

BUILDING “POCKET” COPING SKILLS: TIPS FOR PARENTS, KIDS AND TEENS

“Pocket” coping skills are simple techniques that kids, teens and adults alike can pull out of their literal or figurative pockets and employ in the moment to help reduce stress and anxiety. Here are 8 examples:

DEEP BREATHING

Diaphragmatic or belly breathing lowers the heart rate and blood pressure and helps the body relax.

GROUNDING EXERCISES

This technique helps you calm down by focusing on your senses. For example, focus on five things you see, four things you hear, three things you feel, two things you smell, and one thing you taste.

NUMBERS

To bring yourself into the present moment, try counting backward from 100 or count backward by seven from 100. Someone might try naming as many animals as they can in one minute or naming all the colors they see in the room.

SENSORY TOOLS

Small sensory tools like a stress ball or fidget tool can help. Parents should work with teachers to see what would be appropriate to make available for their child.

MUSCLE RELAXATION

Try pretending you are squeezing a lemon in your hand. Squeeze it hard like you’re getting all the juice out, noting the tightness and pressure. Then “drop” the lemon and note how relaxed you feel. Try it again with your other hand.

POSTIVE MANTRAS OR SELF-AFFIRMATION

Kind, reassuring words can help a lot. Work together with a child to devise something they might say to themselves.

SCENERY CHANGE

Consider going outside or looking out a window to help center yourself. Being in nature has been known to help improve mood.

TECHNOLOGY

If you have a smart phone, tablet or other device, create a folder of cute, funny, silly or comforting images or quotes that you might scroll through when you’re feeling anxious.

