



Wednesday Workshop: Supporting Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Podcast Transcript Episode 4: May 13, 2020 Ways in Which We Cope

Presented by Marissa, Adult Domestic Violence Advocate, and Teresa, Dual Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Counselor

Marissa: Hello and welcome to The Women's Center's Wednesday Workshop podcast, intended for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, as a time to learn and grow in order to move beyond their trauma. Each session will feature instruction on a healing topic. This week, our topic is Ways in Which We Cope. We're in a way, continuing our conversation from last week on grounding work, but more so, we'll be looking at even more coping skills to add to our toolboxes.

We are your hosts, my name is Marissa, I'm the Adult Domestic Violence Advocate with The Women's Center.

Teresa: I'm Teresa I'm the Dual Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Counselor at The Women's Center. And we are going to get started by talking about different ways in which we cope, like Marissa had said.

If you tuned into our podcast last week, you might have heard a little bit about different coping skills, but today we are going to dive in deeper about what specifically is coping, and some different mechanisms we can use right now. We are going to get started by talking about what coping actually is. This may be something that you are already familiar with, you may already be practicing some coping in your own life, or have heard us talking about this on other podcasts here, or have heard about it in the news recently. This seems to be a really big topic right now, just due to all the external stressors of Covid-19, of the Safer At Home Order going on. But essentially what coping is, is actions that we take, either consciously or unconsciously, to deal with stress, problems, or uncomfortable emotions that we might be experiencing.

We know that we all cope with things in different ways, depending on the stressors that are at hand and what works best for us. But they typically tend to fall into two categories that we'll break down further throughout this podcast. And so those two are going to be healthy versus unhealthy coping mechanisms. Which is something that you might have also heard about before, but what does this actually mean? And what does this look like for you?

This is an especially important conversation to have right now when coping skills that we might have utilized beforehand aren't as accessible now as they were prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. You might have typically gone out with friends or you know went for a walk with a family member, and you might not be able to do that now just to being at home a little bit more. You might also be listening to this podcast and be under the added stress of living with an abuser at this time. You might be experiencing heightened triggers from past trauma and or abuse that you've experienced, or you know, you are dealing with all of those things and that added stressor of Covid-19 going on.

Right now, this is a really great conversation to have to begin to find some new skills to implement, or become aware of the ones that you are currently using and change unhealthy skills into more healthy ones.

Marissa: So, what are coping mechanisms? Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while helping them maintain their emotional well-being. To echo what Teresa was saying, you know, that is so important now more than ever. Coping mechanisms are also the combination of thoughts we have and the actions that we take to deal with difficult situations. They can manifest as behaviors, thoughts or emotions that are used to adjust to triggers or changes in our lives. And they often occur in response to physical or psychological stress. This could look like the death of a loved one, could look like trauma related to sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, could be related to a divorce or separation, a loss of a job. Which I know a lot of folks are experiencing right now, alongside Covid-19 and the current Safer at Home order. There can be a lot going on for a lot of folks. You know, we know that now there's at least one or two very consistent things and pretty much everyone's daily life that we're adjusting to that we're trying to course-correct with our coping mechanisms.

Teresa: If you are at home with kiddos, or you're juggling a lot of different hats, you know, taking five minutes and practicing some keep breathing to kind of ground yourself is important. It's also important too to take care of your body. So just generally eating healthy meals, getting plenty of sleep if you can, trying to get some exercise. And lastly avoiding substance use if at all possible.

Marissa: To break this down even further, let's compare avoidant coping with active coping. Avoidant coping is characterized largely by ignoring the issue, or taking part in activities that contribute to the denial of the problem. We'll dive into more examples of these of course. And to echo what Teresa had mentioned earlier, you know avoidant coping although long-term isn't super healthy, but it does serve a purpose. And you know, if we have to choose between avoidant coping and not having the ability to, you know, avoidance is going to win out in that case. But you know, when we do have access to it, really there really is a benefit to utilizing some more active coping skills. It signifies an awareness of the stressor that's going on, and also attempts to decrease that negative outcome too.

