MODERN HEALTH

Coping With Things We Can’t Control

The last few years have taught us that we can’t always control the world around us. Whether it’s a coworker’s behavior, a global pandemic, ongoing violence and injustice, or the current state of the economy, some things out of our control can leave us feeling anxious, stressed out, or scared, and that’s normal. Fortunately, there are strategies that can help you cope with these difficult situations.

> **“You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”**
>
> **- JON KABAT-ZINN**

5 Tips for Coping With Things You Can't Control:

1

Practice acceptance: One of the main principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), an evidence-based psychological treatment, is to accept the things that are beyond your control, including events or situations that are difficult emotionally. Spending time and energy fighting against painful emotions usually leads to even more distress. Shifting that energy to focus on things that align with your values may actually improve your well-being. What is it like to acknowledge things as they are, including the challenging emotions you're experiencing?

> **Pro tip:** You don't have to like or agree with things as they are. For example, by accepting the current state of the economy, you can also acknowledge that it makes you anxious. On issues like systemic injustice, acceptance is not the same as resignation; we can accept the way systems work and commit to our own behaviors to change those systems, which may end up feeling more energizing.

2

Take action where you do have control: Specifically, your own behavior. ACT encourages people to identify their values and behave consistently with those values. Think of your values as a compass to navigate your life. Just because certain things are out of your control doesn't mean you can't decide how to behave in difficult circumstances. Returning to the example of systemic injustices, accepting them as reality gives you the space to behave in ways intended to change those injustices (through voting, donating, activism, etc.).

3 **Focus on the present moment:** When you're feeling overwhelmed, it's easy to get caught up in negative thoughts about the past or the future. For example, you might find yourself continually replaying a recent difficult conversation with your partner. Instead, try to focus on the present moment by practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness involves cultivating an intentional awareness of your current experiences rather than changing your emotions or circumstances.

4 **Cultivate self-compassion:** It's important to be kind to yourself during difficult times. Practice self-compassion by treating yourself with the same kindness, concern, and understanding you would offer to a good friend.

5 **Practice gratitude:** When you're feeling consumed by negative emotions, it can be helpful to reflect on what you're grateful for, no matter how small.

Pro tip: Try not to "just be positive," which can be more associated with toxic positivity. Instead, identify and pay attention to things you're genuinely grateful for. For example, rather than feeling frustrated by a lack of support from a coworker, be grateful for the help you receive from another coworker.

How Modern Health Can Help

Get One-On-One Support

Modern Health can match you with a certified coach or licensed therapist. Our peer-reviewed research demonstrates that our model works and members experience meaningful improvements in their well-being by working one-on-one with either a coach or a therapist. A therapist may help you reduce symptoms of issues like depression or anxiety using evidence-based therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Our mental health coaches also use evidence-based strategies and can help you improve your well-being by reducing issues like stress and burnout. Finally, working with coaches in other life domains like financial or professional growth may help you move toward goals like creating a budget or improving management skills that can help you focus on areas you can control. Get matched with a provider today!

Learn New Skills

A variety of self-guided resources available through Modern Health can support you in addressing the anxiety and stress you may be feeling. Access digital programs, guided meditations, and courses that can help you create a strong foundation for self-care. You can use these resources on your own or to support the work you're doing with a provider. Some examples include our:

- Building Confidence with Self-Compassion course
- Mindfulness program
- Nightly Gratitude meditation

Join a Community Circle

Join an upcoming Circle, a provider-led group session, to learn skills to navigate challenges that may impact you at work, at home, or in your relationships. We host Circles on topics related to coping, like self-compassion and difficult thoughts, as well as Identity-Based Circles in multiple languages where you can discuss, learn, share, and be together in community. Check out our Circles page to sign up for a session!

Start for free today!
Scan this QR code. Or go to my.modernhealth.com
Questions? **help@modernhealth.com**