

**10 COPING STRATEGIES**  
**WHEN GOING THROUGH AN**  
**EXISTENTIAL CRISIS**

**Checklist**

# 10 Coping Strategies When Going Through An Existential Crisis

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## Mindfulness

When in an existential crisis a lot of time is spent thinking about the past or the future. One can easily get lost in a vortex of thoughts that takes us down a path of desperation and hopelessness.

- ✓ Practice mindfulness to stop that progression of thoughts and focus your energy on the here and now.
- ✓ Meditate for 5-15 minutes a day to calm restless thoughts and develop a centeredness and focus on the present that relieves an existential crisis.

## Alter Your Perspective

Our viewpoint plays a significant role in an existential crisis. What we choose to focus on will shape our perspective and lead us closer to or further away from an existential crisis.

- ✓ Instead of pursuing thoughts that take you down a path of hopelessness or meaninglessness intentionally pursue those thoughts that focus on the good and the positives.
- ✓ Rather than considering past failures and lack of accomplishments, focus on past successes and wins.
- ✓ Rather than focusing on imminent death, focus on the joys and pleasures of life.
- ✓ Rather than focusing on how we never truly know anyone, focus on the benefits we gain from the relationships we have in our lives.
- ✓ Make a conscious effort to shift from the negative thoughts that drag you down to the positive thoughts that elevate you and provide a hopeful outlook on life.

## Find Meaning

Much time spent stuck in an existential crisis is spent trying to find the meaning “of” something. This is a practice of shifting focus and attention away from one that can cause mental strain and disdain, to one that can bring joy and gratitude.

- ✓ Instead find the meaning “in” it instead. For example, instead of looking for the meaning of life it is better to find meaning in life.

## **Gratitude Journal**

Gratitude journals can be used to ground our thoughts, refocus us on the present, and calm our fears and anxieties.

- ✓ Start a gratitude journal that can help significantly in establishing or reestablishing that sense of meaning. Gratitude helps us to see those things we can presently appreciate and that are presently adding value to our lives.

## **Maintain Meaningful Relationships**

- ✓ Intentionally pursue and maintain meaningful relationships. Being in a meaningful relationship with others can help to curb the thoughts that make us feel as though we cannot really know or trust others.

## **Treatment**

While there is not a specific treatment for existential crises specifically, there are situations where the symptoms of an existential crisis require consultation of a medical professional.

- ✓ Seek doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, or even therapists to help you to cope with the crisis by prescribing medication to address severed symptoms like anxiety or depression, or for therapies like cognitive behavioral therapy that can address the thought patterns leading to the crisis.
- ✓ Psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy, can also be relied on as a treatment option to address symptoms of an existential crisis such as anxiety and depression.

## **Embrace Uncertainty**

Major events and trauma can trigger lots of uncertainty about life which can bring about an existential crisis.

- ✓ Stop fighting the uncertainty or trying to figure it out, which can lead to confusion, hopelessness, and other elements of existential symptoms.
- ✓ Learn to embrace the uncertainty and unknowns to build resilience and help you adapt to changes and cope with life.
- ✓ The burden of constantly thinking about what might be or what could become is lifted and we experience freedom to simply live and exist.

## **Maintain Hope**

Hopelessness is a staple of an existential crisis, so being intentional about maintaining hope is key to combating it.

- ✓ Look at life and find things that are worth looking forward to. Simple things like seeing a friend and bigger milestones like looking forward to a graduation or a job promotion.

## **Value Yourself**

When you can see how you contribute to your family, friends, job, community, or other places and add value then you are more likely to believe that you have worth and a place worth maintaining in the world.

- ✓ Take the time to find and highlight those things about yourself that are valuable as well as those contributions you've made that are valuable can help to combat the notion that you lack a place.

## **Let It Go**

Ultimately, there is a host of things we will not be able to solve, understand, or get to the bottom of and that is completely okay.

- ✓ Don't get lost in what you cannot ultimately understand instead make peace with not knowing and not understanding.
- ✓ It's where the statement, "What you don't know can't hurt you," comes in and may be true.
- ✓ Free yourself from needing to know can allow you to just live and let live, releasing you of the burden of figuring it all out.