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Alternatives and Coping Methods

When you're faced with any kind of negative urge, whether self harm, an addiction or something else, alternatives are ways that can help you to get past those negative emotions. Some of these can help you immediately, by stopping you in the moment, while others can help you over a longer term to change your thinking and help you to move forward.

Below are a number of different ways to help you when facing these negative urges. These have all been shared by our members over the years about what has helped them. Please keep in mind that not everything on this list will work for everyone, so, if you try something and it doesn't work for you, don't get discouraged! Some of these choices are complicated, and you might want to utilize the help of a therapist or trusted friend when undertaking them. Recovery is not a process that can be walked through alone, so don't be afraid to reach out for help.

This documents covers:

1. **[Distractions](#)** - Good if you're distressed or tempted right now
2. **[Dealing with and expressing your feelings](#)** - Good to reduce urges
3. **[Coping strategies](#)** - Good for long term progress
4. **[Self-care](#)**
5. **[Recovery rewards](#)**

Distractions

Distracting your mind

It can be hard to cope when something unhealthy is on your mind. Unhealthy behaviors can become frequent, or even obsessive. The list below has a few examples of ways to distract your mind.

Our top recommendations:

- *Play the 'fifteen minute game.'* Choose an activity and engage in it for fifteen minutes. When the time is up, add another fifteen minutes and so forth. The goal is to get invested in an activity without realizing that your fifteen minutes are up.
- *Plan activities for yourself throughout the day.* Keeping busy in your surroundings, whether that is volunteering or watching a movie can reduce negative thoughts.
- *Work on a puzzle.* Select a puzzle such as a jigsaw puzzle, a crossword or word search. Working on a puzzle can be both time consuming and calming.
- *Count to fifty or one thousand.* Counting can interrupt your thoughts, thus making it difficult to focus on counting and unhealthy behaviors at the same time.
- *Read or watch a movie or TV show.* This can level out your mind; it gives you the chance to get invested in the lives of characters.
- *Look through old photo albums.* This activity can bring back positive memories. If your past is triggering, however, you may want to avoid this alternative.

Simple distractions:

- Make a cup of tea
- Go shopping
- Color your hair
- Put a face mask on
- Look up words in a dictionary

On the computer:

- Surf the net
- Search ridiculous things on the web
- Browse your favorite website
- Go on YouTube
- Hunt for things on eBay or Amazon
- Play solitaire
- Play computer games or painting programs, such as PhotoShop
- Pick a subject and research it on the web - alternatively, pick something to research and then keep clicking on links, trying to get as far away from the original topic as you can

Mind games:

- Make as many words out of your full name as possible

- Choose a random object, like a paper clip, and try to list 30 different uses for it
- Count ceiling tiles or lights
- Alphabetize your CDs or books
- Color coordinate your wardrobe
- Name all of your soft toys
- Play the A-Z game - Pick a category e.g. animals, and think of an animal for every letter of the alphabet
- Learn words in another language

With people:

- Call up an old friend
- Play hide-and-seek with your siblings
- Be around supportive people
- Make a phone list of people you can call for support - Allow yourself to use it
- Go "people watching"

Be productive:

- Complete something you've been putting off
- Do some household chores
- Do school work
- Re-organize your room
- Take a small step towards a goal you have

Relax:

- Have a lush warm bubble bath with candles!
- Watch fish
- Lay on the grass and watch the clouds. You can try to make pictures with them too
- Take a break from mental processing
- Get out on your own, get away from the stress
- Go for a walk if it's safe for you to do so
- Go to the gym, run or other form of exercise
- Have or give a massage
- Curl up under a comforter with hot cocoa and a good book

Have fun:

- Tell and laugh at jokes
- Play with toys, such as a slinky
- Go to the park and play on the swings
- Go outside and attempt to catch butterflies or lizards
- Dress up or try on old clothes
- Sing on a karaoke machine
- Make your own dance routine
- Find out if any concerts will be in your area
- Plan a party
- Play a sport
- Play a musical instrument

- Do whatever your favorite hobby is

Other ideas:

- Plan regular activities for your most difficult time of day
- Buy a plant and take care of it
- Make a scrapbook
- Memorize a poem with meaning
- Carry safe, rather than sharp, things in your pockets

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t8753-relaxation-techniques/> | Relaxation techniques
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t155165-utilizing-grounding-techniques/> | Utilising grounding techniques
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t3497-dissociation-you-making-grounding-kit/> | The benefits of yoga

Keeping your hands busy

Sometimes keeping your hands busy can help to keep you safe. The suggestions below can help you do this.

