

## **Coping Skills for Kids age 6 - 12 with PTSD**

### **1. Belly breathing**

Put one hand on your belly. Breathe in slowly like you are smelling a flower. Breathe out slowly like you are blowing bubbles.

### **2. 5-4-3-2-1 grounding**

Name **5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste.** This helps your brain remember, "I am here right now."

Grounding can help when someone feels overwhelmed by memories or strong emotions.

### **3. Hold something comforting**

Hold a stuffed animal, blanket, smooth rock, bracelet, or fidget toy. Notice how it feels in your hand.

### **4. Safe place picture**

Close your eyes and imagine a safe place. It could be your bedroom, a beach, grandma's house, a treehouse, or anywhere that feels calm.

### **5. Name the feeling**

Say: "I feel scared," "I feel mad," "I feel sad," or "I feel worried." Naming the feeling can help kids feel more in control.

### **6. Use a calm-down card**

A child can keep a small card that says:

"I am safe right now."

"This feeling will pass."

"I can ask for help."

"My body is having a big feeling, but I am okay."

### **7. Ask for a trusted grown-up**

The child can say, "I need help," "Can you sit with me?" or "Can we take a break?"

### **8. Take a quiet break**

Go to a calm spot, reading corner, bedroom, counselor's office, or quiet area. This is not punishment. It is a reset.

### **9. Draw the feeling**

Draw what the feeling looks like. It can be a storm cloud, monster, scribble, volcano, or heavy backpack. The picture does not have to be pretty.

**10. Move the body**

Try walking, stretching, jumping jacks, dancing, wall push-ups, or squeezing a stress ball. Movement can help the body let out nervous energy.

**11. Butterfly hug**

Cross arms over the chest and gently tap each shoulder, left-right-left-right. Go slow and breathe.

**12. Use a worry box**

Write or draw the worry on paper. Put it in a box or jar. The child can “save it” to talk about later with a trusted person.

**13. Listen to calming sounds**

Try soft music, rain sounds, ocean waves, white noise, or a favorite calm song.

**14. Make a coping kit**

A small box or bag can include a fidget, gum or mints, coloring pages, crayons, a stuffed animal, a family photo, headphones, and a calm-down card.

**15. Use a routine**

PTSD can make kids feel like things are unsafe or unpredictable. A simple routine for morning, after school, and bedtime can help the child know what comes next.

Trauma-informed care focuses on safety, support, and avoiding things that make the child feel unsafe again.

**16. Read or look my favorite book**

A familiar book can help the child’s brain shift from fear to comfort.

**17. Count slowly**

Count to 10, 20, or 50. Or count objects in the room, like tiles, books, lights, or colors.

**18. Use “now and then” words**

Say: “That was then. This is now.”

“I am in my room.”

“I am at school.”

“I am safe with my teacher.”

**19. Drink water or have a small snack**

Sometimes the body needs a simple reset. A drink of water, crunchy snack, or warm drink can help some kids feel grounded.

**20. Tell the brain what is true**

Try:

“I am not in danger right now.”

“My body is remembering something scary.”

“I can breathe.”

“I can get help.”

**21. Use a feelings scale**

Ask: “Is my feeling a 1, 5, or 10?”

If it is a 1–3, the child might use breathing.

If it is a 4–7, the child may need a break.

If it is an 8–10, the child may need a trusted grown-up right away.

**22. Do something with the hands**

Clay, Play-Doh, coloring, LEGOs, puzzles, beads, or tearing scrap paper can help the body calm down.

**23. Practice bedtime calming**

Try the same bedtime steps each night: bathroom, pajamas, story, breathing, night-light, comfort item. Nighttime can be harder for kids with PTSD, so a steady routine can help.

**24. Use positive self-talk**

Child Mind Institute lists positive self-talk, mindfulness, exercise, and deep breathing as healthy coping skills for children.

Examples:

“I can get through this.”

“I am brave even when I feel scared.”

“Feelings are not forever.”

**25. Make a help plan**

The child should know:

“Who can I go to?”

“Where is my safe place?”

“What words can I use?”

“What helps my body calm down?”