

COPING CARDS

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Mindfulness Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

We all experience a range of emotions. This activity will help survivors identify their own personal coping skills, or ways to regulate their emotions. Survivors can use these cards to identify coping skills for different settings and emotions. Cards can be a helpful reminder to use effective coping strategies when feeling sad, anxious, angry, or more. They can help us remember our safe people and safe places that we can go to for support and connection.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 45 MINUTES

10 minutes for instructions | 20 minutes for drawing | 15 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Paper or a journal

Items to write with (pens, pencils, markers)

[Coping card template](#) (optional)

Stickers (optional)

Notes for the facilitator

- This is not for immediate safety planning with survivors.
- Get creative! Encourage survivors to decorate their cards, and keep in a place that is easily accessible.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 10–18 years old)



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Ask participants to think about how they recognize what emotions are coming up.
- 2 Now, ask participants to brainstorm what happens to their body when feeling frustrated or mad. “Does anyone’s heart race? Is it hard to see clearly?”
- 3 Ask each participant to share with the group something they notice in their body when those emotions come up: “Think about what you might notice in your body when you feel a big sense of relief. Maybe your shoulders release, maybe you take a deep breath?”
- 4 Give each participant a printed template for the [coping card](#), and ask them to fill it out and include a helpful affirmation. Or, participants can fill the card out later, in a safe place, and with a safe person.
- 5 Keep things short and sweet – “When we’re in states of panic or anxiety, it can be helpful to have a single word or phrase to remind us of the strategies we want to use to calm ourselves down.”
- 6 Give participants time to decorate the card with stickers, drawings, or whatever comes to mind!

Note: If participants do not want to carry around a physical card, encourage them to take a photo of their completed card and save it to their “favorites” folder on their phone so they have easy access to it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Did anything feel particularly difficult or easy?
- What did you notice in your body as you were doing this exercise?
- What do you notice in your body after this exercise?