Our top recommendations:

- *Play with putty or play-dough.* This can be a grounding technique and a way to keep your hands focused elsewhere.
- *Knit or make jewelry.* Knitting and jewelry making will make good use of your hands.
- *Do yard work.* Raking the leaves, mowing the lawn, or pulling the weeds can be a productive and safe alternative.
- *Do housework.* You can sweep, mop, do laundry, or take the trash out to avoid harming yourself.
- *Use a coloring book.* Coloring will allow you to express yourself through images and colors while keeping your hands occupied.

More ideas:

- Paint your nails
- Doodle on sheets of paper
- Draw a comic strip
- Paint
- Make sculptures
- Write out lyrics to your favorite song
- Make origami
- Make 'scoobies' - braid pieces of plastic or lace
- Play sports that involve your hands such as hand ball or tennis

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t152462-how-make-zen-garden/> | How to make a zen garden
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t151186-aromatherapy->

- [animals/](#) | Aromatherapy animals
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t136687-how-make-calming-jar/> | How to make a calming jar
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t145054-how-make-rice-sock-sack/> | How to make a rice sock/sack
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t129886-how-make-lucky-stars/> | How to make lucky stars
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t144513-how-make-stress-ball/> | How to make a stress ball
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f90-fashion-style/t140381-how-make-button-bracelets/> | How to make button bracelets
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t146362-recycling-crayons/> | Recycling crayons
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t161975-colouring-mindfulness/> | Colouring for mindfulness

In our Newsletter:

- #70. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b42509-newsletter-70-how-wake-up-earlier%3B-keeping-your-hands-busy%3B-how-get-warm-when-its-cold/> | Keeping your hands busy
- #68. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b41971-newsletter-68-how-cope-seasonal-affective-disorder%3B-colouring-reduce-anxiety%3B-how-create-effective-sleep-routine/> | Colouring to reduce anxiety
- #11. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b16802-newsletter-11-taking-control-your-life%3B-recovery-self-harm%3B-making-box-delights/> | How to make a 'Box of Delights'
- #41. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b35404-newsletter-41-misconceptions-about-hiv%3B-doing-your-school-year-justice%3B-make-your-tasty-treats/> | How to make home-made ice pops (popsicles)
- #39. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b34799-newsletter-39-tackling-phobias%3B-communicating-within-relationships%3B-delicious-fruit-smoothies/> | How to make a fruit smoothie
- #31. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b31982-newsletter-31-enhancing-our-volunteer-base%3B-how-fight-your-fears%3B-making-caramel-apples/> | How to make caramel apples
- #29. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b30950-newsletter-29-inspirational-motivational-videos%3B-steps-self-harm-recovery%3B-coping-emotional-abuse/> | Home-made chocolate cookies
- #25. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b28004-newsletter-25-enjoying-photography-artwork%3B-keeping-your-skin-healthy%3B-developing-good-communication-skills/> | How to make use of leftover Easter chocolate

Dealing with and expressing your feelings

Bottled up emotions can contribute to unhealthy behaviors. Here are a few healthy ways to express your feelings.

Our top recommendations:

- *Talk to someone.* Talking to someone is sometimes easier said than done, but if you feel comfortable talking to someone about what you are experiencing, give it a try. If you cannot talk to someone or you do not want to talk to someone in your life, consider calling a hotline <http://www.teenhelp.org/hotlines/>
- *Journal about your feelings.* Journaling, whether it is in a notebook or a blog, can make a world of difference. Journaling can give you a safe place to talk about what you want whenever you're ready. It can also be a way to measure your progress as you can look back at past entries if it is helpful.
- *Express yourself in an artistic way.* Consider drawing, painting, sculpting, writing, or singing. Each of these examples could serve as a valuable outlet.
- *Trace your hand on a piece of paper.* On your thumb, write something you like to look at; on your index finger, write something you like to touch; on your middle finger, write your favorite scent; on your ring finger, write something you like the taste of; on your pinky finger, write something you like to listen to; on your palm, write something you like about yourself.