So whenever possible, we do really want to stay in this active, sort of active coping zone. But at the same time, you know, what whatever is available especially now that works too, that is valid. And we'll continue to dive more into examples of both of these and what they look like.

Teresa: To kind of further breakdown what Marissa was talking about, there are two different categories called problem-focused coping, and emotion focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves handling stress by facing it head-on and taking action to resolve that underlying cause of it. Strategies that aim to remove or reduce the cause the stressor are part of problem-focused coping. This might look like problem solving, time management, or obtaining instrumental social support so you can make those decisions to handle that stressor.

Emotion focused coping involves regulating your feelings and emotional responses to the problem, instead of addressing the problem at hand. This can really help you work through emotions and reactions. This is crucial right now because this emotion focused coping helps us manage emotions rather than the outside circumstances that we can't change or control. There is a lot that is outside of our control, that we don't have the opportunity to change. But knowing that we have that ability to process through it, and work with those emotions and reactions that we're having, through emotion focused coping that is what we can work with. That is what we can kind of shift and change to help us cope with our emotional help during a stressful time.

Marissa: And it's really, really important to note that you are not alone through this. This, again, is very, very, common to rely upon unhealthy or avoidant coping skills. You know, they often do give us that immediate sense of relief, and they may have been habits that we've practiced our whole lives, or they may be easily accessible. They also may have been learned behaviors we picked up when living in an abusive relationship or

environment. That was what was available at the time and that's what was done to ensure survival as well.

So, these avoidant or unhealthy coping skills can be used to survive again, or adapt to a dangerous environment at one point. And you know part of the healing journey is figuring out what coping skills still serve you, and which ones you know we might want to change course on or even what we might want to work on, new strategies that can accompany us in this next leg of our journey.

Teresa: There are a number of different unhealthy coping mechanisms that we might utilize because that's what's available at hand like Marissa had mentioned. Avoidance is when we continually avoid a situation that is associated with a fear or trigger that we might be experiencing. This ultimately allows you to not confront that fear, confront that trigger that is at hand. And it is a survival tactic. We know that and maybe that's something we had to do in order to get through living with an abuser, or the abuse that we were experiencing. It's providing us with that short-term relief, that instant gratification and familiarity of "I don't have to experience this anymore". And that's valid. We have to survive uncomfortable, fearful, scary situations in whatever way possible. And avoidance is a way that people ultimately do that.

Another unhealthy coping mechanism that we wanted to talk about is escaping. And so these two, both avoidance and escaping, really do go hand-in-hand. Escaping is when it's a pattern of leaving a situation or a space to relieve that anxiety that you're feeling. So that might be walking outside of that room anytime you feel uncomfortable or anxious about something going on. This ultimately doesn't address feelings that arise. You know, we might feel that anxious feeling, we might feel that bubble up. But by leaving the anxiety-producing situation rather than attempting to work through that experience with healthy coping and grounding mechanisms, we are just going to provide ourselves with that short-term relief again.

And also, you know again this is a very, very valid way that we cope with scary situations, that we cope with abuse, in order to get through that. We might have to shut down some of those emotions, we might have to avoid certain things to keep yourself safe. We might have to listen to those alarm bells in our body that say, "hey we need to escape the situation here, but is this a healthy coping skill that you need to utilize right now?" That's a great question to ask.

Marissa: And you know those two points really, they remind me of a song quote from one of my favorite artists, Elohim, "I keep the TV on to drown out the sound, my mind is way too loud". That definitely is an example of, you know, either avoidance or escaping.

You know, especially right now, like a lot of our minds are way too loud, and you know we might need that short-term escape or avoidance. but you know in the long term we really are going to want to work to address that for sure.

Teresa: Absolutely. I think it's important to highlight both of those.

Marissa: Some other examples of unhealthy coping mechanisms are excessive sleeping and excessive caffeine. I know those two are really big ones right now for folks who either may have been laid off from their jobs, are furloughed for a little bit, or folks who are trying to adjust to working from home, too, you know. This is a huge change in scenery too, on top of a huge change in circumstance. And a lot of us really don't know what to do with that, right?

