

The Ease Zone Game

wants to provide healthy coping mechanism examples - as possible strategies to use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. It can help us adjust to stressful events while maintaining our emotional well-being.

This is a supportive, educational material - it could be insightful, thoughts and debates inspiring, a reflective tool, but does not supply the role of professional help. Though it may support you to reach one if needed ♥

Coping Mechanism

Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors used to manage inner and outer stressful situations.¹

It is a conscious & voluntary act, different from 'defense mechanisms' that are subconscious or unconscious responses.²

¹ Folkman S, Moskowitz JT. Coping: pitfalls and promise. *Annu Rev Psychol.* 2004;55:745-74.

² Venner M. [Adjustment, coping and defense mechanisms—deciding factors in the therapeutic process]. *Z Gesamte Inn Med.* 1988 Jan 15;43(2):40-3.

How to use the cards

The deck is made of:

- 9 cards of categories describing difficult situations we might find ourselves in
- 45 cards with texts describing coping mechanisms we may use in these difficulties moments (5 per category)
- 45 cards with pictures, where each picture card matches one text card

Each text & each picture card has a symbol on the back, to reveal its intended category.

Some of the cards are even more special - belonging to several categories & therefore hold more symbols on their mighty backs.

One way to play

Number of players (2-5)

- Take the text cards & picture cards out of the deck
- Try to match them together, each picture card has a text card companion guiding you through the coping mechanism
- When you have done your pairs, move on to the category cards
- Line them up (9 categories) in front of you & talk about each of the situations.

*Have I experienced this feeling?
How do I usually behave then?
What helps me in these moments?*

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Illustrated by Andrea Rošková

- After the discussion, take the paired cards (pictures + texts) and match them with the categories and you see fit. (You can check the back of the cards if the symbols match, or not:)

- Evaluate the categories & the mechanisms in front of you.
Have I ever tried this? YES/NO
Is this mechanism helpful for me?
Can I imagine doing this? This I cannot do...
What are my defense mechanisms and could I replace them with these coping mechanisms?

Another way to play

Read the text cards, match them to the categories & draw your own pictures (at the end, look at the provided ones, or not:)

The Ease Zone can also be used

- as a helpline when in difficult situation
- as a reminder that it is okay not to be okay
- for learning what fits our needs & what does not

The Ease Zone card game is aimed to start a conversation and reflect, **not to be played** “perfectly” so there is **no need for** “right” or “wrong” solutions. The symbols of belonging to a category and simply on offering you can take or leave.

Be gentle with yourself and others while playing.

