COPE
CCSD Coping Skills Seminar

Student Workbook

ECU Center for Counseling & Student Development

252.328.6661
137 Umstead Building
www.ecu.edu/counselingcenter

*Content has been adapted with permission from Cal Poly Counseling Services.*
Welcome to COPE! We hope that you find COPE helpful in learning to recognize and better manage the concerns that led you to the Center for Counseling and Student Development. Many people pursue therapy with the idea that their therapist will know exactly how to “fix” them. COPE is specifically designed to help you get a better idea of what you want to change and how to get there. In order to get the most out of COPE, it is important to complete all 3 seminars in addition to the reading and exercises in this workbook.

Many of us think in terms of problems (i.e., what we don’t like about ourselves, what’s wrong with our lives, etc.) and forget to focus on what we actually want in our lives. It is almost as if we believe that erasing the unwanted parts of our lives would leave us with no problems. Simply reducing pain does not guarantee pleasure. This is why it is important to create a clear vision of what we want in our lives. Creating a vision of change supports our motivation for making the change, provides us with a roadmap to our desired goal(s), and shows us where we are on the journey of change.

As you begin your journey, please remember change is not linear. Be prepared for setbacks. Snags can be due to any number of factors including difficult situational events, changes in motivation, sliding back into old habits, fear of the unknown, etc. Many people find that they take one step back for every two steps forward. That’s okay. You could see this as an obstacle, or you could embrace this as a natural rhythm of the change process.

The main goals of COPE are to give you tools to recognize your concerns and to develop a clearer idea of what you want to change in your life. Once you have developed your roadmap to change, you will have a better idea of where you need to go. You may decide to continue on your own or enlist other resources such as friends, family, advisors, professors, or professionals to help you reach your goals. You may even decide that this is not the right time for you to continue this change process, and you would rather focus your energy on other priorities. Whatever you decide, we can support you in your process and hope that COPE will help clarify your goals.

If, at any time, you feel that you need additional support, please let your COPE seminar leader know or contact the Center for Counseling and Student Development at 252-328-6661 (24/7). You may also find additional resources online at: http://www.ecu.edu/counselingcenter/.
About Psychological Pain

Everyone experiences psychological pain. This could be sadness, anger, anxiety, heartbreak, embarrassment, etc. Not only is pain normal, but it communicates important information about our experiences. Much like how the pain from a paper cut tells us that we have an injury, psychological pain serves a similar function.

Most of us take care to minimize how often we feel psychological pain, but some pain in life is inevitable. Some of us try to minimize our pain so much that we unintentionally cause other problems or more pain. For example, someone who experiences anxiety when meeting new people may choose to avoid these types of interactions. Although the person will be successful in avoiding the anxiety of meeting someone new, that person may create other experiences, such as loneliness or sadness from missing out on new experiences. Furthermore, some methods of minimizing or avoiding pain can have more significant consequences. For example, someone might choose to manage anxiety with alcohol or other drugs, learn to shut off or numb feelings completely, or stay continuously busy to the point of physically exhausting or otherwise negatively impacting their body.

By changing our relationship with our psychological pain, we create flexibility. We do not have to get stuck with one option: avoiding pain.

We can learn other strategies that will add a variety of tools to our psychological tool box. This is one of the goals of COPE.

Although some amount of discomfort is inevitable throughout any change process, we want you to take care of yourselves and silently excuse yourself from any activity that feels like it is “too much.” You can simply sit quietly while the rest of the group finishes the exercise and re-join when you feel comfortable. If, at any time, you feel like you cannot be in the COPE session any longer, please notify your COPE session leader or Counseling Services’ front desk staff.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is COPE?
COPE is a 3-week workshop that focuses on enhancing self-care and teaching skills for a more fulfilling life. It was specifically designed to help people with their emotional concerns.

Why does COPE use a 3-session model?
Teaching COPE over the course of three sessions allows you sufficient time to understand the concepts with time to practice in between sessions. Keeping it to 3 weeks allows you to find time in your busy schedule to participate in COPE. If you find that you want more time to build the skills in the model, you may complete the COPE seminar again.

Why do I have to do homework?
The focus of this seminar is on building skills; in order to successfully build skills, regular practice is essential. The more you practice, the more you may find you get out of this seminar. You will not be required to provide your homework responses at any time during this seminar.

What if I didn’t do my homework?
We strongly recommend completing the homework. The students that report the most benefit from COPE are the ones that are able to practice between sessions and beyond. If you are unable to complete an assignment, we encourage you to come to your next scheduled COPE seminar anyway.

