

Cope Ahead

Cope ahead is a DBT Skill that helps us regulate our emotions by preparing to better handle emotional situations. Cope ahead is useful any time you anticipate a situation that causes you worry, fear, anger, sadness, etc. – especially when your anticipation is increasing your anxiety.

Steps for Cope Ahead

- Describe a situation that is likely to create negative emotions
 - Be *specific* in describing the situation and the emotions, as well as any of unhealthy/old coping you want to avoid using in response
- Decide what healthy coping or problem-solving skills you want to use in the situation instead
- Imagine the situation and visualize yourself in it as vividly as you can
- Rehearse using the coping strategies effectively, including:
 - How you'll act
 - What you'll tell yourself
 - What you'll say and how you'll say it
 - Role play to practice whenever possible

Scenario:

Rachel knows that going home to visit her family for Thanksgiving tends to be difficult. For the last several years, her family members have wanted to discuss their different political preferences and rehash previous arguments. Rachel found herself getting into heated arguments at the dinner table and saying things she later regretted. To cope ahead this year, Rachel met up with her best friends Maria and Chris. She assigned each of them a family member to role-play, asking them to act out the behaviors of two of her argumentative family members. With the help of her friends as stand-ins, Rachel was able to practice staying out of the arguments. Because she was able to cope ahead, she attended Thanksgiving dinner this year and successfully avoided confrontations and arguments.

Can you think of an upcoming situation for which you can cope ahead? How will you practice? Who can help you?

Cope Ahead – Worksheet

Instructions: In the first column, describe a problem situation. In the second column, describe how you imagine yourself coping effectively with the problem. Then check the box to indicate whether coping ahead was helpful.

Future problem situation	How I imagine coping effectively
1.	Helpful? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.	Helpful? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No