HELPFUL, NOT SO HELPFUL AND HARMFUL COPING

Distracting ourselves when things are stressful or sad or overwhelming can be a healthy way to cope, but sometimes the same distraction can lead to unhealthy coping or numbing out.

written by: PRISCILLA TALLMAN
M.S. CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
www.spikedr.com

DISTRACTIONS

Distractions are people, places or activities that prevent us from giving full attention to something or someone else. When they keep us from getting something done or meeting a goal, distractions are not helpful. When we need a mini-vacation from work, play or from a stressful situation, distractions can be a helpful way to reset our focus. So, how do we choose?

HEALTHY COPING

A coping mechanism is something we do to tolerate or minimize stress or unwanted emotions. Healthy coping may include exercise, eating nutritious foods, spending time with friends or loved ones, journaling, being in nature, resting, meditating, listening to music, etc. Healthy coping will bring us CLOSER in relationship with ourselves or others. Can you think of some other healthy coping strategtes?

UNHEALTHY COPING

Unhealthy coping PUSHES US AWAY from relationship with ourself or others. Unhealthy coping examples are alcohol or drug abuse, toxic relationships or friendships, abusive relationships, comparing on social media, controlling or blaming others. It can be a substance, a person or a behavior.

NUMBING OUT OR SELF-MEDICATING

If unhealthy coping pushes us away, numbing out and self-medicating ISOLATE US from ourselves or others. These are behaviors, people or substances designed to numb feelings. The problem is when you numb out the unwanted feelings, you also numb out the good ones you need too - leading to further isolation.

HEALTHY COPING BREEDS CONNECTION

Connecting with others and sharing our thoughts and feelings might be the best way to cope and connect. However, when we cannot physicaly connect with others, it's important we still find healthy ways to connect with our own process, emotions and thoughts.