

Coping Skills

There are many coping skills, both bad and good. Once in a while I am not sure what coping skills to use or even what a coping skill is.

I erased the post from yesterday and am replacing it with the upswing version! Yesterday was a long day – but regardless of those bad gut feelings I had from Sunday evening’s flashbacks and nightmares, my concentration was placed on healing not punishing myself.

One of the biggest and most important shifts that I have ever had is the reality that I do not need to feel guilty or deserving of my past. This doesn’t mean that these issues do not surface and indeed bother me, but I no longer punish myself with the idea that I somehow deserve to relive the events of the past.

I have said many times in the past that I do not consider anger an emotion, but the result of an emotion. This doesn’t mean that I don’t get angry. Yesterday morning after the chaotic night – I got livid and I got mad at everyone and everything. This is not a good coping skill and in reality only hurts one’s self. I always want to lash out at someone (fortunately I did not do this yesterday).

My parents handle yesterday perfectly. So, I thought I would share that with the loved ones of consumers. My father and mother both addressed that I had a bad night and spoke to me with respect and concern. They treated me with dignity and with the fact that I had experienced a symptom of my illness and

traumatic past. It is empowering when the people that you love realize that what they cannot see (the illness) is real and serious. So often it is simply brushed off for one reason or another and if you care about someone with a mental illness – I advise you to treat them with the respect that is equal to any other illness.

I used a myriad of coping skills yesterday. At one point I laid down on my bed and just said to myself, “hit me – bring it on” I wanted all the emotions to just flood in and do whatever they felt they needed to do. This was helpful for a little bit, then I started realize the vicious cycle I was entering. It is important to mention at this point that if I were not medicated, I would never be able to think logically enough to bring myself out of that cycle. Generally, my medication is unnoticeable to me with the exception of side effects. Yesterday I realized the evidence of the lithium in my system and it brought a smile to my face. The rest of the day, I concentrated on little tasks that didn’t require much thought or effort, but kept me moving. I gave myself the permission to rest my mind the best that I could.

So here is the upswing. This morning I woke up with a big smile on my face. I always say thank you to God, for my life before I ever get out of my bed. This morning I said, “Thank you and what the hell was that!” ha.

I was trying to think of an analogy. It may not be a good one, but let me try this one. Have you ever had the flu – flu so bad that you thought - OH let me sleep forever, but you can’t sleep you just roll and ache? Then you start thinking, if I ever feel healthy again – I am going to run 5 miles a day and do this and do that? You realize how wonderful it is to be healthy and you

are so grateful for that health. That would be me this morning. I am so grateful to be healthy. The only thing I am going to use Sunday evening's events for is a point of comparison as to how great it is to be healthy! Today I have a therapy appointment and this evening dinner and speaking at a NAMI event. I don't deserve what happened in the past and I certainly don't deserve to live it over and over again. However I will take the flashbacks as a reminder of how enormously blessed I am to be safe and to have a voice in which enables me to do my small part in helping others to not have to live those nightmares.

So, back to work and please remember to treat yourselves well and celebrate the days that you are healthy. Giving back is something that warms my heart and seems to be the most effective measure of combating the negative aspects of my illness. I would have to say, when it comes to coping skills... this is the most effective – giving back.