Safe Coping Skills

Source: Lisa M. Najavits, Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Use (Guilford Press, 2002), 103-108

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| ☞ **Ask for help** | Reach out to someone safe |

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| ☞ **Inspire yourself** | Carry something positive (e.g., a poem) or negative (e.g., photo of a friend who overdosed) |

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| ☞ **Leave a bad scene** | When things go wrong, get out |

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| ☞ **Persist** | Never, never, never, never, never, never, never, *never* give up |

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| ☞ **Honesty** | Secrets and lying are at the core of substance abuse; honesty heals them |

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| ☞ **Cry** | Let yourself cry; it will not last forever |

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| ☞ **Choose self-respect** | Choose whatever will make you like yourself tomorrow. |

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| ☞ **Take good care of your body** | Healthy eating, exercise, safe sex |

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| ☞ **List your options** | In any situation, you have choices |

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| ☞ **Create meaning** | Remind yourself of what you are living for: your kids? love? truth? justice? God? |

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| ☞ **Do the best you can with what you have** | Make the most of opportunities |

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| ☞ **Set a boundary** | Say “no” to protect yourself |

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| ☞ **Compassion** | Listen to yourself with respect and care |

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| ☞ **When in doubt, do the hard thing** | | The most difficult path is invariably the right one |
| ☞ **Talk yourself through it** | Self-talk helps in difficult times | |

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| ☞ **Imagine** | Create a mental picture that helps you to feel different |

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| ☞ **Notice the choice point** | In slow motion, notice the exact moment when you chose a bad habit |

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| ☞ **Pace yourself** | If overwhelmed, go faster; if stagnant, go faster |

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| ☞ **Stay safe** | Do whatever you need to do to put your safety above all |

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| ☞ **Seek understanding, not blame** | Learn from behaviour; blaming prevents growth |

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| ☞ **If one way doesn’t work, try another** | Turn a corner and try a new path |

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| ☞ **Create a new story** | You are the author of your own life; be the hero who overcomes adversity |

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| ☞ **Avoid avoidable suffering** | Prevent bad situations in advance |

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| ☞ **Ask others** | Check the accuracy of your beliefs and assumptions |

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| ☞ **Get organized** | You will feel more in control with “to-do” lists and a clean space |

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| ☞ **Watch for danger signs** | Face a problem before it becomes huge; notice red flags |

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| ☞ **Healing above all** | Focus on what matters |

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| ☞ **Try something, anything** | A good plan today is better than a perfect one tomorrow |

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| ☞ **Seek support** | AA, self-help, therapy, medications, group – anything that keeps you going |
| ☞ **Notice the cost** | What is the price of substance use in your life? |
| ☞ **Structure your day** | A productive schedule keeps you on track and connected to the world |

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| ☞ **Set an action plan** | Be specific, set a deadline, and let others know about it |

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| ☞ **Soothing talk** | Talk to yourself very gently (as if to a friend or a child) |

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| ☞ **Think of the consequences** | Really see the impact for tomorrow, next week, next year |

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| ☞ **Trust the process** | Just keep moving forward; the only way out is *through* |

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| ☞ **Feel your discomfort** | If it feels awkward or difficult, you’re doing it right |

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| ☞ **Replace destructive activities** | Eat candy instead of getting high |

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| ☞ **Pretend you like yourself** | See how different the day feels |

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| ☞ **Focus on now** | Don’t focus on the past or future; do what you can to make today better |

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| ☞ **Praise yourself** | Notice what you did right; this is the most powerful method of growth |

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| ☞ **Observe repeating patterns** | Try to notice and understand your well-worn paths |

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| ☞ **Self-nurture** | Do something you enjoy (e.g., take a walk, see a movie) |

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| ☞ **Practice delay** | If you can’t totally prevent a self-destructive act, delay it as long as possible |

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| ☞ **Set a deadline** | Make it happen by setting a date |

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| ☞ **Rethink** | Think in a way that helps you feel better |

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| ☞ **Take responsibility** | Take an active, not a passive approach |

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| ☞ **Learn from experience** | Seek wisdom that can help you next time |

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| ☞ **Use kinder language** | Make your language less harsh |

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| ☞ **Reward yourself** | Find a healthy way to celebrate anything you do right |

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| ☞ **Setbacks are not failures** | A setback is a setback – nothing more |

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| ☞ **Tolerate the feeling** | “No feeling is final”; just get through it safely |

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| ☞ **Actions first, feelings will follow** | Don’t wait until you feel motivated; just start now |

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| ☞ **Create positive addictions** | Examples: Sports, hobbies, AA ... |

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| ☞ **When in doubt, don’t** | If you suspect danger, move away (mentally or physically) |

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| ☞ **Fight the trigger** | Take an active approach to protect yourself |

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| ☞ **Do the right thing** | Do what you know will help you, even if you don’t feel like it |

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| ☞ **Go to a meeting** | Feet first; just get there and let the rest happen |

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| ☞ **Prioritize healing** | Make healing your most urgent and important goal, above all else |

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| ☞ **Reach out** | Lean on community resources – they can be a source of great support |

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| ☞ **Notice what you can control** | List these aspects of your life |