

Why Many Coping Mechanisms Backfire

Description

Psychologists describe coping mechanisms as strategies that everybody develops to manage high stress levels, trauma, or heightened emotional states. Without coping strategies, we wouldn't be able to handle difficult situations and carry on with our day-to-day lives.

However, it is fair to say that coping mechanisms come in a variety of shapes. A young woman who wears her good luck necklace for a job interview is showing one type of emotional strategy to manage stress. The overworked employee who buys a doughnut and a cup of creamy cappuccino as a reward at the end of a tough day is another example of coping strategies. Perhaps you've seen teenagers go to the gym after an argument with their friends. This is also a coping approach. We all cope with stress in different ways. Even events that are positive, such as getting married or having a baby, can bring a lot of stress into your life. Without a strategy to manage your emotional well-being, you wouldn't be able to interact with everything that happens in your day-to-day life.

But, while coping mechanisms serve a health purpose, they could also get out of control and damage your health. Here we want to take a look at some of the most popular coping mechanisms and why they could backfire if you are not cautious.



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The happy hour dilemma

There is something about having a drink from time to time that can play a hugely positive role in someone's life. A social drink between friends, for instance, or with dinner, is perceived as a sophisticated and gourmet hobby. The truth is that while alcohol can be damaging to your body, even in small quantities, it also can have an anxiety-relieving impact. Ultimately, alcohol produces a sense of euphoria and reduces your inhibition. A drink can be enough to help sedate your central nervous system. That one drink can be all a person needs to temporarily forget about stress and be able to

relax. It's important to understand that alcohol doesn't eliminate stress. But in a social situation when you're meeting new people, for instance, a small quantity can be helpful to talk to others.

Unfortunately, a lot of people fall into the trap of believing that alcohol can be used to regulate anxiety disorders. It has an adverse effect. Once the alcohol wears off, your anxiety comes back. The belief one needs to drink to cope is the first step that contributes to unhealthy addiction. That's precisely what makes an [alcohol abuse intervention](#) so delicate. It's important to note that there are places like [Overland Park](#) ready and prepared to help those in need. Indeed, you need to first convince the substance user that they can cope without alcohol. Only then can they agree to the further rehab steps.

CBD and anxiety

Cannabidiol, or CBD for short, is recognized by the medical board as a pharmaceutical ingredient that can belong to a coping mechanism strategy for stress, pain, or emotional distress. Indeed, CBD is highly effective at breaking your body's response to stress. Stress creates a hormonal response. The body releases stress hormones that travel through the bloodstream to the different organs. Cannabidiol receptors can alter the secretion and synthesis of your hormones. When it comes to stress, CBD acts as a braking system, encouraging the body to reduce the production of cortisol, the stress hormone. Therefore, CBD oil, drops, or even gummies offer a [fantastic coping mechanism for anxiety](#). They are also a safe alternative to pharmaceutical medications.

Is CBD addictive? The answer is no. CBD does not have the same hallucinogenic properties as cannabis. Yet, individuals can develop a psychological addiction in the sense that they believe they would not be able to cope without it. It is important to keep your consumption under control so that you don't trick the brain into responding to any type of stress with CBD. Try using a [CBD dosage calculator](#) to find out how much CBD oil you should take.

The sweet reward

We have a complex relationship with food. Indeed, food is fuel for the body, but also mental health. A healthy diet supports your emotional response to stress or trauma. However, it's not uncommon to [seek gratification through food](#), which could become a harmful behavior. We've all been in a situation where we thought to ourselves: I deserve something sweet. This could be because you've worked hard or because you need a pick-me-up after a tough meeting. There is a sugar rush sensation that occurs when you eat a treat. This temporarily reduces your perception of stress. But, the sugar rush doesn't last. Emotional eating can increase your anxiety levels dramatically. If you convince yourself that you need a sweet treat to handle stress, you could develop an addictive behavior and create a vicious circle. Stress needs sugar which, in turn, creates additional stress.

Is sugar the only culprit when it comes to addictive coping mechanisms? No, it is one of the most popular fake friends. But processed carbs, alcohol, large quantities of caffeine, and sweeteners are also putting your mental health at risk. They do not resolve your issue, and the addiction can aggravate the problem in the long-term.

The surprising shopping addiction

According to studies, approximately 6% of the American population is believed to have some form of shopping addiction. A shopping addiction dramatically affects your financial health, your relationship, and your mental health. But impulsive or excessive shoppers respond to a stress stimulus. They utilize shopping as a coping mechanism, creating a “high” sensation that can mute their stress, anxiety, or depressive issues. This begs one important question: Can shopping be a true coping strategy?

The answer is yes. We all experience excitement and a mood boost when we buy something new. So, there’s a lot to be said about bringing a beautiful and exciting item into your life.

I don’t care what happens today. I am wearing a new tee.

As superficial as it sounds, shopping can work to some extent to release stress. However, when shopping becomes an everyday habit, the excitement drops. You need to buy more to experience the same high as before, which is where the addiction comes from.

Distractions are a coping trick

Playing video games is not only an effective coping mechanism but is also an enjoyable hobby. While the media often describe gaming as an addictive activity, it’s important to get to the bottom of this assumption. Playing games not only keeps the brain alert but also encourages the production of happiness hormones. Indeed, a game is rewarding, therefore the brain reacts to the gratification phenomenon. Additionally, it’s also a great way of taking your mind off things.

Yet, there is an addictive side to playing games. Indeed, video games offer an escape from everyday anxiety and stress. Someone who is emotionally vulnerable could prefer to spend more time playing than interacting with their peers. The addiction is emotional, but it can be a real risk.



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Sport and stress relief

Doctors and fitness enthusiasts are the first to mention sports as a coping strategy. Physical activities drive the production of endorphins, which are the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters. As a result, working out reduces stress levels and significantly improves your mood. Unlike other coping mechanisms, it is also identified as an essential element that's part of a healthy lifestyle.

However, it's important to mention that individuals can also [develop sports addiction](#) when they get hooked to the feel-good effect. Indeed, in excess, sports can lead to physical injuries and put your health at risk. The brain builds up a tolerance to the sports high, and therefore you'll need more extreme workouts to feel the same benefits.

In conclusion, most coping strategies are effective in bringing a positive response to stress or anxiety. However, relying on a single strategy puts individuals at high risk of developing a dependent behavior. It is crucial to create multi-layered and varied coping mechanisms that combine different responses. The variety will reduce the danger of addiction and keep your mental health in check.

Date Created
2021/03/26

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