



# Borderline and Beyond Coping Skills



**This leaflet has been written by the Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) Dialogues Group. This is a group of people with lived experience of BPD, in partnership with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and the Mental Health Network.**

The coping skills in this leaflet may be helpful for people with a diagnosis of BPD who experience intense changeable emotions and impulsive reactions.

These skills may also be helpful for anyone trying to cope with difficult or distressing feelings.

## Introduction

We all cope with the stresses of life differently and all of us can become overwhelmed at times. People with a diagnosis of BPD can struggle with intense feelings and can be more vulnerable to becoming overwhelmed, especially if they are yet to receive treatment.

Some people may resort to ways of coping that can be harmful. This leaflet aims to show better ways of coping.

These ideas have been tried and tested by people who have been in your shoes, but not all of these coping skills will work for everyone. You may have disabilities that mean some skills are not possible for you. One size does not fit all. There are lots of different ideas to try.

Some of these ideas might seem unusual, but it's worth trying them out to see if they help.

By reading this leaflet, you are already starting to find solutions.

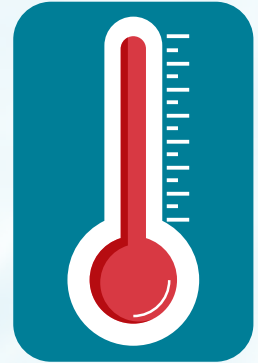
## Quick Coping Skills

When we experience extreme feelings of distress or anger, the part of the brain which helps us think rationally goes 'offline'.

This means that the emotional part of the brain takes over.

We can find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly and can find ourselves reacting impulsively.

The coping skills in this section are quick and simple things you can do when you are feeling very distressed. They can help bring down emotional temperature and get the thinking part of the brain back online.



### Very Quick Actions

- Punch or scream into a pillow
- Do star jumps or run on the spot
- Crunch or rip up pieces of paper
- Scribble on paper with pens or paint

### TIPP Skill

**T** = Temperature (splash your face or put face in iced water, or use ice pack)

**I** = Intense exercise - even just for a short while

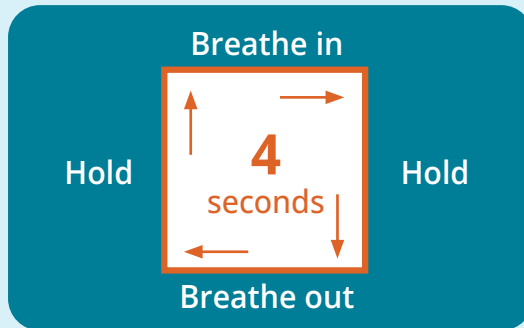
**P** = Paced breathing (slow your breathing down or breathe in for 5 and out for 7)

**P** = Pair muscle relaxation with your breathing  
(As you breathe, focus on specific areas like your shoulders, arms or legs and try to release the tension in your muscles)

### 54321 Exercise - name;

- **5** things you can see
- **4** things you can touch
- **3** things you can hear
- **2** things you can smell
- **1** thing you can taste

**Box Breathing** - breath in for a slow count of 4, hold your breath in for 4, breath out for 4, hold your breath in for 4, repeat.



## Sensory Soothing and Distraction

Use your five senses to self-soothe or distract yourself during times of distress.

- **Sight** - use your vision to focus on something else, count how many places you can see a certain colour in the room, scroll through your favourite photos on your phone
- **Sound** - listen to loud music, play soothing sounds on your phone
- **Taste** - have some mints or sour sweets, eat an orange or a lemon, chew on a piece of ginger or chilli
- **Touch** - use a weighted blanket, take a warm bath, put your face in cold water, use a fidget toy, hold ice in your hands, put a bag of frozen peas on the back of your neck
- **Smell** - sniff a strong smell like citrus or menthol, use essential oils like tea tree, eucalyptus, bergamot

## Skills for when you are able to think a bit more calmly

Anything that keeps you busy and keeps your mind off negative emotions will help. If you finish, move on to a new activity.

### Activities

- read a book
- use a colouring-in book
- bake or cook something you like
- go for a walk
- call your friend
- dance to your favourite song
- do 10 sit-ups
- wash the dishes
- go to a museum
- watch a movie

### Other Ideas

**STOP Skill** (Stop, Take a step back, Observe, Proceed mindfully)



**Seek out people** - friends / family / professionals who have been helpful to you in the past

**Do something creative** - build on interests you already have, make use of your existing hobbies e.g. painting or crafting to make something nice for yourself or others

**Contributing** - Do something kind for another person.

Give someone a compliment. Give a friend something you've made or look into volunteering opportunities in your area. Help cook dinner.



