5 Ways to Cope When Things Feel Out of Control

Sometimes things happen in life that you can't control. They can range from being mildly disruptive, like getting stuck in traffic, to heartbreaking, like finding out someone you love is very sick.

When those moments happen, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. But there are ways to cope. Here are five things you can try.

One: Take a look at your feelings. Try to examine your feelings with curiosity, not as things that are *good* or *bad.* Do you feel overwhelmed? What does that feel like in your body? Do you notice your shoulders are tighter? Is your heart beating faster?

It may help to write down what you notice about your feelings and how your feelings affect your body.

Two: Avoid getting stuck in a harmful mindset. When you're feeling overwhelmed, it's easy to see everything from that same point of view. Try to look for things that make you feel good. Is it a beautiful day for a walk?

Did someone say something that made you smile or laugh today? Have you crossed off a few items on your to-do list? Think about what's going well for you.

Three: Focus on the things you *can* control. Try thinking about the things you *can* do something about. There's not much you can do about being stuck in traffic. But you can control your breathing—and help lower your stress level—by taking slow, deep breaths. And that's something.

Four: Find ways to cut back on things that intensify that out-of-control feeling. Maybe you can limit the amount of time you spend around certain people. Or it might help to limit the amount of time you spend looking at the news or social media. And you'll want to be careful about using alcohol or drugs in unhealthy ways.

Five: Do something that brings you joy. Call up that friend who always makes you laugh. Listen to your favorite music. Enjoy a warm bath. Or take a few minutes to help someone else who needs a hand.

Life can be rough sometimes. Just remember that intense emotions are temporary. You'll find your way through those feelings.

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