

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)

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 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 ..)