The point of excessive sleeping, it allows us to essentially escape from our reality. We're not really thinking about it if we're asleep, right? It really does provide that short-term relief. As a whole, it isn't super great for the body. We do need exercise and outside stimulation to remain not only physically healthy, but emotionally healthy as well. Our sleep patterns may be off right now due to being home more, not being able to engage in activities, or any of that social interaction like we're used to. It's also really, extremely emotionally draining to go day today right now for a lot of folks. You know, we're feeling that disconnect between our bodies and time itself. We are really looking at new schedules, definitely new routines right now, and to some extent a shift and sleeping can be totally normal. If you're noticing that it's starting to get excessive, or it's not allowing you to function at the capacity that you may be used to, or you may want to be functioning at, or if it's getting in the way of completing day-to-day activities like work, our daily living tasks, feeding ourselves you know what have you, that is the line where it starts to become unhealthy. And again just about this all of it really does go back to that avoidance and that escaping that Teresa was talking about. We don't have to be present in the reality of what it is when we're sleeping.

On the flip side, but also very much interconnected, is excessive caffeine use. We obviously know that caffeine helps relieve feelings of tiredness and stress. But it can cause long-term problems. We can become dependent upon caffeine, we may start getting headaches or some other physical symptoms when we don't have access to caffeine. We may not be able to function until we've had maybe that first, second or even third cup of coffee. You know, and when we're relying on caffeine to get us moving, we're not really listening to our bodies, and getting the rest that we need. We may be, in a way, be slower to move in the morning because we're very tired and you know, the answer might be looking at our sleep patterns. Caffeine does provide that short-term relief. And you know, often as we know a lot of a lot of caffeine options are particularly tasty and

particularly comforting. And who doesn't love lattes or tea? But you know, again you know your body best. If you feel like this use of caffeine is starting to get in the way of your day-to-day activities, particularly your sleep. You know, you may be at that line, and you might want to you know, see where any adjustments might need to be made.

Teresa: As Marissa had mentioned, caffeine is one unhealthy coping mechanism, one substance that people can utilize. We also know that binge drinking, as well as smoking, are two other substances that people can utilize as an unhealthy coping mechanism.

Binge drinking is when we are drinking to numb emotions and thoughts. Both of these things are you know, they could be potential learned coping mechanisms that you engage in to provide you with short-term relief. Or that immediate relief to cope with external stressors, or internal stressors, uncomfortable emotions that you might be experiencing that you don't want to feel, that you want to numb out. Ultimately this might have been all that is available to you at that time. We know with binge drinking, there are going to be those health implications, including that risk of dependence upon alcohol anytime you're experiencing those stressors. Ultimately this is going to provide you with that short-term relief to get you through those emotions, to get you through with that stressful situation. But it's not going to provide you with that long-term comfort, that long-term relief.

Smoking on the same hand, also has negative coping mechanism implications due to health reasons, and as well as financial implications as well. Just the cost of keeping up that habit two can be really impactful on your life in a different manner. This again is going to provide you with that short-term relief in stressful situations. Maybe it is giving you that opportunity to step outside of a really stressful environment, or maybe this is what you turn to when you are feeling really overwhelmed and just need a break.

Again, we turn to what's available to us at the time, and especially when we are in that survival mode, when we are just needing to get through the day. If these are the things that you turn to, and these are the things that you have turned to in the past, that's okay. You know, they served a purpose. It's valid. But let's talk about different ways too that we can move through this and find some healthier coping mechanisms.

Marissa: Another example of an unhealthy coping mechanism is compulsive spending. We know that this helps to relieve stress. Purchases replace negative emotions with positive ones, for again, that short term relief. I know now, you know, a lot of that is being turned to online shopping, and you know, trying to find the ways in which businesses are still offering us the goods and services that we are more or less using as a fix. But again, going back to those long-term problems. This can create some financial strife. Sometimes we can see hoarding behaviors as well. This could be, this could

become a huge problem. You know, if it doesn't go, if it goes unchecked. And you know, we're losing that grasp of what we need and what we want, and even what just gives us that short term relief.

