Coping Skills
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Thriving in 2013

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, 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 - Ask 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. 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) 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, don’t 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 can’t totally prevent a self-destructive act, at least delay it as long as possible 55. Let go of destructive relationships - If it can’t 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’s 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 - Don’t 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’s 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. Acceptance and letting go will follow - Don’t 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’s telling it to you 77. Make a decision - If you’re stuck, try choosing the best solution you can right now; don’t 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 - Get 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 ...)