Safe Coping Skills (Part 1)
FROM "SEEKING SAFETY: COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR PTSD AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE"
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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 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  
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)
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 split 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 a 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- Evaluate 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 (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 .. )