**Imagery** - Imagine yourself dealing with the problem successfully and feeling good when the situation is over.



**Meaning** - Try to find meaning in painful situations. What can you learn from this experience? Maybe you'll be more empathetic. Maybe you'll build new relationships. Maybe this will start you on a healing journey.

**Prayer** - Prayer can come in any form that works for you. The prayer can be to any higher power, or the universe. Offer your problems and ask to tolerate the situation a little longer.

**Relaxation** - We tense up during stressful situations thanks to our fight or flight instinct. Try doing relaxing activities to calm the psychological distress you're experiencing. These activities can include deep breathing, yoga, a hot bath, and a relaxing walk.

**Comfort TV** - have episodes of your favourite show or movie handy to watch



**One thing in the moment** - Stay in the moment by letting go of the past and future. Adding old issues to the situation, or future anxiety about potential results of the situation, will not be helpful in solving the problem. Find one thing to do and focus your entire self to that task.

**Self-compassion** - Compare how you are managing things now to how you did before, and try to recognise how you are more able to manage things now. Try not to compare yourself to anybody else. Remind yourself you are doing the best you can and show yourself the kindness you would show to others.



Things you can prepare in advance when you are feeling OK for future periods of crisis or distress.

### Write a List of Positive Affirmations



**Positive Jar or box** - fill it up with your written affirmations, and you can take one out when you are having a bad day. You can roll each one up until it is small enough to fit into a piece of a drinking straw. This might help to make it feel more special and important when you pull one out and unroll it to look at.

You can do the same with favourite lines of poetry or song lyrics that mean something to you.

**Make a self-care box** - for example; stress balls, essential oils, CDs, photographs, affirmations, hot chocolate sachet, lavender eye mask, spray of a soothing scent on a piece of material.

**Make a little inspirational video** when you are feeling good.

**Make a photo album** of some good times. This can either be on your phone, or photos printed and stuck in an album

## Ideas for selecting activities

**Activities Jars** - If you enjoy crafts, you can prepare different decorated jars for different moods, e.g.



Put the right kind of activities in each jar to suit these future moods and levels of energy

### Activities List

Less “crafty” people could prepare a list or even a spreadsheet of numbered activities to refer to. When you need a suggestion, pick a random number and do whatever that number is on the list.

**Take things step by step and pick goals that are realistic for you.**

We hope this leaflet has given you some helpful suggestions or even inspired you to come up with your own ideas! Remember we are all different and it's all about finding what works for you. As people with lived experience, we have all found our own different go-to coping skills and we wish you the very best in finding yours!

## Other recommended resources

If you want more information on Borderline Personality Disorder, we have produced a leaflet from a lived experience point of view called **Borderline and Beyond**, available here:



**NHS GGC MyApp My Mental Health website** has a section on Borderline Personality Disorder  **MyApp: My Mental Health | Right Decisions (scot.nhs.uk)**

This can also be downloaded as an app (**Right Decisions** App on AppStore or GooglePlay)

The **Mental Health Network** has a webpage with useful resources and details about the BPD Dialogues group.

 <https://mhngg.org.uk/bpd-dialogues-group/>

**MIND website**

 **What can I do to help myself cope with BPD? - Mind**

**SHOUT website**

 **Little Book of Coping Skills**

**Useful Contacts in a Crisis:**

**NHS 24 Mental Health Hub**

Speak with someone 24 hours - 7 days

Phone:  **111** and select option for mental health hub

## Breathing Space

Monday-Thursday - 6pm-2am

Friday 6pm to Monday 6am (24 hour support at weekends)

☎ **0800 83 85 87**

Live Chat: 🌐 <https://breathingspace.scot/> (Doesn't appear on phone bill) (Live Chat opening times are different)

## Samaritans

24 hours - 7 days

☎ **116 123**

✉ [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) (Doesn't appear on phone bill)  
(response within 24 hours)

## Shout (Text Support)

24 hours - 7 days

Text: **85258** (Doesn't appear on phone bill)

## Childline (Up to 19th Birthday)

24 hours a day

☎ **0800 1111** (Doesn't appear on phone bill)

Live chat: 🌐 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### My mental health contacts: