

SESSION 8: ASSESSING COPING STRATEGIES

What do you do to soothe stress, frustration, and/or grief? Is it working?



[FUN FACT:

Did you know that the singer in this scene is the real Leslie Douglass and that is her beautiful singing voice?

Her son Zach is equally talented and sings “Homework” over the scene of young Brooks playing football with his dad. Marilyn’s beautiful singing voice lives on—our daughter loves to sing and even Brooks is a great singer 😊

PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

Start class by practicing the deep breathing method discussed on page 28.

INTRODUCTIONS

Last week’s session was about repairing relationships, and the homework was to write a Letter of Gratitude to someone.

- *Does anyone want to share their experience with the Letter of Gratitude?*
- *Does anyone feel like they’ve made steps forward toward repairing a relationship?*

BEHIND THE SCENES

Trauma and the recovery process can be overwhelming. Your mind races. Flashbacks haunt you. You’re tired of being tired. Sometimes you just want to escape your life. You want to take a break from being you. *When life feels overwhelming, what do you do to help you cope with life’s uncertainties, stress, and/or grief?*

MOVIE CLIP - *Play Session 8: Assessing Coping Strategies*

As we watch this clip, look for ways that Brooks is trying to cope with the uncertainty, stress, and grief in his life. Look for both positive, healthy coping strategies and negative, unhealthy coping strategies.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

[First, write responses to the questions below (*think*), then share your responses with a partner (*pair*), then discuss the questions as a group (*share*):

- 1) In the movie clip, what does Brooks do to help him cope with stress?
- 2) What are other common coping strategies people use to try to ease stress, anxiety, and depression? List both positive, healthy strategies and negative, unhealthy strategies. Some strategies might fit under both categories.

HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES	UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

- 3) When you feel stressed or discouraged, what coping strategies do you use?
- 4) How do your coping strategies affect you—both positive and negatively? How might they affect others?
- 5) What are some additional or alternative coping strategies that might be good for your life?

CLASS DISCUSSION

Devising coping strategies is a natural way to try to defend ourselves against angst. When life feels overwhelming, we seek ways to soothe our system and alleviate pain or anxiety, particularly for trauma survivors who are haunted by past events. In times of anxiety, we can turn to healthy coping strategies or turn to more self-destructive methods like alcohol, drugs, over eating, or risky behavior. Whichever the choice, the behavior often becomes a habit and can have short-term and long-term effects on yourself and others.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," talks of a choice between two roads. Read the poem below and discuss the questions.

The Road Not Taken (verses 1 & 4)

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

- By Robert Frost (1916)



Imagine that you are standing at a crossroad, a road that diverges into two separate paths. In this case, one path represents healthy coping strategies and the other path represents unhealthy coping strategies. You are standing at the base of both and need to decide which way to go.

Think-Pair-Share the following questions:

- If you could look down the path representing **healthy coping strategies**, what would your life look like if you took that path? (*Describe physical health, emotional health, financial security, relationships, trauma recovery.*)

- If you could look down the path representing **unhealthy** coping strategies, what would your life look like if you took that path? (*Describe physical health, emotional health, financial security, relationships, trauma recovery.*)

- In the poem, which path does the author take? What was the result?

- If you are in the grip of addiction (alcohol, drugs, food, unhealthy relationships), what can you do? How can you get off that road and onto another?

HOMEWORK:

Use Handout 8.1: Assessing Coping Strategies to monitor your health and well-being habits.

FROM BROOKS: *“Try to stay away from the things you know are going to get you in trouble because there’s going to be plenty of things you don’t know that are going to get you in trouble. There’s going to be enough curve balls without doing things that are purposefully stupid.”*

HANDOUT 8.1: ASSESSING COPING STRATEGIES

Use this log to monitor daily activities related to stress management. Begin the journal on whatever day tomorrow is (e.g., Mon.) and fill in answers for each day of the week.

	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Weds.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	TOTAL
<i>Sample</i>								9
HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES								
Ate a healthy meal								
Exercised or did relaxation activities								
Talked to a friend or family member								
Had "quiet time," prayer/meditation								
Read or journal wrote								
Took 5+ deep, deliberate breaths								
UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES								
Drank more than two alcoholic drinks								
Smoked a cigarette								
Used drugs								
Watched more than 2 hours of TV								
Slept more than 9 hours								
Ate too much								
COULD BE HEALTHY OR UNHEALTHY (<i>consider long-term effects and possible alternatives</i>)								
Took prescription drugs								
OTHER (<i>enter any activities you think may be helping or hurting your trauma recovery</i>)								

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