More ideas:

- Identify what is hurting so bad that you need to express it in this way
- Start a grateful journal where everyday you write down three: good things that happened/things that you accomplished/are grateful for/made you smile. Make sure the journal is strictly for positive things. Then when you feel down you can go back and look at it.
- Carry tokens to remind you of peaceful comforting things/people
- Make a collage of how you feel
- Free write (Write down whatever you're thinking at that moment, even if it doesn't make sense)
- Make lists of everything such as blessings in your life
- Write your feelings on paper then rip it up
- Write words in the sand for them to be washed away
- Make a notebook of song lyrics that you relate to
- Hug a pillow, soft toy or a tree
- With permission, give someone a hug
- If you're religious, read the bible (or your own religious text) or pray
- Accept where you are in the process. Beating yourself up, only makes it worse

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t163998-how-determine-your-feelings/> | How to determine your feelings

In our Newsletter:

- #86. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b45721-newsletter-86-how-make-corn-nuts%3B-spring-cleaning%3B-opening-up-someone/> | How to open up to someone
- #83. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b45164-newsletter-83-reaching-out-others%3B-how-read-more%3B-putting-yourself-first/> | Deciding to reach out
- #35. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b33386-newsletter-35-more-efficient-site-navigation%3B-keeping-touch-old-friends%3B-how-tell-your-parents-you-struggling/> | Telling your parents that you are struggling
- #60. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b40128-newsletter-60-new-staff-role%3B-talking-your-family-about-sensitive-issues%3B-choosing-pet-suits-you/> | How to talk to your family about sensitive issues

Some alternatives can be specifically useful for particular feelings or situations. Below are some alternatives for a variety of feelings.

Anxiety or restlessness

Our top recommendations:

- *Use a calm down jar.* A calm down jar is a jar that is filled with glitter, glue, water, and food dye. To use one, shake it and watch the glitter fall. Here is an article that discusses how to make one. <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t136687-how-make-calming-jar/>
- *Listen to guided imagery or affirmations.* Guided meditations can help you focus on breathing or on other parts of your body, and are often calming. Here is an article about guided imagery. <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t152879-what-guided-imagery/>
- *Do breathing exercises.* Inhale, and picture all the stress and anxiety leaving your body every time you exhale. You can also take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds before slowly releasing it. Additionally, you can practice mindfulness or yoga. Here's an article about mindfulness. <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t148762-mindfulness/>
- *Make yourself feel safe and comfortable.* You can go to a safe room, hold a safe object, or make your environment feel safer (e.g. turn on the lights or leave the TV running). Touch something familiar and surround yourself with pleasant objects.

More ideas:

- “See, hear and feel” - 5 things, then 4, then 3 and countdown to one which will make you focus on your surroundings and will calm you down
- Hyper focus on something, such as a picture on a wall. Pay attention to every aspect of it and examine it carefully
- Listen to soothing music

- Drink herbal tea
- Feel your pulse to prove you're alive
- Focus on your breathing and work on slowing it gradually if you're having a panic attack
- Sit in a comfortable position and put your feet firmly on the floor

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t100848-countering-your-anxiety/> | Countering your anxiety
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t163202-understanding-overcoming-fear/> | Understanding and overcoming fear
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f87-education-careers/t154447-coping-stress-while-school/> | Coping with stress while in school
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t160455-surviving-trauma-anxiety-how-feel-safe-night/> | Surviving trauma and anxiety: how to feel safe at night
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f551-anxiety-stress/t164005-overcoming-driving-anxiety/> | Overcoming driving anxiety

In our Newsletter:

