SAFE COPING SKILLS

1. Ask for help — Reach out to someone safe. 2. Inspire yourself — Carry something positive (e.g., poem) or negative (photo of a friend who overdosed). 3. Leave a bad scene — When things go wrong, get out. 4. Persist — 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. Creating 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 is 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 put your safety above all. 20. Seek understanding, not blame — Listen to your behaviour; blaming prevents growth. 21. If one way does not 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 people who are receiving help are safe for now, that is 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 will 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 will 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 — For example, 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

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; do not 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 cannot totally prevent a self-destructive act, at least delay it as long as possible. 55. Let go of destructive relationships — If it cannot 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 is 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 — Do not 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 is 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 — Do not 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 is telling it to you. 77. Make a decision — If you are stuck, try choosing the best solution you can right now; do not 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...)

YOU CAN DO IT!

Material adapted by Suzanne Welstead (2016) from Seeking Safety: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for PTSD and Substance Abuse by Lisa M. Najavits, Ph.D.