

Preparing for Stress Before You're in the Middle of It

Building a plan that helps you reduce overwhelm

Planning ahead helps you prepare for emotionally challenging situations before they happen. By recognizing potential triggers, planning how you'll respond and rehearsing recovery-focused coping strategies, you can navigate stressful moments with greater confidence and intention.

Coping ahead is especially helpful for situations that may feel emotionally difficult, like mealtimes, social events or triggering environments. [Use this skill to stay grounded, make mindful choices and support your recovery when stress is high.](#)

Step 1: Identify the Upcoming Challenge

- What situation or event is coming up that feels stressful or triggering?
- Where or when do you expect urges, anxiety or difficult to occur?

Step 2: Anticipate Your Feelings and Urges

- What thoughts, feelings or urges might you notice during this situation?
- What signs indicate that you're starting to feel overwhelmed?

Step 3: Choose Your Coping Skills and List Your Strategies

Examples:

- **TIPP:** Temperature change (cold splash), intense sensory input, paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation
- **STOP:** Stop → take a step back → observe → proceed mindfully

Building Your Stress-Response Toolkit

Step 4: Plan Your Actions

What specific actions and coping skills will you use before, during and after the situation?

- Before:
- During:
- After:

Step 5: Rehearse and Visualize

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in the situation. Practice using your coping skills and visualize staying calm, grounded and in control.

- What will you notice in your body when you're using your skills?
- What thoughts or self-talk will help you stay focused?

Step 6: Reflect

After the situation, check in with yourself:

- Which coping skills worked well?
- What could you try differently next time?

Don't struggle alone.

Reaching out can be your next step toward recovery. Contact us today to learn how we can help you find stability and a path forward.

ACUTE accepts patients 15+ years of age of all gender expressions suffering from severe medical complications associated with an eating disorder and/or severe malnutrition.



Call **877-228-8348** to speak with a member of the ACUTE admissions team.

This worksheet is provided for educational and self-reflection purposes only. It is not intended to constitute medical or psychiatric advice, diagnosis or treatment, and should not be used as a substitute for care from a licensed healthcare provider.

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