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)

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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 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…)

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