



# Coping Strategies to Stop Picking

ACNE EDUCATION HANDOUT

## COPING STRATEGIES TO STOP PICKING

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### Fist Clenching

Teach clients how to use the strategy taught by Azrin & Nunn (1973), whereby patients clench their fists for 1-3 minutes to aid in resisting an urge.

### Hand Toys

Suggest a variety of different toys that can be purchased to keep hands busy during an urge.

### Band-Aids / Gloves

Suggest putting Band-Aids/Gloves on the fingers/hands used to pick to

- 1) remind them that they are about to pick and
- 2) remove the sensations associated with picking.

### Change Activity

Instructs the clients to physically get up and remove themselves from a situation where they are experiencing an uncomfortable urge.

### Pleasurable Activity

Encourages the clients to engage in a pleasurable activity such as a craft or hobby that will get their mind off picking and distract them from the urge to pick.

### Keep Hands Away from Picking Location

For those clients who report stroking or feeling certain areas of their skin, the acne program recommends that they keep their hands away and avoid looking at these areas altogether.



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### Relaxation

Teach clients both deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation for use during times of tension or high stress.

### Consult a Professional

Instruct clients to talk with their dermatologist or esthetician to help reduce urges to pick.

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### Avoid Mirrors / Dim the Lights

Recommend covering up mirrors, dimming the lights, or standing 3 feet from mirrors to avoid visual triggers that can precipitate an episode.

### Throw Away Skin Picking Tools

Suggest getting rid of items that can be a skin-picking implement.

### Thought Busting I

Reviews cognitive restructuring for thoughts about skin picking

(e.g., *"I am a failure because I can't stop"* or *"My skin looks terrible"*).

### Thought Busting II

Reviews cognitive restructuring for thoughts about other things such as life stressors.



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### Change Posture

Instruct clients to change their posture if they tend to sit in positions that assist in their picking.

### File Nails / Paint Nails

Instruct clients to file/paint nails to keep their hands busy and/or to care for their nails and areas surrounding nails (e.g., cuticles).

### Barriers

Suggest the use of hats, bandannas, scarves, glasses, or other “barriers” to keep hands away from the skin.

### Ask for Help

Instruct clients to ask people around them for help when they are experiencing an urge.

### Use Serum or Benzoyl Peroxide to Soothe the Skin

Suggest using ointments or salves to reduce physical sensations (e.g., itching, tingling, etc.) that exacerbate picking.

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