

Kim

Kim isn't quite sure exactly what she's feeling, but she knows she's stressed about her family situation. She feels nervous and on edge and is having a lot of headaches. Kim knows that her mom recently stopped taking her mental health medications; Kim is worried about what is going to happen next. She remembers that her mom has gotten really out of control when she's gone off her medications in the past. Kim would just like some peace.

One Good Way to Cope: Relaxing

When we feel tense and worried, we often experience the stress in our bodies. This mind-body connection is clear in Kim's situation because she gets headaches when she feels stressed. When we are worked up, it can help to do something that calms us. Kim learned some tools in counseling that help her feel more peaceful.

Kim finds peace by remembering to:

- Take deep breaths
- Take a long shower
- Do yoga or pilates
- Imagine walking along a beautiful beach and feeling the warm sun on her face
- Take a nap
- Remind herself that she's strong and will get through this difficult time
- Listen to music
- Play with her dog

As Kim practices these new behaviors, she notices that she has fewer headaches and feels more relaxed.



What can you do to calm your spirit?

Is there a special place that is peaceful for you?
In your house? At a church, synagogue, or
other place of worship? In nature?

Pedro

Life at home is rough for Pedro. His dad has schizophrenia and he says and does things that are really annoying and confusing. His parents fight a lot, and Pedro feels very uncomfortable at home. Because he needs to get some distance from the chaos, he spends a lot of time at the mall, the gym, and the community center. Last week Pedro got into a fight at school and then punched a hole in the kitchen wall after dinner. Pedro really needs to blow off some steam.

One Good Way to Cope: Doing Something Physical

When we need to release stress, doing something physical can be just the answer. Get up, go outside, and do something. Not only does physical activity feel good at the time, exercise actually releases chemicals in your brain that give you energy and help you to feel better.

Pedro knows that it helps him to:

- Lift weights or use the treadmill at the gym
- Go for a run
- Play pick-up basketball
- Go on a bike ride
- Skateboard



After basketball season starts and Pedro gets back into a regular workout routine, he feels a bit calmer. Although he's still upset about his dad's illness, he is a bit more accepting of his dad's behavior.

What physical activity helps you to release stress?

In summary, we've reviewed five good ways of coping with strong feelings:

- Gathering information
- Distracting yourself and having fun
- Expressing your feelings and finding support
- Relaxing
- Doing something physical

One More Coping Tool to Consider: **Helping Others**

Because you live with a parent with a mental illness, you have probably learned a great deal. One additional way to cope is to help other kids who are in similar situations. You could be very helpful to another young person whose parent has a mental illness. It would also feel good for you to make a difference in another teen's life by sharing your experiences.

If you meet a teenager whose parent has a mental illness, what would you be sure to tell them? What would be important for them to know?