What if I don’t feel comfortable in groups?
This is a common concern. COPE is structured and curriculum-driven like a classroom. You may find that you feel comfortable enough to share some of your experiences in the seminars; this allows all the participants to learn and support one another. However, you are not required to speak if you do not feel comfortable doing so. You can still benefit from the information presented. The COPE facilitators respect each participant’s right to disclose or not and never require you to share sensitive or potentially embarrassing information about yourself.

What if I have an urgent need to see a counselor during COPE?
Simply let the COPE facilitator or the CCSD front desk staff know and they will help you get the help you need.
What if I have a problem that’s hard to define?
This is one of the ways COPE can be particularly helpful. Because it is designed to get you better in touch with your own experiences and goals, COPE may help you define what it is you are looking for.

What if I have a mood disorder that is probably the result of a biochemical irregularity?
Even with an identified mood disorder, such as Major Depression or Bipolar Disorder, change-oriented approaches can be very helpful. Improving our ability to recognize our experiences will enhance our ability to identify mood episodes. The earlier someone with a mood disorder is able to accurately determine when a mood episode is happening, the more efficiently that person can be at managing that mood episode. Plus, research suggests that various psychotherapies change the brain in positive ways, even when there is a biochemical irregularity (e.g., Beauregard, 2007; Kumari, 2006; Linden, 2006).

What if I am survivor of a traumatic event?
While no one can change events that have already happened, we can learn to become more aware of how these experience impact us today. We can learn to listen to the stories we tell ourselves about what happened, the evaluations that we might apply to ourselves or others, the feelings and bodily sensations associated with what happened, and how our behaviors and actions have been affected. By staying true to our experiences instead of trying to control our thoughts, feelings, and sensations, we can often achieve a more fulfilling life, even in the face of traumatic events.

What if I want to get to the origin or “root” of my problem?
Many people believe that if we only knew the root cause of our problems then we would have the solution to the problem. Although it is true that our behaviors (including thoughts and feelings) are related to our experiences, it is not necessarily true that just identifying the root cause guarantees our current behaviors will change. If you feel that getting to the origins of your concerns is essential for your change process, we can recommend a variety of alternative options, including referrals to mental health providers that specialize in this type of therapy.
In-Session Exercises & Homework

*Make sure to bring this workbook with you to COPE sessions so that you can complete the in-session exercises.
Confidentiality Agreement

Welcome to your COPE: Coping Skills Seminar experience! We are glad you are here.

You have the right to CONFIDENTIALITY. This is the foundation of your COPE experience and the seminar effectiveness depends on it.

a. COPE leaders are required by law to maintain your confidentiality and may not release information without your written permission. Exceptions to confidentiality include:
   i. A clear and present danger of harm to yourself or others;
   ii. A reason to suspect abuse or neglect of children or the elderly;
   iii. A court order
   iv. An individual cites his or her clinical record in a legal proceeding;
   v. Otherwise required by law.

b. COPE participants also share responsibility for confidentiality.
   i. COPE participant communication is NOT protected by law. Participants must therefore AGREE TO CONFIDENTIALITY which includes not discussing or disclosing to others outside of COPE any identifying information about COPE participants, for example, names, physical description, biographical information or specifics about COPE interactions.
   ii. You are free, however, to disclose to others that you are a COPE participant and whatever personal information you decide regarding your own personal COPE experience.

You have the right to VOLUNTARY participation. You are not required to disclose the reasons that prompted you to seek counseling. The more you participate in the exercises the more you will get out of the COPE seminar; however, only share what you are comfortable sharing.

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of members of the COPE seminar.

__________________________________  __________________________________
Printed Name                          Signed Name & Date

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**Journal Exercise: Breathing Space**

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**Self-Care Assessment**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Self-Rating</th>
<th>1 – 5 (poor – excellent)</th>
<th>Ideas for Improvement</th>
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<td>(example) Sleep</td>
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<td>Establish a regular schedule. Avoid caffeine after 3pm.</td>
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<td>Sleep</td>
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Sleep is one of those things that you can’t really appreciate until you don’t have it. Anyone who has experienced sleep deprivation for long periods of time can tell you that it impacts your whole demeanor. You get snappy and aggravated, cry inexplicably, or lose it over the most minor details. It can also exacerbate the symptoms you might experience if you are already coping with anxiety or depression. It is one of the first suggestions we make when trying to focus on healthy habits and making positive changes–get some sleep!