Another example of an unhealthy coping mechanism is promiscuity. And that being said, you know, we are not here to judge or shame anyone's sex-life. We're talking about is the use of sex to fill a void, or to again escape from some un-comfy emotions. So, we'll define this as meaningless sexual encounters that allow us to avoid attachment while still feeling quote normal and connecting with others. You know another long-term implication of utilizing this coping skill right now, is you know, we might be heading out to meet other folks up at a time where it's not really safe to do so. This provides that short-term relief and the sense of control. You know, this can sometimes be common with survivors of sexual violence. You know, where sexual agency has been taken. We want to reclaim that. And you know, there is a way to reclaim that, while you know acknowledging where you're at in your healing, and actually you know, taking some time to explore what that means. But, you know, when you're using sex to just fill a void, or to not think about stuff, that's where again that's that's, that's sort of line where it starts trudge into the unhealthy.

And we're not saying don't have coffee, don't have sex, you know, don't turn on the TV. You know, we're saying, you know, sort of see where your own personal line is with all of that. Just take stock of where you're at, what might be helping you, and what might not be. That's really important right now.

Teresa: Another unhealthy coping mechanism, or actually a couple unhealthy coping mechanisms, that people can engage in could be through our eating habits. We are going to be talking about controlled eating habits, and as well as emotional eating. Ultimately controlled eating habits allows us to feel like we have control over a certain aspect of our life when things feel out of control. And maybe that is feeling like we are in control of our life after we have experienced abuse, when so much is feeling like it's outside of our control. When we have very little control over the environment that we're in. You know, it makes sense to go to things that we can easily control, like what we're putting into our bodies. We know that we've got to feed our bodies everyday in order to give us the energy and to get through the day. That is something that we need to do to survive.

We are saying, you know, when we are experiencing controlled eating to the point where we are writing down every bite of food that we're having or were very strict on are eating regiment, that is what we're talking about when we talk about controls eating habits. We may feel like this is giving us that short-term relief and making us feel like okay, I've got this under control, you know this one part of my life I can predict, I can plan for that, I

know what I'm taking in. But that is only going to give you that short-term relief still. Much like everything that we talked about as far as unhealthy coping mechanisms go, the one common ground is going to be that short-term relief that we're feeling.

On the flip side, we may feel like when we are in a really heightened emotional state, when we are experiencing uncomfortable emotions, we might turn to eating as a way to provide us comfort in stressful moments. To provide us some comfort in times in our life where we feel very much like we're out of control. Might be, you know, literal feeling of I feel filled up, I feel comforted by this certain type of food. But again, this is going to be that short-term relief. And it also runs health risks including obesity, diabetes or heart attack. We know we need to eat to survive, but when we are attempting to control or respond to an environment through these coping skills that's when it can become unhealthy.

Marissa: Totally. And to echo that point, ultimately all of these unhealthy coping strategies have one thing in common: it's that short-term or instant relief from negative emotions, triggers or environments. While they may provide that instant relief, in the long term, they fail to address what we actually need, and what's actually going to serve us in the long run and might be able to help us carry through our journey. With that in mind, what can we turn to?

Teresa: This is where healthy coping skills come in! By being aware of unhealthy coping skills that we've utilized in the past, or currently using this can help us become aware of the things that we need to change. And that's where these come in.

Marissa: And to start that process we have a few guidelines that can help us figure out what truly is helpful for us. First one being, establish some strategies that are effective for you. It can really help to identify and practice strategies for calm when you are in that level state of mind. Coping isn't always reactionary, it can be a preventative measure, precautionary measure. You know it's we can utilize coping skills when we're feeling okay too. In fact, it really helps us get more in gear when we may be a crisis, or we, you know, maybe feeling particularly stressed out at something that we've already learned, or even to a certain extent may have memorized.

With that being said, coping strategies are not one-size-fits-all. So, what works for me may not work for Teresa, and that might not work for you, or it might, you know, we don't know. You know everyone is different so it's really important to examine those possibilities and eliminate those that don't work for you.