- #63. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b40843-newsletter-63-benefits-taking-gap-year%3B-how-cope-anxiety%3B-how-deal-stress-workplace/> | Methods of coping with anxiety
- #26. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b28929-newsletter-26-volunteering-opportunities-teenhelp%3B-beating-anxiety%3B-ensuring-your-friends-right-you/> | Letting go of your past
- #30. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b31435-newsletter-30-living-young-carer%3B-combating-abusive-relationships%3B-healthy-exercise-while-pregnant/> | How to deal with anxiety
- #28. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b30406-newsletter-28-share-your-experiences-improve-teenhelp%3B-staying-motivated-during-studying%3B-avoiding-damaging-effects-sunburn/> | Overcoming social anxiety
- #67. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b41740-newsletter-67-how-carve-pumpkin%3B-creating-class-schedule%3B-coping-nightmares/> | How to prevent and cope with nightmares
- #31. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b31982-newsletter-31-enhancing-our-volunteer-base%3B-how-fight-your-fears%3B-making-caramel-apples/> | Fighting your fears
- #44. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b36512-newsletter-44-creating-new-resources%3B-helping-loved-one-cancer%3B-going-beyond-your-comfort-zone/> | Stepping out of your comfort zone

Anger

Our top recommendations:

- *Tear up pictures or newspapers.* Taking your aggression out on the paper can be therapeutic. You can also scribble over people in magazines.
- *Punch or scream into a pillow.* Screaming on or punching a pillow is a safe

- way to reduce some of your anger.
- *Write an angry letter to someone.* Use this as an opportunity to be as angry as you want. When you're done writing, set it aside and return to it when things cool down. Alternatively, you can choose a safe way to destroy it.
 - *Fill a piece of paper by drawing cross hatches.* You could also include drawings or words of things that make you angry. Draw cross hatches over these to erase the anger you feel by them.
 - *Pop bubble wrap or balloons.* Blow up balloons and find creative ways to pop them, or use bubble wrap instead.

More ideas:

- Have a pillow fight with the wall
- Beat up a stuffed bear
- Scream very loudly
- Listen to music and sing along loudly
- Count up to ten getting louder until you are screaming
- Draw a picture of what is making you angry
- Splatter paint
- Scribble on a piece of paper until the whole page is black
- Throw an apple/pair of socks against the wall
- Throw ice cubes at the bathtub wall, at a tree, etc
- Build a fort of pillows and then destroy it
- Break sticks
- Get out a fine tooth comb and vigorously brush the fur of a stuffed animal (but use gentle vigor)
- Stomp around in heavy shoes
- Yell at what you are breaking and tell it why you are angry, hurt, upset, etc

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t103149-conquering-your-anger/> | Conquering your anger
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t161781-jealousy-how-deal/> | Jealousy and how to deal with it

In our Newsletter:

- #46. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b37116-newsletter-46-what-dialectical-behaviour-therapy-dbt-%3B-how-fight-alcohol-addiction%3B-preventing-spread-flu/> | Anger management
- #27. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b29779-newsletter-27-improving-teenhelps-services%3B-gender-identity%3B-overcoming-jealousy/> | How to deal with jealous feelings

Sadness

Our top recommendations:

- *Allow yourself to cry.* Crying can sometimes be tiring or uncomfortable but it is a good way to let go of your emotions.

- *Imagine yourself living in a perfect home and describe it in your mind.* This will help to give you hope and inspiration.
- *Spend time with a pet.* Pets give unconditional love and that can be comforting during a difficult time.
- *Go outside for a while.* The sun or the change of scenery can help improve your mood.
- *Listen to upbeat music.* Choose positive songs or make a playlist to use when you are feeling sad.

More ideas:

- Remember a happy moment and relive it for a while in your head
- Look at things that are special to you
- Call a friend and ask for company
- Try to imagine the future and plan things you want to do
- Imagine yourself living in a perfect home and describe it in your mind
- Congratulate yourself on each minute you go without giving into your urges
- Eat something ridiculously sweet - Sugar increases your mood
- Make a tray of special treats and tuck yourself into bed with it and watch TV or read
- Instead of punishing yourself by self harming, punish yourself by not self harming

In our Newsletter:

- #42. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b35833-newsletter-42-phone-applications-help%3B-understanding-addiction%3B-overcoming-abuse/> | Coping with suicidal feelings
- #6. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b13648-newsletter-6-celebrating-fcrds%3B-staying-shape%3B-dealing-distress-difficult-emotions/> | Suicide prevention
- #26. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b28929-newsletter-26-volunteering-opportunities-teenhelp%3B-beating-anxiety%3B-ensuring-your-friends-right-you/> | Letting go of your past
- #23. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b26267-newsletter-23-goodbye-avatar%3B-dieting-healthy-way%3B-using-internet-safely/> | Coping with loss

Coping strategies

Grounding techniques - Feeling present in the 'now'

Grounding techniques are alternatives that can help you feel more present in the moment. This can help to change your thinking away from the past or the future, which may cause you distress, to focusing on the now, which can be important for breaking the cycle of negative thinking. The list below has suggestions that encompass all of the senses.

