

# Managing distress

Feeling distressed or in crisis can be really difficult. Although many people will experience some kind of hardship during their life, it's easy to feel confused and overwhelmed when you're going through it.

## WHAT CAN HELP?

### Get some support

Talk to someone you trust about how you're feeling. This can help you feel supported and listened to. If things start to feel too much, talk to your GP or health care professional. Ask them to help you find new ways to manage difficult times.

### Find ways to distance yourself from difficult thoughts and feelings

It can be useful to distance yourself from situations that are making things worse. See if any of the following help:

#### ■ Activities

Engage in an activity that you like. Go to the movies, do some exercise, or read a book.

#### ■ Contributing

Focus on doing something for someone else. Volunteer at your local animal shelter or help someone in need.

#### ■ Take time out

Create physical or mental distance from the situation or person that's bothering you.

#### ■ Alleviate some of the stronger feelings

Hold ice, squeeze a rubber ball or listen to loud music.

### Find ways to look after yourself

Be kind to yourself in moments of distress. There is a lot of research showing the benefits of engaging your '5 senses':

#### ■ What you see

Focus your vision on something you find soothing, for example, the flame of a candle, a flower, the waves in the ocean, or look at the stars.

#### ■ What you hear

Listen to sounds that you find soothing, for example, beautiful music, running water, sounds of nature (including birds, waves, rainfall), or sing a favourite tune.

#### ■ What you smell

Try using your favourite smells to soothe yourself, for example, light a scented candle, bake biscuits or smell the ocean breeze.

#### ■ What you taste

Chew or eat something that you love. Take a moment to really taste what you have chosen to eat or drink. Notice what it feels like to enjoy eating something.

#### ■ What you touch

Take a bubble bath, put on a textured blouse, brush your hair or stroke a pet.

Best of all, engage in an activity that uses all or most of your senses at once, for example, sit on the beach while watching, listening to, and smelling the ocean and feel the sand between your toes.

Practise relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or visualise a relaxing scene. Imagine your feelings or emotions as a wave that comes and goes and changes in intensity over time. These activities may help you feel more alive and provide relief from your distress.

The Project Air Strategy acknowledges the major support of NSW Health. The Project works with mental health clinicians, consumers and carers to deliver effective treatments, implements research strategies supporting scientific discoveries, and offers high quality training and education. Contact us at [info-projectair@uow.edu.au](mailto:info-projectair@uow.edu.au) or visit [www.projectairstrategy.org](http://www.projectairstrategy.org)