

### Tips for Implementing Seeking Safety (Najavits, 2009)

- 1) ***Offer many coping skills, rather than “one right way”*** - empowerment approach, as long as it's safe coping it's good coping
- 2) ***Keep the room safe for all*** – keep interaction safe, calming, focused on recovery
- 3) ***Identify trauma themes*** – help them discuss trauma “themes” if they are only discussing substance abuse
- 4) ***Find your own style*** – pace, style, creative exercises, personal touches
- 5) ***Balance the coping skills and client issues*** – interweave coping skills & client issues in sessions
- 6) ***Know that you cannot cover all the material in one session*** – Do what you can and what is most relevant to clients
- 7) ***Rehearse the “tough cases”*** – Figure out ahead of time what you can say in difficult situations with clients.
- 8) ***Teaching clients that in any situation, good coping is possible*** – There's always a way to cope safely in any situation.
- 9) ***Encourage “headlines, not details”*** – Name traumas & explore how they play a role in the present.
- 10) ***Learn ways to redirect and contain*** – Know what to say to redirect or stop when clients dominate discussion or take too much time.
- 11) ***Watch for power dynamics*** – Be aware of clients' reactions to power; of how you use your power; no mistreatment
- 12) ***Use alternate methods if a client cannot read*** – read or give summaries
- 13) ***Give honest feedback*** – let clients know how they are doing
- 14) ***Understand that working on the present does not mean avoiding the past***
- 15) ***Understand that present-focused therapy is not “less than” past-focused therapy.***

- 16) ***Discuss and rehearse the skills.***
- 17) ***Ask the “big ticket” question: How did you try to cope?***
- 18) ***Try different ways of rehearsing the skills. Different methods might include:***
- a. Do a “walk through”
  - b. In-session experiential exercise
  - c. Role play
  - d. Identify role models
  - e. Say aloud
  - f. Process perceived obstacles
  - g. Involve safe family/friends
  - h. Replay the scene
  - i. Discussion questions
  - j. Make a tape
  - k. Review key points
  - l. Question/answer
- 19) ***Educate all staff*** – help get everyone in your organization on the same page, common understanding trauma informed treatment.
- 20) ***Find a way to steer away from overly intense details*** – gently redirect.
- 21) ***Choose session length and pacing to fit your setting*** – Depending on the setting and time available sessions could be once a week, twice a week or more often; 1 or 1.5 hrs in length.
- 22) ***If time is limited, select key topics*** – If over-all treatment time is limited, plan and decide which topics will be most helpful to the client.
- 23) ***Use a triage approach for deciding what to work on*** – During a session balance topic needs of clients with most dangerous behaviors with higher functioning clients.
- 24) ***Relate process issues to trauma and substance abuse*** – When clients reject most of the treatment process, compassionately raise their awareness about how they are coming across.
- 25) ***Attend to your experiences*** – Observe your own reactions as you do the work of Seeking Safety, which may include: your own experience of trauma & substance abuse, countertransference, self-care issues, and secondary traumatization. Notice & process gratifications and difficulties.

- 26) ***Consider ways to help client decrease substance use*** – There are various options for reducing use: Abstinence, harm reduction, or controlled use. Choices depend on the philosophy of your program.
- 27) ***It's helpful to rate yourself and others on the Seeking Safety Adherence***  
Scale or one of the short versions to evaluate whether clinicians are in-sync with SS.
- 28) ***Group Treatment Points:***
- a. *Leadership:* Singly or co-led fine.
  - b. *Group name:* Use an appealing name for the group (no need to call it a treatment group) e.g. Seeking Safety Group, New Paths Group, Coping Skills Group or other.
  - c. *Group Size:* Depends on program; small (3-8 clients), medium (9-15), large (16 or more). Need to balance processing time factors with size.
  - d. *Group rules:* Unnecessary to review rules at the beginning of each session, just once at the very beginning.
  - e. *Contact outside of sessions:* No specific rules.
  - f. *Mixed-gender groups:* Seeking Safety can be done successfully in mixed gender format. Avoid putting clients with major current perpetration issues with victims (e.g. sexual abusers with sexual abuse survivors).