My Cope Ahead Plan

Pick one hard situation you can see coming. Plan your skills now, so they are ready when the moment arrives.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 The situation
Be specific: a real date, place and people

When and where: _____

Who will be there: _____

What will most likely happen: _____

2 Check the facts
Separate the prediction from what you actually know

What my mind predicts	What the facts say

3 Emotions and urges I expect
The ones most likely to get in the way of my skills

Emotions, and how strong (0 to 10): _____

Urges (to leave, snap, shut down, use, avoid): _____

What I usually do that makes it worse: _____

4 Skills I will use
Write the exact skill and how you will do it

Before the day before, on the way	During in the hard moment	After to settle and recover

5 If then plan
Plan for problems, including the one you fear most

If this happens...	Then I will...
My most feared outcome:	

6 My exact words
What I will say, and how I will say it

_____

_____

_____

Cope ahead is for hard situations, not emergencies. Thoughts of suicide or self harm? Call or text 988 (US).
Text HOME to 741741 (Crisis Text Line) · In immediate danger: call 911

Original layout by Lotus & Tulip, based on the DBT cope ahead skill (Linehan, 2015). Not therapy.
Free printable from Lotus & Tulip · lotustulip.com/cope-ahead-worksheet.html

Cope Ahead Rehearsal

Rehearse the plan in your mind, then log each rehearsal and how ready you feel afterward.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Rehearsal script: read it slowly, eyes closed if that feels okay

1. **Settle.** Take a few slow breaths. Picture the place, the time and who is there.
2. **Step inside.** See it through your own eyes, in the present tense: I am there now.
3. **Let it get hard.** Let the hard moment arrive. Notice the emotion and the urge in your body.
4. **Cope well.** See and hear yourself using the plan: your actions, thoughts, words and tone.
5. **Add a curveball.** Something new goes wrong. Picture yourself coping with that too.
6. **Face the feared outcome.** Picture the outcome you fear most, and yourself getting through it.
7. **Relax.** Finish with 2 to 3 minutes of slow breathing or muscle relaxation.

Rehearsal log

Date	Version: plan, curveball or feared outcome	How vivid? 0 to 10	Distress peak 0 to 10	Confidence after 0 to 10	Relaxed after? Y/N

After the real situation

Review it within a day or two

What actually happened

_____

_____

Skills I used

_____

_____

What worked

_____

_____

What I will change next time

_____

_____

For the clinician

Cope ahead is one of the ABC skills for reducing vulnerability to emotion mind (DBT Emotion Regulation Handout 19, Linehan 2015).

Choose a predictable situation in the next week or two. Rehearse once in session before assigning it as homework.

Keep the feared outcome version for after a plain rehearsal has gone well; watch for avoidance or overwhelm.

Review the log and the after section next session, and fold what changed into the next plan or a chain analysis.

With teens, plan school or home situations with a caregiver or school counselor where that is safe and helpful.

Cope ahead does not replace a safety plan. If the situation carries a risk of self harm, review the safety plan too.

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DBT Worksheets for Therapists, 20 pages incl. a diary card, checking the facts, opposite action, a crisis survival plan and chain analysis

Holiday sale on Etsy until Dec 2: about $11.04, was $14

Get it on Etsy

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