

3 Steps to Use Awareness as a Coping Tool (Coping with the uneasiness)

There is no person on earth who does come across a certain *hardship/uneasiness/difficulty* that they will not need to cope throughout their lives. Although the types and levels of those problems vary in range and scope, the following situations seem to be the most common:

- Job loss
- Divorce/Break-ups
- Financial Stress/Financial Shortages/Bankruptcy
- Any sort of illness (including Mental & Physical)
- Loneliness
- Any sort of failure
- Unfamiliarity (with jobs-places-people...etc.)
- Relocations (workplaces, neighborhoods...etc.)

Whether these come to us expected or unexpected, these problems especially differ in terms of being *short-lived* (acute, in other words) or being *ongoing and repeating*.

WHAT DO THE STATISTICS TELL US?

Statistics show that:

More than **40% of adults** in the US either avoid or do not know how to deal with stressful situations (Statista 2018).

According to the largest UK Study, **46%** of the participants reported that they ate too much or ate unhealthily due to stress. **29%** reported that they started drinking or increased their drinking, and **16%** reported that they started smoking or increased their smoking. In addition **74%** of people have felt so stressed they have been overwhelmed or unable to cope (Mental Health Foundation YouGov, 2018).

In terms of Job loss, in a study carried out with unemployed individuals, only **5.7%** of the participants did not have depressive symptoms and unemployed people with high anxiety and depression scores have developed maladaptive coping strategies such as substance use, self-blaming, or denial (Navarro-Abal et al., 2018).

An influential study found that unemployed people were more distressed; less satisfied with their lives, marriages and families; and more likely to report psychological problems than the employed (Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 74, No. 3, 2009).

A recent study, done before this pandemic found that **57%** of Americans are grieving the loss of someone close to them over the last three years. That means every other person you see is grieving (by Amerispeak and WebMD).

According to a 2018 report by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, **22%** of adults in the United States say they often or always feel lonely or socially isolated. A national 2019 survey led by health insurer Cigna found that **61%** of Americans report feeling lonely (Source: Harvard Magazine 2021).

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting **40 million** adults in the United States age 18 and older, or **18.1%** of the population every year. But approximately **40% those** suffering receive treatment or seek outside help (Anxiety and Depression Association in America-WHO & National Institute of Mental Health numbers).

In 2019, there were an estimated **51.5 million adults** in the United States with Any type of Mental Illness (AMI). This number represented **20.6%** of all U.S. adults. In 2019, 23.0 million (**44.8%**) received mental health services in the past year. The percentage of young adults aged 18-25 years who received mental health services (**38.9%**) was lower than adults with AMI aged 26-49 years (45.4%) and aged 50 and older (47.2%) (National Institute of Mental Health)

An estimated **17.3 million** adults in the United States had at least one major depressive episode. This number represented **7.1% of all U.S. adults**. The prevalence of adults with a major depressive episode was highest

among individuals aged 18-25 (13.1%). Approximately 35% of adults with major depressive episode did not receive treatment (National Institute of Mental Health).

A study, published by the National Institute of Health (2020), found that there are significant correlations between financial stress, interpersonal stress, and psychological distress and well-being. A substantial number of adults in the United States between the ages of 21 and 62 felt anxiety and stress (60%) about their personal finances well before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new published report. Researchers found that financial stress and anxiety are highly linked to low levels of financial literacy, problematic financial behaviors and decreased financial security (Hasler et al., 2021).

WHERE THIS ALL LEADS US...

Whatever the nature of the problem might be, there is a lot of research indicating that there are many ways to cope with certain types and levels of problems. The ways in which we might cope with these problems certainly differ especially considering the effectiveness and efficiency of our coping mechanisms.

Recent research suggests that a mental-health-informed approach is not just helpful, it's required: Job search programs that don't involve nurturing people's motivational and cognitive resources simply aren't as effective as those that do. Therefore, psychologists should also inform policymakers on the physical and mental health consequences of unemployment (APA Monitor 2020). In another research, difficulties in emotional awareness were related with depressive and anxiety symptoms (2017). Similarly, awareness of adaptive coping strategies was found to be positively related with lower levels of depression and anxiety (Miller-Matero et al., 2017). Jones et al, (2019) have found that mindfulness meditation training that aimed at momentary awareness, has led to increased coping flexibility. Finally, a study carried out in Brazil found that awareness improves problem-solving performance (University of Sao Paulo research, 2017).

Overall, a lot of individuals report that they find at least one source of coping support to deal with a related problem. And majority of them report that source to be an external one (see for an example related to adolescents' self-injury problems Berger, Hasking, and Martin, 2017) otherwise they do not believe in their internal capacity to deal with certain adversities. And a considerable number of individuals do not believe their level of awareness would be contributing to the *effectiveness and efficiency of their own coping mechanisms*.

Throughout my career as a scientist-practitioner, I have come to realize that there are some definite answers associated with how a person's level and content of awareness might be the root cause of their coping mechanism quality.

HOW TO USE AWARENESS AS A COPING TOOL WITH 3 STEPS

Here are the 3 steps that people either *do not consider taking or do not know how to take to use their own awareness as a coping tool*:

1. **To be able to identify their problem to be a repeating vs. a one-time phenomenon.** Whether we accept it or not, some of our problems repeat during our lifetime independent of context, people and time.

What might be repeating?

- Problem relationship (marriage, partnerships, friendships)
- Money Issues (lacks, losses, shortages)
- Career issues (being laid off, leaving jobs, constant job search)
- Cycles of loneliness
- Depressive Mood
- Anxiety and Worry
- And more...

Even at a very preliminary level, to be able to identify the nature of our problem is a very critical first step towards tackling it. And yes,

we may not think it is really necessary or even useful to identify a problem that repeats or not. As an example, if a problem repeats, there is a different type of awareness work that needs to be done vs. if that problem occurs the first time and just once.

2. **To be able to realize whether the problem we see might only be the half of the story.** Sometimes the problem that we see might only be the tip of the iceberg. Usually, the problems that we experience on the surface might be caused by some other major issue in disguise.
3. **Knowing what our awareness level might be in relation to that problem occurrence as well as our ways of coping with it.** Many individuals do not know what is the current nature of their awareness including what *awareness blocks* might be leading them to feel stuck which unfortunately exacerbates the problem even further.

We all are aware of many coping tools out there waiting for you to explore and try out. But before you even start digging in to find some coping tools, it would be lot more practical for you to take the steps I have outlined above so that you not only save time, money, and energy, but you also start deploying some of your already existing internal resources to effectively and efficiently cope right now.

Now, to start using your awareness as a coping tool, please click on the subscription link below (FREE) and start benefiting from our biweekly awareness toolbox that gives you *actionable awareness tools* towards achieving your coping goals.

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With this subscription FREE of charge, you will also be given access to our Q&A function which allows you to send and receive instant messages about your coping goals. By the help of this tool, you will have a chance to receive useful clues as to what your *awareness block* might be related to a

certain problem, while you will also be provided with related *awareness tips* so that you can put your *awareness into action*.

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