Our top recommendations:

- *Hold something to fidget with.* Use a stress ball, a fidget toy, or putty. Stimulating the tactile sense can help you feel more grounded.
- *Shuffle your feet or stomp on the floor.* This is another way to focus on the tactile sense.
- *Use a product containing menthol.* Menthol products provide a cold and warm sensation when used on the body. They also smell minty, which targets the sense of smell and feel.
- *Bake or prepare a meal.* The act of preparing a dish, cooking it, eating it, and smelling it while it is cooking can help you feel more present. You can find recipes here for Irish potato candy <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f185-food-recipes/t144050-irish-potato-candy/> or rainbow pancakes <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f185-food-recipes/t108978-rainbow-pancakes/> to get you started.
- *Listen to music.* Listening to music can distract you and keep you in the moment.
- *Talk to someone.* Holding a conversation with someone requires you to actively listen and participate which makes it a useful grounding tool.
- *Suck on hard candy, chew gum, or eat something spicy.* Foods that are spicy or minty can stimulate your taste buds.
- *Look at something shiny, sparkly, or colorful.* You could look at holiday lights or a piece of tinfoil to target your sight.
- *Focus on your breathing.* Breathe in and out slowly, feel your lungs expand as you breathe in and the breath rushing out again.
- *Do a "reality check list".* Write down all the things you can list about where you are now (e.g. It is the 9th November 2014, I'm in a room and everything is going to be all right)

More ideas:

- Hold ice in your hands, against your arm, or in your mouth
- Drink cold water
- Splash your face with cold water
- Take a warm or cool shower/bath
- Clap your hands
- Wax your legs
- Massage where you want to hurt yourself
- Jump up and down to get some sensation in your feet
- Put PVA/Elmer's glue on your hands then peel it off
- Write or paint on yourself

- Arm wrestle with a member of your family
- Bite into a hot pepper or chew a piece of ginger root
- Rub liniment under your nose

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t3497-dissociation-you-making-grounding-kit/> | Dissociation and You: Making a Grounding Kit
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t3497-dissociation-you-making-grounding-kit/> | Worry stones
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t3497-dissociation-you-making-grounding-kit/> | The benefits of yoga
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f185-food-recipes/t160966-using-baking-mindfulness-grounding-technique/> | Using baking as a mindfulness & grounding technique

In our Newsletter:

- #66. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b41486-newsletter-66-how-take-better-photos-night%3B-dealing-rejection-when-applying-jobs%3B-grounding-techniques/> | Grounding techniques
- #87. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b45872-newsletter-87-being-more-present%3B-how-cope-unhealthy-people%3B-beginner-hand-sewing-tips/> | Being more present
- #73. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b43199-newsletter-73-how-focus-your-breathing%3B-benefits-meditation%3B-interacting-unfamiliar-dog/> | Benefits of meditation
- #27. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b29779-newsletter-27-improving-teenhelps-services%3B-gender-identity%3B-overcoming-jealousy/> | Meditating for increased well-being
- #73. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b43199-newsletter-73-how-focus-your-breathing%3B-benefits-meditation%3B-interacting-unfamiliar-dog/> | Focusing on your breathing

Cognitive activities - Thinking positively

Cognitive alternatives are those that help combat negative thinking you may be experiencing. Here are a few ways to target negative thinking.

Focus on positive thinking:

- *Take note of positive things when you can.* While it is important to work through the negatives, it is equally as important to acknowledge the positive things. A good way to practice this is to write about a positive aspect each day, put the paper into a jar or folder, and read about your experiences at the end of the calendar year.
- *List things you like about yourself.* Write about your traits, whether they are physical attributes or assets related to your personality.
- *Decorate your space with positivity.* Write down favorite quotes, draw calming pictures, or use things that make you feel happy to decorate your room or other space. For instance, you could put positive words around your mirror or another place you are frequently in.

