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 |