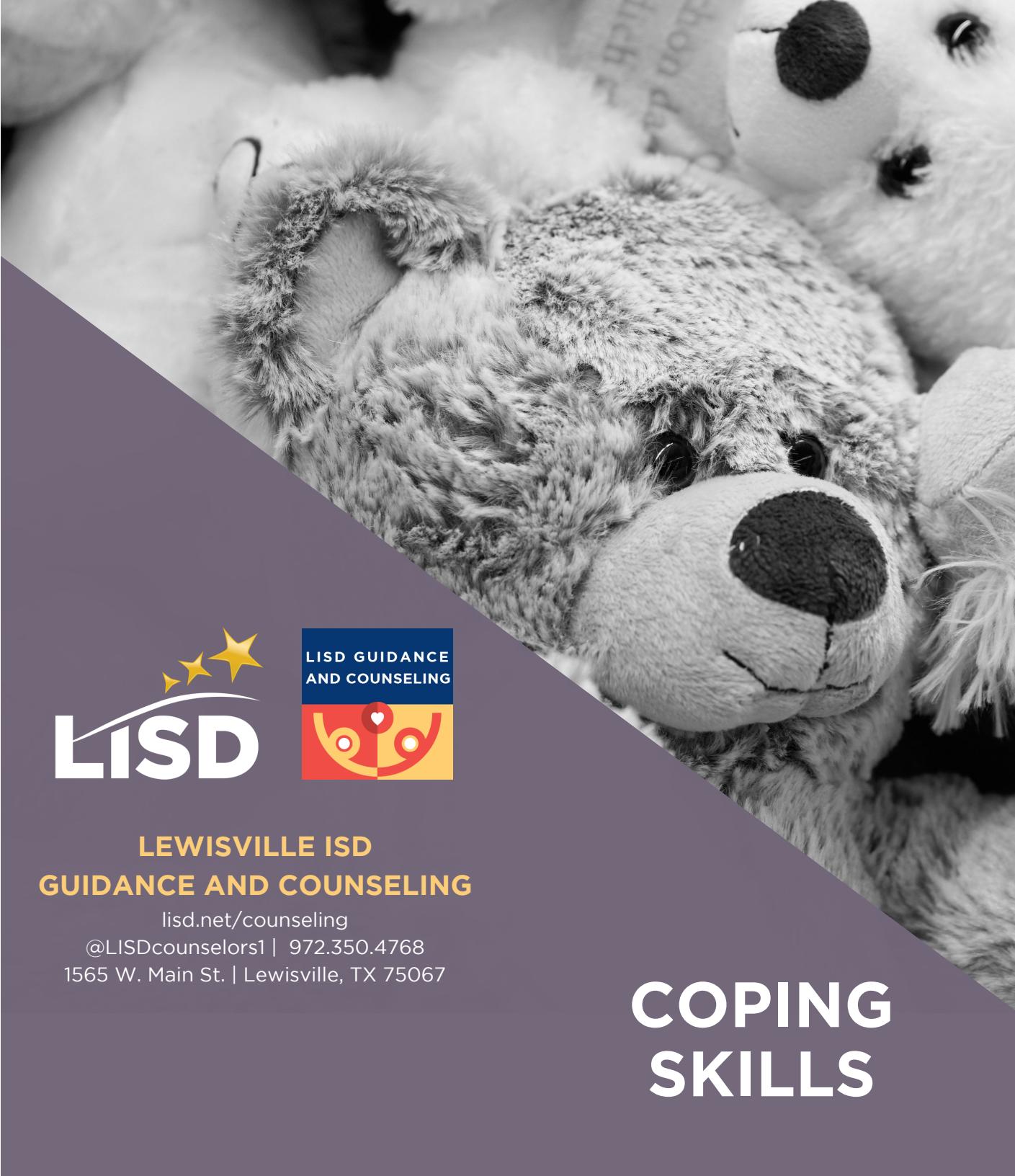
Coping skills are critical for getting us through difficult times. They can give us an important break from mental and emotional distress. They help reduce anxiety and help us be able to press the "reset" button and move forward.



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COPING SKILLS



GENERAL COPING SKILLS

Breathing: Take deep breaths from the diaphragm or stomach.

Music: Use a relaxing or lively tune. Play the music when they need it to self-soothe, but turn it off when you return to the activity.

Self-Statements/Cognitive Coping: What can child/caregiver say to themselves to feel better? Example "I'm safe now; he's not here; It's not my fault."

Imagery: Look at and direct your attention toward pictures or photographs of a beautiful and calming scene, like beaches or mountains.

Visualization: Have the child visualize a place they love or find calming and describe it as if they are there, using all five senses.

Relaxation: Calmly focus on a specific item.

Stuffed Animal: Young kids can hug or pet a favorite stuffed animal. Kids can create a "coping bag" with some of these items.



POSITIVE SELF-TALK

You may not even realize it but how you talk to yourself can really affect your state of mind. Our actions and beliefs are inspired by our thoughts. Below are some ways to use positive self-talk to help you cope with a situation.

1. Eliminate the negative self-talk: The first step in making a change is awareness. Help your child recognize when the negative self-talk starts and turn it around. This won't be easy - patterns are difficult to break. Every time you catch yourself saying, "I can't ..." challenge yourself and ask, "Why can't I?".
2. Use positive affirmations. Affirmations are YOU being in control of your thoughts. This can be very empowering for children. They are usually short, powerful thoughts. By repeating them you are imprinting them on your subconscious thoughts. These will help you battle the negative self-talk.
3. Use positive scripts. Positive scripts are a story that you tell yourself to distract you from the negative self-talk. Incorporate visualization and achievement of a goal into your script. Help your child visualize making that good grade or talking with a new friend.
4. Get rid of your negative influences. Identify what in your life is a negative influence and change it into a positive influence.
5. Focus on the moment. It is easy to let the future worries get you down. Talk with your child about enjoying where they are and who they are with. Teach them to let go the worries about things they can't control.

MINDFULNESS SKILLS

The following options will help increase mindfulness, or the ability to sustain concentration and attention on a particular activity, thought or feeling in the moment.

M&M: Have the child place a single M&M in their mouth. For two minutes, they are to try and pay attention only to the M&M in their mouth—what it feels like (texture), or tastes like—when other thoughts enter their mind, they should direct them back to the M&M without judging themselves for being distracted.

Seeing Meditation: Fix your gaze on an object in your line of vision, take several deep belly breaths and glue your eyes to the object. Let it capture your interest as though it were the only object around. Try not to judge what you are seeing or have any thoughts. Just see.

Mindful Walking: Have the child walk slowly and carefully feeling their feet connect at each point on the floor.

Counting Backward: Throw a ball back and forth as you take turns counting backwards from 100 by 2s or 3s.

Jumping Quadrants: Place tape in a + on the floor. The child has to jump between quadrants (clockwise or counterclockwise) on one leg, and then has to reverse directions jumping on the other leg when told so.

Additional Activities Requiring Sustained Attention: Some mainstream games can be great ways to work on attention skills. Any game that requires attention to succeed will work, including Memory (card matching game), Where's Waldo and Pictionary Jr.