

Safe Coping Skills (Part 1)

from "Seeking Safety: Cognitive- Behavioral Therapy for PTSD and Substance Abuse" by Lisa M. Najavits, Ph.D.

1. Ask for help- Reach out to someone safe
2. Inspire yourself- Carry something positive (e.g., poem), or negative (photo of friend who overdosed)
3. Leave a bad scene- When things go wrong, get out
4. Persist-- Never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never give up
5. Honesty- Secrets and lying are at the core of PTSD and substance abuse; honesty heals them
6. Cry- Let yourself cry; it will not last forever
7. Choose self--respect- Choose whatever will make you like yourself tomorrow
8. Take good care of your body- Eat right, exercise, sleep, safe sex
9. List your options- In any situation, you have choices
10. Create meaning- -Remind yourself what you are living for: your children? Love? Truth? Justice? God?
11. Do the best you can with what you have- Make the most of available opportunities
12. Set a boundary- Say "no" to protect yourself
13. Compassion- Listen to yourself with respect and care
14. When in doubt, do what's hardest- The most difficult path is invariably the right one
15. Talk yourself through it- Self-talk helps in difficult times
16. Imagine- Create a mental picture that helps you feel different (e.g., remember a safe place)
17. Notice the choice point- In slow motion, notice the exact moment when you chose a substance
18. Pace yourself- If overwhelmed, go slower; if stagnant, go faster
19. Stay safe- Do whatever you need to do to put your safety above all
20. Seek understanding, not blame- Listen to your behavior; blaming prevents growth
21. If one way doesn't work, try another- As if in a maze, turn a corner and try a new path
22. Link PTSD and substance abuse- Recognize substances as an attempt to self- medicate
23. Alone is better than a bad relationship- If only treaters are safe for now, that's okay
24. Create a new story- You are the author of your life: be the hero who overcomes adversity
25. Avoid avoidable suffering- Prevent bad situations in advance

26. Ask others- Ask others if your belief is accurate
27. Get organized- You'll feel more in control with lists, "to do's" and a clean house
28. Watch for danger signs- Face a problem before it becomes huge; notice red flags
29. Healing above all- Focus on what matters
30. Try something, anything- A good plan today is better than a perfect one tomorrow
31. Discovery- Find out whether your assumption is true rather than staying "in your head"
32. Attend treatment- AA, self-help, therapy, medications, groups- anything that keeps you going
33. Create a buffer- Put something between you and danger (e.g., time, distance)
34. Say what you really think- You'll feel closer to others (but only do this with safe people)
35. Listen to your needs- No more neglect- really hear what you need
36. Move toward your opposite- E.g., if you are too dependent, try being more independent
37. Replay the scene- Review a negative event: what can you do differently next time?
38. Notice the cost- What is the price of substance abuse in your life?
39. Structure your day- A productive schedule keeps you on track and connected to the world
40. Set an action plan- Be specific, set a deadline, and let others know about it
41. Protect Yourself- Put up a shield against destructive people, bad environments, and substances
42. Soothing talk- Talk to yourself very gently (as if to a friend or small child)

With appreciation to the Allies Program (Sacramento, CA) for formatting this Safe Coping List.
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Safe Coping Skills (Part 2)

from "Seeking Safety: Cognitive- Behavioral Therapy for PTSD and Substance Abuse" by Lisa M. Najavits, Ph.D.

43. Think of the consequences- Really see the impact for tomorrow, next week, next year
44. Trust the process- Just keep moving forward; the only way out is through
45. Work the material- The more you practice and participate, the quicker the healing
46. Integrate the spilt self- Accept all sides of yourself; they are there for a reason
47. Expect growth to feel uncomfortable- If it feels awkward or difficult, you're doing it right
48. Replace destructive activities-Eat candy instead of getting high
49. Pretend you like yourself-See how different the day feels
50. Focus on now- Do what you can to make today better; don't get overwhelmed by the past or future
51. Praise yourself- Notice what you did right; this is the most powerful method of growth
52. Observe repeating patterns-Try to notice and understand your re-enactments
53. Self- nurture- Do something that you enjoy (e.g., take a walk, see a movie)
54. Practice delay- If you can't totally prevent a self-destructive act, at least delay it as long as possible
55. Let go of destructive relationships- If it can't be fixed, detach
56. Take responsibility- Take an active, not passive approach
57. Set a deadline- Make it happen by setting a date
58. Make a commitment- Promise yourself to do what's right to help your recovery.
59. Rethink- Think in a way that helps you feel better
60. Detach from emotional pain (grounding)- Distract, walk away, change the channel
61. Learn from experience- Seek wisdom that can help you next time
62. Solve the problem- Don't take it personally when things go wrong-try to just seek a solution
63. Use kinder language- Make your language less harsh
64. Examine the evidence- Evaluation both sides of the picture
65. Plan it out- Take the time to think ahead-it's the opposite of impulsivity
66. Identify the belief- -For example, shoulds, deprivation reasoning
67. Reward yourself- Find a healthy way to celebrate anything you do right

68. Create new "tapes" Literally! Take a tape recorder and record a new way of thinking to play back
69. Find rules to live by- Remember a phrase that works for you. for you (e.g., "Stay real")
70. Setbacks are not failures- A setback is just a setback, nothing more
71. Tolerate the feeling- "No feeling is final", just get through it safely
72. Actions first and feelings will follow- Don't wait until you feel motivated; just start now
73. Create positive addictions- Sports, hobbies, AA...
74. When In doubt, don't- If you suspect danger, stay away
75. Fight the trigger- Take an active approach to protect yourself
76. Notice the source- Before you accept criticism or advice, notice who's telling it to you
77. Make a decision- If you're stuck, try choosing the best solution you can right now; don't wait
78. Do the right thing- Do what you know will help you, even if you don't feel like it
79. Go to a meeting- Feet first; just get there and let the rest happen
80. Protect your body from HIV- This is truly a life-or-death issue
81. Prioritize healing- Make healing your most urgent and important goal, above all else
82. Reach for community resources- Lean on them! They can be a source of great support
83. Get others to support your recovery- Tell people what you need
84. Notice what you can control- List the aspects of your life you do control (e.g., job, friends...)

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