

DBT Cope Ahead

Cope Ahead is a preparatory skill designed to help individuals manage challenging situations before they arise. This skill can offer benefits to students who are working to reduce their cannabis use. It is especially applicable when considering attendance at social events where cannabis may be present or when anticipating stressful events where cannabis would typically be used for relaxation. Similar to rehearsing a presentation or difficult conversation, the Cope Ahead skill involves planning and mentally practicing how to cope effectively without cannabis, increasing the likelihood of handling difficult situations with skill and minimizing distress in the moment.



1

Describe



Describe the situation that is likely to prompt uncomfortable emotions or might trigger an urge to use cannabis. Check the facts. Be specific in describing the situation. Name the emotions and actions likely to interfere with using your skills.

2

Decide



Decide what coping or problem-solving skills you want to use in the situation instead of using cannabis. Be specific. Write out in detail how you will cope with the situation and with your emotions and action urges.

4

Imagine



Imagine the situation in your mind as vividly as possible. Imagine yourself in the situation now, not watching the situation.

3

Rehearse



Rehearse in your mind coping effectively. Rehearse in your mind exactly what you can do to cope effectively. Rehearse your actions, your thoughts, what you say, and how to say it. Rehearse coping effectively with new problems that come up. Rehearse coping effectively with your most feared catastrophe.

5

Practice

Practice relaxation after rehearsing, without cannabis! This could be deep breaths, listening to calming music or just taking a mindful breath

