



Tips for tough times

Coping strategies

Sometimes life can be hard. From relationship issues, to work and farm stress, to financial struggles, 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 journalling, 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.

Where to start

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 some ideas for how you can handle tough times. Build your options for handling tough times, they'll come in handy now and in the future.

- *Journal – write a story or music*
- *Connect with country, family or friends*
- *Express your feelings through artwork, song, & 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 – swim, go fishing, 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/breathing exercises*



Tips for tough times

Develop your own coping strategies

Here are seven strategies you could use to develop your own ways to cope:

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.

Quick Tips

Relaxation

Tense everything in your body. Take a breath and hold it. Hold for 5 seconds. Slowly release the breath and the tension and feel your body rest.

Belly breathing

Slow your breathing and focus on the breath as it enters and leaves your body. Count to 4 as you breathe in and then 7 as you breathe out. Take your left hand and place it on your belly. Notice how your belly rises as you breathe in and falls towards your spine as you breathe out. Belly breathe with a slow exhale for 5 minutes.

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.

In the Moment

Take a few slow deep breaths and notice



5 things you can see

4 things you can feel



3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell



1 thing you can taste