Coping Skills:
It's Not How To Saw But What To See
By
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"Problems are not the problem; coping is the problem"
-Virginia Satir

Coping skills and attitudes are learned behaviors. They are not something that one person is born with and another is lacking. Learning to cope effectively with changes, tragedies, and traumas that every life contains is a skill that is developed and honed. Coping mechanisms involve learning self-initiated problem solving. People who cope skillfully are effective in appraising the possible threats and dangers in the change event, and are able to choose from many alternative courses of action.

Your personal attitude is paramount in successfully negotiating difficult events in your life. It is necessary to view changes as a normal part of living, instead of viewing them as a curse, bad luck, or some kind of punishment. The ability to view a transitional event as challenging or welcomed opportunity pushes you into positive action and allows you to feel in control of your situation. An effective example is how people react after they lose a job. If they see this life-changing event as an opportunity to move to a career that they have always wanted or start their own business, then they have already reframed the event as a challenging opportunity

Those who are in control of their attitudes and acknowledge they are a co-creator rather than a victim of life, have a healthy coping style. They know their values and goals and remain true to them. They know who they are and what they want. The difficult transitional events in this person's life are not seen as tragedies, but as a part of life, just another occurrence on life's highway. They are willing to take responsibility for their actions and do not blame others for the transitions that inevitably occur. When they become ill, they are willing to look at flaws in their lifestyle as well as to look for external physical causes.

The length of time required to conclude a transitional event depends on a number of factors: the meaning of the transition to the individual, the extent to which the person is aware of and expresses feelings about the transition, previous experiences with transitions and learning from them, the availability of support systems, counseling, and the extent to which the person is willing to develop healthy coping skills and attitudes.

Some coping skills would be: Building and utilizing support networks, Cognitive restructuring (reframing), Solving problems in a rational, intuitive, discovery and systems approach, and Managing stress responses and stress inducing events. And you can learn all of these skills! The key to coping with threatening personal change is to learn to see with new eyes the nature of your transition, to think of it as a fairly predictable and understandable process, and to use these skills to cope with the different stages in the process.

Since transitions are essential to life, your primary goal is self-management. The secondary goal is to inoculate yourself against depression, hopelessness, chronic grief, and self-pity. Build an awareness of where you are and where you want to be. It is important to see the event as a challenge and to use your creative spirit to negotiate through the difficult time. Know that you are going to get through this experience and that you are can come out on the other side of this crisis in better shape than when you began.

Dr. Darlene Treese has been in private practice in hypnosis and counseling since 1983. She is a Diplomate in Counseling with the National Institute of Sports, Past President of the American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association and Vice President of the Rotary EClub of Southwest USA. Darlene has been internationally acknowledged for her positive action and solution-based therapies and work with corporations. "A person for the people", Dr. Dar is always available to help with your questions and dilemmas through office visits, email or telephone consultations. Call her at **850-201-0073** or visit **www.AskDrTreese.com**