The Importance of Coping Skills for OAB

by ERIC PATTERSON

Skills for Coping With OAB

Everyone has coping skills. Coping skills are the thoughts you have or behaviors you perform to reduce or eliminate something undesirable. The undesirable something could be a person, a negative situation, pain or psychological stress. If you want to make something better, a coping skill is what you need. Here's how you can go about coping with OAB.

Positive vs. Negative Coping

It must be noted that not all coping skills are created equally. They generally fit into two categories: negative coping skills and positive coping skills.

What Are Negative Coping Skills?

Negative coping skills are ones that may improve the targeted stress, but in turn, will add increased stress later or will trigger the creation of a new stress.

Imagine you are afraid of heights, and you need a coping skill to deal with this. Your coping skill is to no longer drive over bridges. Problem solved. No more bridges mean no more stress, fear or anxiety. But what if your job is across a bridge? This is an example of a negative coping skill. It reduced immediate anxiety but increased stress and raised new concerns, like paying bills.

What Are Positive Coping Skills?

Positive coping skills are thoughts or behaviors that lead to desirable outcomes in the present and the future.

Imagine that you are having a conflict with someone at work. You decide to assertively have a conversation with them about the issue while listening carefully and respecting their point of view. This works to resolve the problem and sets the stage for future disagreements to be approached in a similar fashion. You win in the present and in the future. Positive coping skills are always the way to go.

Understanding How Positive and Negative Coping Skills Impact You

Despite the fact that positive copings skills lead to better results than negative coping skills, people tend to use negative ones often. The contradictory notion is simply explained: positive coping skills are difficult and negative ones are easy.

Positive coping skills require thoughtfulness, intelligence, hard work, insight, empathy, consistency and may add more stress to your life temporarily. Choosing to not drive over the bridge to work is easy. It takes no work, no planning and adds no stress to your life in the short-term. Consider a negative coping skill for the second

example. It would have been easier to avoid your coworker and hope the problem vanished. Problems never do, though.

This is where your overactive bladder (OAB) comes into the conversation. Your OAB causes undeniable levels of stress in your life. With this being true, you have a decision to make.

Do you want your OAB symptoms and the resulting stress to improve or worsen? Of course, you want symptoms and stressors to improve, but do your coping skills match this desire? Do you avoid, ignore and escape or do you confront your stress in direct, practical ways?

Negative Coping With OAB

In the moment, people with OAB will make choices to limit their experience of stress. In actuality, these decisions only increase depression and anxiety. Examples of negative coping with OAB include:

Staying at Home

Whenever you are stressed about finding the nearest bathroom or fearful that you will have to suddenly race to a bathroom, staying at home sounds like the easier choice. Over time, your supports may grow tired of asking for your company only to be refused. Also, your comfort zone shrinks without new and novel experiences.

Obsessively Seeking out Bathrooms

Being exclusively focused on bathrooms will detract from your enjoyment of the outing. If your thoughts constantly surround the nearest bathroom, the cleanest bathroom or how long it would take to race to a bathroom, you cannot focus on having fun. This will make it more difficult to agree to another activity.

Rigidly Monitoring or Limiting Fluid Intake

With OAB, it makes good sense to track your fluids, but being overly inflexible is never a good idea. If you begin to obsess about your intake, you will miss opportunities to be spontaneous. Spontaneity is a great stress buster.

Staying Away From Friends

You may think that your friends will be better off without you along because your OAB is such an inconvenience. You will convince yourself that the selfless act is to stay at home. In fact, this is an example of depression changing your thoughts to keep you more depressed.

Skipping Doctors Appointments

Your treatment has not yielded positive results to this point. You are frustrated and feel more hopeless that your symptoms will ever change, so you have been missing your doctors' appointments. You forget the fact that without treatment, there is no chance for your OAB to improve.

Quitting Your Job

You have had so many embarrassing moments at work that you cannot possibly bear the weight of another. Clearly, quitting your job seems easy and beneficial in the short-term, but the social and financial loss will outweigh whatever negatives you are currently experiencing.

Positive Coping With OAB

Many times, you can look at the negative coping skills as a guide for what not to do, but use caution; the opposite of a negative coping skill is not necessarily a positive. Working to move towards balance will give you the best results. Here's how:

Improve Self-Acceptance

Acceptance of your situation will set the stage for other positive coping skills to come. People with OAB live in denial because admitting their condition to others and themselves is scary and painful. Of course, you realize you have OAB, but have you really come to terms with the implications of this?

Accepting your status means that you accept yourself. Stress becomes instantly reduced with self-acceptance.

Improve Communication

With self-acceptance, you can work to reduce the perceived stigma of your condition. Choose to speak about OAB openly, honesty and genuinely. Allow people to ask questions about your symptoms, your hopes and your fears. The easy thing to do is avoid direct communication for fear that it might be uncomfortable. Communication is difficult to master, but once you do, you will have a skill that is useful in countless situations.

Improve Activity

Negative coping skills tell you that it is easy to escape than to engage. This is true but it is not best for you. Work to expand your comfort zone by agreeing to go places and do things that may trigger some anxiety or stress. This temporary discomfort will be worth it over time.

Use your new communication skills to voice your hopes and concerns to your friends. They may have information or offer suggestions that will greatly improve your chances of success.

Improve Your Goals

Speaking of success, it is valuable to reexamine your goals. How are you measuring success and failure with your OAB? If you expect to never have periods of strong urges or instances of incontinence, you will likely be let down and disappointed.

Set yourself up for success through kindness and understanding. Setting reasonable goals will ensure that you can accomplish them through hard work. Completing goals helps you to feel motivated, powerful and in control of your symptoms. Everyone likes to feel this way.

Improve Monitoring

As mentioned above, being overly rigid and inflexible is harmful to your OAB. The stress associated with that can actually make symptoms worse. Furthermore, it is extremely challenging to accurately manage your fluid intake since the fluid levels found in foods, like fruits, are really hard to measure. Focus your energies on following your doctor’s recommendations.

Improve Your Relaxation

Working to reduce the unwanted facets of your life through positive coping skills is wonderful but not always enough. Another type of positive coping skills is one that adds more desirable thoughts and feelings. Relaxations are an efficient use of your time and resources. The benefit of relaxation is two-fold as you get the direct result of less stress and tension in your life.

The indirect results is that relaxations techniques like guided imagery, muscle relaxation and autogenic training have been associated with better OAB symptoms management.