The third guideline is to practice these regularly. You're more likely to have coping, you're more likely to have healthy coping become one of your first thoughts when triggers emerge when you are really practicing those skills. Sharpening those tools and what now. We're going to dive into a couple different strategies involving distraction, soothing, and balancing.

Teresa: Distraction is a technique that might be familiar with you if you tuned into our podcast last week. This differs from numbing. Ultimately distraction is not numbing or avoiding emotions, but it is moving you through those emotions, through distraction techniques, to kind of help you, you know, get through that emotional experience that might be overwhelming. This creates some distance from that source of emotional distress, whether that is the environment that you're currently in, or the trigger that you're experiencing so that you are able to process those uncomfortable feelings that are arising for you. These techniques might include removing yourself from the triggering space. If you are in an environment that is really triggering or if you are still at home with an abuser right now, you thinking about different distraction techniques to remove yourself from that space if you need to. Or it could look like stepping outside and going for a walk if it's safe to do so and you can. You deserve to do what you need to do in order to remove yourself from that space and to re-ground yourself a bit.

Another technique that you can use in order to practice some distractions, is going to be through different grounding techniques. So, if you tuned into our podcast last week where you heard us talking specifically about grounding techniques, this is an awesome time to start utilizing some of those things or practicing them. You can utilize some of those cognitive awareness grounding techniques that we were talking about. You can play a game on your phone if you have that close by, or you can practice some sensory grounding skills too. If it is playing a categories game that we had mentioned, if you are thinking of all the sports teams you can off the top of your head in order to distract you from that trigger, that emotional response you're having, try that out. If that doesn't work for you, maybe try some sensory grounding. Maybe walk through that 5 4 3 2 1 exercise, or you try to find all the blue things in the room that you're in if you are inside an environment. Try on what feels right for you and see which grounding technique you seem to respond to.

Marissa: The next thing that we want to look at is soothing, and this can be done both externally and internally. So, when we say external soothing, we are talking about activities that provide you with some comfort. That can look like some of those deep breathing exercises again that's something that we dove in deep within our grounding podcast. This can also look like making art, listening to music, exercising. For a lot of folks under more normal circumstances, this could look like physical touch. Hugs, holding hands with somebody, you know being close to someone, but in this new time

where we may not be able to be around others, this can look like you know giving a gentle squeeze on our own hands. Or putting our arms around us to give ourselves like sort of a little hug. Those things can really throw things really help soothe us. I know those are huge ones.

To practice some internal soothing, so that's something that comes from within you. And your inner dialogue with yourself. So that can look like changing some harsh inner dialogue, to positive affirmations. Really replacing that negativity with positivity. I called you reframes. We may be down on yourself laying around all day, or quote, "doing nothing". A good reframe of that is, you know, it sounded like this day was a good day to rest. Or you know, I'm glad I had the space to recharge, or I watched my favorite TV show today and I loved every second of it. You know, we can really, you know, just by changing a couple of words we can really change our outlook on a lot of different things about ourselves truly.

Teresa: Balancing is another strategy to try to follow when we're talking about utilizing some healthy coping skills. Balancing is when we try to bring in some logic to the situation if at all possible. This requires us to feel emotions and respond to them in healthy ways. Recognizing those emotions whether they are easy to experience or feel such as happiness or excitement, or they're difficult to sit with, like shame or guilt or blame. You know, letting yourself feel those. Recognizing that they are there, and not trying to push it away or avoid it or numb it out. Let yourself feel those things and try to find a strategy to release it in a way that doesn't harm you or anyone else. Examples of utilizing some different balancing techniques or strategies could look like making a list, it could be by allowing yourself to be honest about those feelings and then asking for help with a safe and supportive friend or person in your circle if possible, to kind of talk through and walk through those feelings with you. You know if that is something as simple too, as telling yourself that this emotion is temporary to get you through that initial difficult response that may be overwhelming. That can sometimes be enough to get us through that difficult feeling. But ultimately, allow yourself to be honest with how you're feeling and know that help is out there. You're experiencing these emotions, and all of them whether they are easy to welcome, or they are difficult to welcome, are there for a reason and you are able to get through them with some extra help and support.

