

Top Down & Bottom Up Coping

Where to start when you're stressed

Top Down

Thoughts first

When you can pause and reflect. You may feel worried, stuck in a thought, overthinking, or unsure what to do.

Try a skill

Name the thought

"What am I telling myself right now?"

Check the facts

What do I know for sure?

Reframe

Is there another way to look at this?

Unhook from the thought

"I'm having the thought that..."

Focus on what you can control

What's actually mine here?

Choose your next helpful action

What's one small step I can take?

Return to your values

What matters to me right now?

Bottom Up

Body first

When thinking feels hard. You may feel panicked, flooded, frozen, disconnected, restless, or tense.

Try a skill

Slow your breathing

Longer exhale than inhale

Ground yourself

Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell

Use temperature

Cold water on your face, or hold something cool

Move your body

Walk, stretch, shake out tension

Release tension

Tighten and relax your muscles

Use your senses

Music, scent, texture, warm shower

Orient to the room

Look around, remind yourself where you are

Not sure where to start?

If thinking feels hard, start with your body.

Once you feel more present, try a thought-based skill.

Pick one and try it. You can always switch.