Frontline Wellness Program – The Coping Club

Topic: Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping

Material:
The Stress Bucket - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KYC5Sjix8

what's the difference?
Healthy coping skills involve facing and processing difficult emotions, seeking resolutions to problems, and actively working towards personal growth. Unhealthy coping skills tend to avoid or suppress underlying issues, providing temporary relief without addressing the root causes.

Costs/Benefits
Unhealthy coping strategies tend to feel good in the moment, but have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies may not provide instant gratification, but they lead to long-lasting positive outcomes.

Factors influencing our coping choices
our personality, qualities, and characteristics (optimism, hardiness, locus of control, and self-efficacy)
cultural norms
past experiences
way we were raised
lack of awareness of healthier alternatives
environment/ what we have access to

Unhealthy: Substance use
May seem to give you immediate comfort, a temporary escape, numbs pain or difficult emotions
If you experience stress/anxiety, alcohol can give you a very short-lived feeling of relaxation – but this quickly disappears.
If you rely on alcohol to cover your stress/anxiety, you may soon find yourself drinking more and more to relax.
If using alcohol for sleep - may help you fall sleep, but leads to poor quality of sleep, waking up in night
Substance use can impact various areas of our life (eg. finances, relationships, physical health, mental health)

Healthier Alternatives to Substance Use
Exercise: Staying physically active can boost both emotional and physical health and manage stress, therefore helping to control cravings
Problem-solving: By identifying a problem as it arises, a person can better learn how to handle it and not be overwhelmed by the issue
Art, journaling, or creative expression: Creative outlets can provide a way to express oneself in a healthy manner
Communication and support: Talk it out, and don’t be afraid to ask for help when needed.

Unhealthy: Avoidance/Denial
Avoidance doesn’t address root causes of stress, and tends to increase stress and anxiety when overused.
Denial: where you ignore, minimize, or outright deny having a problem
By refusing to deal with or even admit that there is something wrong, you are trying to prevent facing stress, conflict, threats, fears, and anxieties
Normalizing a problem to reassure yourself or others. Overusing humor to make light of a problem can be another unhealthy form of avoidance coping

Healthier Alternatives to Avoidance/Denial
- Directly confronting the problem or stressor
- Using resources, skills, and supports
- Using a problem-solving approach
- Focusing on controllable aspects of the issue
- Finding ways to improve the situation
- Boosting confidence and self-efficacy
- Working through difficult emotions

Unhealthy: Negative Self Talk
Self-talk is important because it has a big impact on how you feel and what you do. When we make a mistake, fail in some way, or have shortcomings, our inner critic starts to judge and criticize us.
“Should” statements dismiss, invalidate, or reject our current feelings and experiences. We may beat ourselves up for any imperfection, instead of having any understanding or patience

Healthier Alternatives to Negative Self Talk
- Taming our inner critic
- 3 C’s of CBT
  Self-compassion
  Ask yourself: If my best friend was in this situation, what would I tell them??

Unhealthy: Isolation
Isolation is a lack of social relationships or emotional support. Loneliness is a craving for social contact. It is often linked to feelings of sadness and emptiness. Isolation can lead to feelings of low self-worth, feelings of disconnected, hopelessness

Healthier Alternatives to Isolation
- Get creative (eg. Zoom, FaceTime, group chats, letter writing)
- Consider time spent on social media
  manage health anxiety
  telephone and virtual counselling
- Find ways to participate in your community (clubs, volunteering)
  Choose the right living situation
  Find an activity that you enjoy, restart an old hobby, or take a class to learn something new.
- Build family relationships. think of ways to increase connections

Rolemodeling healthy coping for kids
Children pick up behavior patterns from adults, so one of the best ways to teach your kids good coping skills is to practice them yourself.
- narrate your behavior to your kids as you model (“Okay, that phone call made me feel anxious, so I’m going to do take 3 deep breaths and walk around the block to help calm myself down”). Leading by example is also usually more effective than trying to tell kids what to do.
- Modeling good communication that includes “I statements” and naming emotions. Let your child see you express and deal with difficult emotions

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