

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, 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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