



SAFE COPING SKILLS

Circle or Underline points that resonate with you.

- Ask for help: Reach out to someone safe
- Inspire yourself: Carry something positive (poem, photo of friend, loved one or favorite place)
- Leave a bad scene: When things go wrong, get out
- Persist: Never, never, never, never, never, never give up
- Honesty: Secrets and lying are at the core of PTSD and substance abuse; honesty heals them
- Cry: Let yourself cry; it will not last forever
- Choose self-respect: Choose whatever will make you love yourself tomorrow
- Take good care of your body: Healthy eating, exercise, safe sex
- List your options: in any situation, you have choices
- Create meaning: Remind yourself what you are living for: Your children? Love? Truth? Justice?
- Do the best you can with what you have: Make the most of available opportunities
- Set a boundary: Say “no” to protect yourself
- Compassion: Listen to yourself with respect and care
- When in doubt, do what’s hardest: The most difficult thing is often the right one
- Talk yourself through it: Self-talk helps in difficult times
- Imagine: Create a mental picture that helps you to feel different (remember a safe place)
- Notice the choice point: In slow motion, notice the exact moment when you chose a substance
- Pace yourself: If overwhelmed, go slower; if stagnant, go faster
- Stay safe: do whatever you need to do to put your safety above all
- Seek understanding, not blame: Listen to your behavior; blaming prevents growth
- If one way doesn’t work, try another: As if in a maze, turn a corner and try a new path
- Link PTSD and substance abuse: Recognize substances as an attempt to self-medicate
- Alone is better than a bad relationship: If only treatment providers are safe for now, that’s okay
- Create a new story: You are the author of your life; be the hero who overcomes adversity
- Avoid avoidable suffering: Prevent bad situations in advance
- Ask others: Ask others if your belief is accurate
- Get organized: you’ll feel more in control with “to-do” lists and a clean house
- Watch for danger signs: Face a problem before it become huge; notice red flags
- Healing above all: Focus on what matters
- Try something, try anything: a good plan today is better than a perfect one tomorrow
- Discovery: Find out whether your assumption is true, rather than staying “in your head”
- Attend treatment: AA, self-help, therapy, medications, groups- anything that keeps you going
- Create a buffer: Put something between you and danger (time, distance)
- Say what you really think: You’ll feel closer to others (but only do this with safe people)
- Listen to your needs: No more neglect- really hear what you need
- Move toward your opposite: for example, if you are too dependent, try being more independent
- Notice the cost: What is the price of substance abuse in your life?
- Structure your day: A productive schedule keeps you on track and connected to the world
- Set an action plan: Be specific, set a deadline, and let others know about it



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- Protect yourself: Put up a shield against destructive people, bad environment, and substances
- Soothing talk: Talk to yourself very gently (as if to a friend or small child)
- Think of the consequences: Really see the impact for tomorrow, next week, next year
- Trust the process: Just keep moving forward; the only way out is through
- Work the material: The more you practice and participate, the quicker the healing
- Integrate the split self: Accept all sides of yourself; they are there for a reason
- Expect growth to feel uncomfortable: If it feels awkward or difficult, you're doing it right
- Replace destructive activities: Eat candy instead of getting high
- Pretend you like yourself: See how different the day feels
- Focus on now: Do what makes to your day better; don't get overwhelmed by the past or future
- Praise yourself: Notice what you did right; this is the most powerful method of growth
- Observe repeating patterns: Try to notice and understand your reenactments
- Self-nurture: Do something that you enjoy (take a walk, see a movie)
- Practice delay: If you can't totally prevent a self-destructive act, at least delay it as long as possible
- Let go of destructive relationships: If it can't be fixed, detach
- Take responsibility: Take an active, not a passive, approach
- Set a deadline: Make it happen by setting a date
- Make a commitment: Promise yourself to do what's right to help your recovery
- Rethink: Think in a way that helps you feel better
- Detach from emotional pain (grounding): Distract, walk away, change the channel
- Learn from experience: Seek wisdom that can help you next time
- Solve the problem: Don't take it personally when things go wrong-try just to seek a solution
- Use kinder language: Make your language less harsh
- Examine the evidence: Evaluate both sides of the picture
- Plan it out: Take the time to think ahead- it's the opposite of impulsivity
- Reward yourself: Find a healthy way to celebrate anything you do right
- Create new "tapes"- Record new, kinder thoughts or messages to play back
- Find rules to live by: Remember a phrase that works for you ("Stay Real")
- Setbacks are not failures: A setback is just a setback, nothing more
- Tolerate the feeling: "No feeling is final"; just get through it safely
- Actions first, and feelings will follow: Don't wait until you feel motivated; just start now
- Create positive additions: Examples; sports, hobbies, AA...
- When in doubt, don't: If you suspect danger, stay away
- Fight the trigger: Take an active approach to protect yourself
- Notice the source: Before you accept criticism or advice, notice who's telling it to you
- Make a decision: if you're stuck, try choosing the best solution you can right now; don't wait
- Do the right thing: Do what you know will help you, even if you don't feel like it
- Go to a meeting: Feet first; just get there and let the rest happen
- Protect your body from HIV: This is truly a life-or-death issue
- Prioritize healing: Make healing your most urgent and important goal, above all else
- Reach for community resources: Lean on them! They can be a source of great support



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- Get others to support your recovery: Tell people what you need
- Notice what you can control: List the aspects of your life you do control (your job, the relationships that you chose, etc.)