Marissa: There are tons of different ways that we can practice different healthy coping skills and we wanted to provide a couple of examples of things that, you know, we know may work for us or we know it may work for others. To the point of distractions or diversions, you know we can we can channel that energy into writing, drawing, painting or practicing photography. We can play an instrument, sing, dance, act. And with all of these you don't have to be like, master level amazing great at these things. You know, turn up the music and sing even if you don't think you sound very good. I'm telling you

it's going to feel good! Other things we can practice are taking showers or baths and really making those times intentional as a way to ground ourselves. Something that I know a lot of folks are taking advantage of, especially with this nicer weather, is practicing some gardening or you know getting, getting some real quality outdoor time. I know some of the restrictions around gardening shops have loosened and those are available to purchase some plants or seeds in a safe manner. That is an option that's really becoming more accessible and that can really help for a lot of folks.

You can also spend some intentional time inside too, if that's not your thing. You know, you can watch TV or a movie, things that really lift you up. And you could play a game, clean or organize your environment, read or you know with a lot of these, just take that intentional break. You know, quote “doing nothing” is not a bad thing, you know having an open schedule isn't isn't a dirty word. You know we really do need those times to just not think about a whole lot, or to just have that moment of peace and that ability to breathe. For some examples of social or interpersonal coping. You can talk to someone that you trust. Like Teresa had mentioned, there are a lot of options to remain connected virtually. You can talk to folks on the phone, you can send them text messages or even send them a letter! And there are dozens of video calling apps to you know, if you are really really craving that more face-to-face time. Something really important with social coping is setting boundaries. And you know, feeling secure enough to say no when when you mean it, and say yes when you mean it too. It can really help to be assertive and advocate for your needs.

Another good example of some social coping is using humor. You know, there's nothing wrong with adding some levity to a situation that might be scary, it helps us wrap our minds around it. And you know, feel confident that we can face it.

Another really big one too if you've got one with you is playing with a pet. You know there is something really special to having a connection with our animal friends and you know, a lot of animals can feel attuned to our emotions to you and you know they might snuggle up to us a little more if we're feeling down. That connection is crucial and amazing

Teresa: Definitely. Another example of some healthy coping skills could be through using cognitive coping. This might look like making a gratitude list. That might feel really hard right now, especially in the time that we are living in. But even if it is something as simple as writing down one thing at the end of the day that you're grateful for. If that is, the sun came out today, or didn't rain today, finding small things that you can hold on to, to give you some of that gratitude, so kind of distract you from those external stressors and triggers that we might be experiencing.

It's also might look like keeping an inspirational quote or song lyric with you, that you find really grounding or helpful when you are struggling. If that is putting it in your pocket, on a Post-It note and carrying it around with you so that if you need to kind of tap into that. You can take that out read it put it back in your pocket. Or, try putting it on a door on a mirror or fridge where you going to see it every day.

Writing a list of goals can also be a great way to practice some of that cognitive coping. It might be, you know short-term goals, such as I really want to look at cleaning out that drawer that I've been meaning to. Or long-term goals too, of you know I want to paint that room a different color. Doesn't have to be these really big, earth-shattering things either. They can be small things such as they just want to get outside today, or I want to get outside tomorrow. Things you want to accomplish so that if and when you are thinking about practicing some unhealthy coping skills, you can look at these and see the different goals that you set for yourself as small or as big as they might be.

Another idea is to write a list of pros and cons for decisions that you might be making. This could even look like making a pros-and-cons list for practicing an unhealthy coping skill. If we have a tendency to want to, you know, sleep when we are feeling something overwhelming what are the pros and cons? Also, it's really important to, to, reward yourself right now. This is an extremely stressful time that we are living in. And we might be feeling really overwhelmed with the environments that were living in, with the triggers we're experiencing. Rewarding yourself in small ways is really beneficial. And that might be for, for, you, you know, getting outside and you know taking a walk. That might be you having a piece of chocolate if you've got a sweet tooth, or whatever you kind of need to do to reward yourself to make yourself feel taken care of it important.