So here are the recommendations from the National Sleep Foundation–now, we recognize that they don’t necessarily coincide with your stereotypical college lifestyle. But there are pieces, which when really prioritized and included in your daily routine, can make a huge difference!

- Avoid napping during the day; it can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime. While alcohol is well known to speed the onset of sleep, it disrupts sleep in the second half as the body begins to metabolize the alcohol, causing arousal.
- Exercise can promote good sleep. Vigorous exercise should be taken in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before bed to help initiate a restful night’s sleep.
- Food can be disruptive right before sleep; stay away from large meals close to bedtime. Also dietary changes can cause sleep problems, if someone is struggling with a sleep problem, it’s not a good time to start experimenting with spicy dishes. And, remember, chocolate has caffeine.
- Ensure adequate exposure to natural light. This is particularly important for older people who may not venture outside as frequently as children and adults. Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
- Establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine. Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep. Don’t dwell on, or bring your problems to bed.
- Associate your bed with sleep. It’s not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, listen to the radio, or read.
- Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant and relaxing. The bed should be comfortable, the room should not be too hot or cold, or too bright.

Pretty challenging, right? But we think some of those changes can be done! Like….

- Try not to get your schedule too far off on the weekends, so that when your 8 am class comes around on Monday, you don’t have to readjust after sleeping in all weekend.
- Get some lamps or fun strings of lights to decorate your room so you don’t have to use the fluorescent overhead light.
- Create a regular bedtime routine and stick with it. Listening to relaxing music, using a nature sound machine or reading a novel can help ease into sleep mode. We even have a number of free app downloads for music and nature sounds on our website under the Self Help tab. One example is Relax Melodies, where you can actually layer several sounds to create your own unique mix.
- Try to set a cut-off point for caffeine during the day. Yes, Starbucks does make decaf!
- Get your work out in early, in order to avoid the stimulating endorphins from exercise too late in the evening. Yes, working out is important, but maybe not starting it at midnight…
Breathing Practice

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit in a chair or comfortably on the floor with your back straight. Essentially, what you will be doing in this exercise is breathing in one nostril and out the other, then in the second nostril and out the first. In other words, you will breathe in the left nostril to the count of six, using your finger to hold the right nostril closed. Hold the breath for three counts. Then release the right nostril and breathe out the count of six, closing off the left nostril with your finger, and breathing in the right for six counts. Hold for three counts. Then release the flow of air through your nostrils six times, you will experience an unbelievable sense of relaxation, and the balancing effect this will have on your brain will be miraculously tranquilizing. A tremendous peace and harmony will come into your being.

You can do this exercise as often as you wish, but you should try to do it at least once a day. It is especially helpful before a meeting or in preparation for a stressful and emotionally charged event.

This breathing exercise can be used as a highly effective tool to balance your nervous system. In each of our nostrils, there are nerves that lead into the center of the brain. The brain has two sides. The right side is creative, inspirational, and relaxing. The left side is mechanical and calculating. The yogis have found that there is body rhythm in which every hour and twenty-eight minutes the sides of the brain alternate dominance. The nostrils reflect this. One nostril will also be dominant during this period. If the right side of the brain – the healing, resting side – is dominant, the left nostril will also be dominant. If the left side of the brain – the mechanical calculator – is dominant, the right nostril will be dominant.

In our typical fast-paced Western life style, most of our time is spent employing the mechanical and calculating activity of the left-brain. It is difficult in our society to structure one’s life for the creative, inspirational, healing, and relaxing activities of the right brain. These do not harmonize with the frenetic qualities of the American life-style, especially in the cities. Our very life-style forces an imbalance between the two sides of the brain, which creates a great deal of tension in our lives. By understanding that each nostril connects to the opposite side of the brain and using this information in a breathing exercise, you can actually balance the two sides of the brain, and the result is an amazing sense of equilibrium.

Reset Breath

Breathe out completely, allowing your lungs to empty. Then, allow your lungs to refill naturally.

4 Square Breathing

Breathe in to a count of 4.
Hold to a count of 4.
Breathe out to a count of 4.
Hold for a count of 4.
Repeat 3-4 times

7/11 Breath

Breathe in slowly to a count of 7 and out to a count of 11. Then breathe naturally. Repeat as needed.
**Internet Resources**  http://www.ecu.edu/counselingcenter/

**Check out the COPE section of our website for helpful videos, recordings, and more!**

### Daily Practice Journal

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Today I practiced...</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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Journal Exercise: Use this space to continue your journal practice at home.

Remember to use language to add flexibility and space between yourself and your experience: “I am having the thought...” or “I am having the feeling...”