

Coping with Symptoms of Psychosis



Positive Coping Strategies

Problem solving: coming up with solutions that might help to reduce difficulties.

Example: bringing a book or listening to music while on public transit to decrease focus on anxious thoughts

Goal setting: setting realistic and achievable goals.

Example: setting a small goal at first, like going for a 10 to 15 minute walk and building up to larger goals like going to the gym 3 times a week.

Managing stress: being active in anticipating and managing stressors. Having a plan or supports in place ahead of time makes it easier to manage stress.

Example: studying over the course of a week for an upcoming exam versus starting the day before.

Preventing Relapse: thinking ahead about things that can increase vulnerability to relapse or experiencing psychosis again.

Example: taking medication as prescribed or reaching out to friends.

Seek support: if you are struggling to manage your symptoms reach out to others for support.

Example: talking to a family member or friend or calling your healthcare provider, doctor or therapist.

Symptoms of psychosis can be hard to manage. Things like hearing voices or having thoughts that others are out to harm you can cause anxiety and distress. Coping in a healthy way can help you feel better overall, even if the symptoms continue.

Negative Coping Strategies

Isolation: When you are feeling stressed or experiencing symptoms, you may want to isolate. However, spending time with friends and family can provide support, which helps reduce stress and symptoms.

Avoidance: In the short term avoidance can reduce anxiety, but in the long term it makes anxiety and distress worse. When you avoid things, you miss the chance to learn how to cope with symptoms. Avoidance also makes it harder to enjoy the things you like doing.

Substance Use: Substances may reduce feelings of anxiety and distress in the short term, but in the long term, they can make symptoms worse and lead to other concerns.

Ways to Manage Active Symptoms

1

Distraction:

If voices or troubling thoughts are distressing you, try to turn your mind to another activity, such as:

- Listening to music on headphones
- Watching a TV show
- Talking to a friend or family member
- Exercising
- A relaxing activity such as having a bath



2

Grounding:

By focusing on things outside of yourself and in your environment, you can shift your attention from distressing symptoms or emotions by doing the following:

- Focus on your immediate surroundings and what you are doing (for example eating, walking)
- Focus on an object and describe it to yourself. Notice the colour, texture, temperature.
- List these things out loud: say 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.



3

Keeping a diary or tracker:

By documenting your voices or troubling thoughts in a diary or notepad, you gain a better understanding of their frequency, intensity, triggers, and patterns. This helps you understand what makes your symptoms worse. Also pay attention to what makes your symptoms better!