- *Write positive messages on your skin.* You can do this with pen, marker, or body paint. Allow these messages to serve as a healthy reminder of your worth.
- *Volunteer, or do something for someone else.* Doing something for someone else can brighten their day and be a positive experience for both of you. It can also be useful to find out about other people's lives to put your own thoughts into a wider perspective.
- *Treat yourself the way you treat others.* If your friend or a family member was struggling, what would you tell them? Relay those same messages to yourself.
- *Remembering past times and focusing on positive memories.* Think about what was positive about this particular memory, for example list all the good things about it.

Change negative thinking:

- *Re-frame your thoughts.* When you have a negative thought, take note of it and then find a way to change it into a positive one. For instance, a thought such as "I don't like my depression" can be changed into "My depression is only one part of me and it is not going to be permanent."
- *Talk back to your negative thoughts.* Write down the thoughts you are having, and then write down positive statements that combat and disprove the negative thoughts.
- *Acknowledge that the unhealthy behavior you'd like to engage in is harmful.* For example, instead of saying "I want to (insert behavior)" say "I want to hurt myself."
- *Note black and white thinking.* Black and white thinking is known as "all or nothing thinking." When you notice yourself thinking that way, make a "gray" statement instead.
- *Change your scene.* If you're focusing too much on negative thoughts, a change of scene can help to change your thinking. This could be leaving your current room, changing your clothes or doing your hair differently that day.
- *Use word associations.* Pair each negative thought with a positive alternative and remember this. Whenever you think of the negative word or urge focus instead on the positive word you paired with it.

More ideas:

- Create a safe place to go to and use it when needed. Pay attention to the changes needed to make you feel safe. Here is an article about creating a safe place <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t138025-creating-safe-place/>
- Repeat to yourself "I don't deserve to be hurt" even if you don't believe it
- Kiss the places you want to self harm or kiss the places you have healing wounds. It can be a reminder that you care about yourself and that you don't want this
- Remember that you always have the choice not to harm yourself: it's up to you what you do
- Remind yourself that the urge to self harm is impulsive: you will only feel like engaging in an unhealthy behavior for short bursts of time

- Get your friends to make you friendship bracelets: wear them around your wrists to remind you of them when you want to self harm
- Write the name of a loved one (a friend, family member, or anyone else who cares about you) where you want to self harm. When you go to self harm remember how much they care and wouldn't want you to harm yourself
- Choose your way of thinking, try to resist following old thinking patterns
- Remember that you don't have to hurt yourself just because you're thinking about it
- Notice "choices" versus "dilemmas" - Recognize and acknowledge the choices you have NOW
- Treat yourself nicely
- Lose the "should-could-have to" words. Your future isn't set. Instead try saying "What if"

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t161782-what-harm-reduction/> | What is Harm Reduction?
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t140038-effective-goal-setting/> | Effective goal setting
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t14090-loving-yourself/> | Loving yourself
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t136686-coping-triggers/> | Coping with triggers
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f72-general/t162246-how-change-your-surroundings-when-you-need-change/> | How to change your surroundings when you need a change
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f78-self-harm/t142299-self-harm-road-recovery/> | Self-harm: the road to recovery
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f78-self-harm/t124319-discussing-self-harm-loved-one/> | Discussing self-harm with a loved one
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f78-self-harm/t107426-seven-steps-self-harm-free/> | Seven steps to be self-harm free
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t149253-finding-therapist/> | Finding a therapist

In our Newsletter:

- #74. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b43459-newsletter-74-how-deal-troublesome-roommates%3B-coping-overwhelming-feelings%3B-how-save-money/> | How to cope when you're overwhelmed
- #20. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b23891-newsletter-20-getting-good-nights-sleep%3B-job-interview-advice%3B-how-break-bad-habit/> | How to break a bad habit
- #83. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b45164-newsletter-83-reaching-out-others%3B-how-read-more%3B-putting-yourself-first/> | Putting yourself first
- #75. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b43705-newsletter-75-how-boost-your-self-esteem%3B-creative-date-ideas%3B-running-beginners/> | Boosting self-esteem