And lastly, with cognitive coping, writing a list of your strengths can also be really great. We often are our own worst critics, and especially experiencing a lot of stress and you know, having a lot of things being outside of our control, we can feel like so much is changing day. And it can be changing pretty significantly day to day. And we might get down on ourselves for you know, not coping in a healthy ways all the time. But writing a list of strengths that you have that you are inherently carrying around and that make you unique is important. Another part of healthy coping skills to give you some examples, is with physical, healthy coping.

A lot of this we already talked about, but it's going to be making sure that you're getting enough sleep right now when we are in such an uncertain time, or we are experiencing triggers a lot more than we're used to. Making sure we're rested, and trying to get you know 6-8 hours of sleep a night is really important. Also, we want to try to eat some healthy foods to not just you know fill us up, but nourish us and get our bodies the energy that it needs. This next one is really important especially right now and if that is

going to be getting into a good routine for you and your family and your lifestyle right now.

If you are shifting into working from home, what is a new morning routine that you could create for yourself to make yourself feel more grounded going into the day? Or maybe that's creating a routine at 5 p.m. when you're done with work and you need to transition out from work and into interacting with your family. Thinking about different things you can implement now to create a new routine for yourself. Like Marissa had mentioned earlier, considering limiting your caffeine use.

And then lastly practicing deep breathing or slowing down your breathing. This is really big because we often know when we are experiencing stress or overwhelming emotions, maybe the first thing that goes out our breath, or not breathing as deeply. It's more shallow. So just centering ourselves and allowing yourself to take a few breaths and just kind of reconnecting with our brains in our body can be a great way to cope in a more physical manner.

Marissa: And all of this is to say, be patient with yourself. Recognizing where we've picked up our coping skills, if they're healthy or unhealthy, and how we respond to stress takes time and energy in itself. And especially now more than ever, that time and energy is in a really limited resource. Allow yourself the room to grow be patient and remember that healing isn't linear, you know, you're doing the best you can especially in an unprecedented situation. The fear and concern that a lot of us are feeling right now is emotionally draining and exhausting so, you have the time to maybe tap more into these coping skills or brainstorming what works for you, you know go for it. But as always at your own pace and what works for you. You know it's not going to be helpful to try to force some healthy coping skills on yourself. You know that's just going to be again a little more difficult in the long term. At your own pace.

Teresa: That being said we have a few different resources for you when we are talking about different ways to cope. The first two you might have heard us talk about last week in grounding. The first resource is going to be from the CDC, and they have a section right now on their website specifically designated for mental health and coping during the coronavirus. So, this is a really great way to kind of look at managing your stress and anxiety during this unprecedented time, and different ways and strategies that you can you know work through this.

Along with the CDC, SAMHSA also has a number of different coping tips for traumatic events and disasters. Again, specifically related to Covid-19, so it gives you some really great ways to manage a lot of those things that we can't control. We are also going to be having a personal coping skills worksheet just below this podcast that you can download

if you want to create a list for yourself. This is a really great template that breaks down different things that we can do for ourselves. It's great to take a look at the first page, where it can work through each section.

We'll talk about distraction techniques, grounding techniques, emotional release, self-love, thought challenging and lastly accessing your higher self. What it will do to break down those different sections and help you determine what's a personal coping skills in each one of those things that you can utilize. And then there will be a separate page where you can create your own coping skills plan, so that if you are having a hard day, you're overwhelmed with what's going on right now, or you're experiencing some triggers, that you have a concrete template to tap into. So, check out some of those different resources if you do feel like this is the conversation that you want to get some more information on.

Teresa: Thank you for joining us to learn more about ways in which we cope. Our next session will be on self-care and emotional safety planning, where we'll talk about different self-care strategies that you can use and how to create an emotional safety plan tailored to your needs.

If you would like to talk to an advocate about your own experience, please call the 24-hour hotline at 262.542.3828. Learn more about the one at www.twcwaukesha.org. Thank you and be well.