- #7. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b14330-newsletter-7-join-our-magazine%3B-get-work-done-without-procrastination%3B-improve-your-self-esteem/> | Building self-esteem
- #29. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b30950-newsletter-29-inspirational-motivational-videos%3B-steps-self-harm-recovery%3B-coping-emotional-abuse/> | Staying positive
- #23. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b26267-newsletter-23-goodbye-avatar%3B-dieting-healthy-way%3B-using-internet-safely/> | Positive thinking
- #32. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b32370-newsletter-32-user-experience-survey-results%3B-preparing-natural-disaster%3B-motivational-blogs-pictures/> | How to improve your mood
- #1. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b9775-newsletter-1/> | Dealing with stress
- #43. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b36200-newsletter-43-how-discuss-self-harm-family-friends%3B-keep-going-face-stress%3B-helping-friends-through-difficult-times/> | How to deal with stressful situations
- #48. <http://www.teenhelp.org/blogs/teenhelp/b37624-newsletter-48-teenhelp-mobile-devices%3B-self-harm-myths%3B-how-get-most-out-your-college-education/> | How to stop caring about what others think of you

Releasing endorphins - Feel good chemicals

When an unhealthy behavior is performed, the body often releases 'feel good' chemicals into the brain. These chemicals are what tend to cause an addiction. Here are a few healthier ways to release endorphins.

- Exercise. Exercise is a good endorphin release. Take a walk or jog, stretch, or head to the gym.
- Give someone a hug. Hugging someone releases oxytocin, which produces positive feelings. If you cannot hug someone, hug a pet, pillow, or stuffed animal.
- Soak up the sun. Going outside and absorbing the sun is a good source of Vitamin D and it can also be an excellent mood booster.
- Listen to your favorite music or eat your favorite foods. Doing this can help release endorphins, thus helping your mood.

Self-care

From time to time it can be difficult to take care of yourself when you are struggling. Self-care tasks can serve as an alternative to unhealthy behaviors while they meet your needs.

- *Plan regularity into your life.* It can be easy to forget basic daily tasks, so be sure to plan them at regular times. Going to bed at the same time, eating meals at the same time and taking part in social and leisure activities at the same time on a regular basis will help you to reduce stress and give you more time to focus on your recovery.
- *Bathe or shower.* Take a bath or a shower to clean yourself off. Picture washing your negative thoughts away with the water.
- *Change into new clothes.* Change into something that makes you feel comfortable whether that is a fresh pair of pajamas, sweatpants, or a dressy outfit.
- *Have a meal or a snack.* If you are having difficulty eating, try something small or something that entices you to eat.
- *Drink water.* Staying hydrated will make you feel and look much better.
- *Take a nap.* A nap can sometimes take the thoughts away, and it also gives you and your mind an opportunity to rest and feel restored upon waking up.
- *Exercise.* Exercise of any kind will reduce stress and help you feel better. A short walk, quick run or a sport of your choice will all help.
- *Learn HALT signals* - Hungry, angry, lonely, tired. If you feel any of these things it's time to stop (halt) and do something about them.

Many of the other ideas and strategies in this guide will also contribute to your own self-care.

In our Articles:

- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f80-mental-health/t45909-self-care/> | Self-care
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f82-general-health/t160607-activities-healthy-morning-routine/> | Activities for a healthy morning routine
- <http://www.teenhelp.org/forums/f552-lifestyle-hobbies/t164001-how-find-new-hobby/> | How to find your hobbies

Recovery rewards

There are alternatives that can have a long lifespan or serve as an incentive during your recovery.

- *Reward yourself.* Setting up a reward for a certain amount of progress can be a helpful incentive in reaching your goals.
- *Try the butterfly project.* Draw a butterfly (or anything that makes you happy) on yourself and name it. Every time you feel upset, look at that butterfly. Draw as many as you need.
- *Create paper links.* Make paper links for each day that you go without engaging in something unhealthy. In time, connect these links to make a chain. This can help remind you of how far you've come.
- *Make a progress jar.* Collect rocks from outside or purchase decorative rocks in different colors. If you cannot get rocks, use mini pom-poms from the craft section of a store. Each healthy day, place a rock or pom-pom inside the jar. When the jar is filled dump it and start over or use a new jar. Additionally, you can color code your symbols (e.g. white for no unhealthy behaviors, black for relapse, green for a particularly rough day) to track your progress.