

# Seeking Safety for Parents

Parent Collective Presentation

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# Ice breaker!!!

*Enter into the chat or use the raise hand feature to answer these questions:*

- Name
- What's one emotion you are feeling right now?
- What are the positive coping skills you've used this week?
- What are the negative coping skills you've used this week?
- Who/what are your resources of support?
- What is your **commitment** this week?

# What is Safety?

“ ‘Safety’ .... signifies various elements: discontinuing substance use, reducing suicidality, minimizing exposure to health risks, letting go of dangerous relationships, .... gaining control over extreme symptoms.... and stopping self-harm behaviors... Many of these are self-destructive behaviors that reenact trauma.... Even though the trauma may have occurred long ago, patients treat themselves in ways that repeat it....

‘Seeking safety’ refers to helping patients **free themselves from such negative behaviors** and, in so doing, to move toward **freeing themselves from trauma at a deep emotional level....**

**Establishing safety [is] life-enhancing:** learning to ask for help from safe people, utilizing community resources.... taking good care of one’s body, rehearsing honesty and compassion, increasing self-nurturing activities, and so on.” <sup>1</sup>

# Seeking Safety: An Evidence-Based Practice

## 25 *Seeking Safety* treatment topics

*(cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, or a combination)*

- (1) Introduction to treatment / Case management
- (2) **Safety** *(combination)*
- (3) **PTSD: Taking Back Your Power** *(cognitive)*
- (4) **Detaching from Emotional Pain: Grounding** *(behavioral)*
- (5) **When Substances Control You** *(cognitive)*
- (6) **Asking for Help** *(interpersonal)*
- (7) **Taking Good Care of Yourself** *(behavioral)*
- (8) **Compassion** *(cognitive)*
- (9) **Red and Green Flags** *(behavioral)*
- (10) **Honesty** *(interpersonal)*
- (11) **Recovery Thinking** *(cognitive)*
- (12) **Integrating the Split Self** *(cognitive)*
- (13) **Commitment** *(behavioral)*
- (14) **Creating Meaning** *(cognitive)*
- (15) **Community Resources** *(interpersonal)*
- (16) **Setting Boundaries in Relationships** *(interpersonal)*
- (17) **Discovery** *(cognitive)*
- (18) **Getting Others to Support Your Recovery** *(interpersonal)*
- (19) **Coping with Triggers** *(behavioral)*
- (20) **Respecting Your Time** *(behavioral)*
- (21) **Healthy Relationships** *(interpersonal)*
- (22) **Self-Nurturing** *(behavioral)*
- (23) **Healing from Anger** *(interpersonal)*
- (24) **The Life Choices Game** *(combination)*
- [Review]
- (25) **Termination**

# Topics to be covered today

- Facilitating a safe space for your loved one
- Understanding Safe versus Unsafe coping
- Integrating the Split Self
- Types of Boundaries (how they relate to safety and how to set them!)
- Warning Signs of risky behavior

Practice non-judgement/  
Approach with curiosity

Validate

Ask questions

Modeling effective coping skills & boundary setting

Model Openness

# How do you create a safe space for your loved one?

Be mindful of your own substance use

Let them know that you're there (then leave!)

Practice vulnerability

Understand safe versus unsafe coping

*Manage your own anxiety*

Normalize struggles

# Managing your anxiety

- Discussing self harm/ suicide/ trauma is **not easy**, and that's normal!
  - Educate yourself
- Utilize coping skills like Boxed Breathing, Pair Muscle Relaxation, etc.
  - Adhere to HALT before having tough discussions or making quick decisions (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)
- Avoid jumping to conclusions or asking leading questions about self-harm or suicide
  - E.g.: "You don't want to kill yourself, right?" or "You wouldn't hurt yourself, would you?"
  - "If you have thoughts about suicide, you must be about to do it, so we have to go the ER now!"

# Coping Skills

## Adaptive/Safe/Effective

Asking for help

Reading

Creating meaning

Practice delay

Exercise

Enjoying nature

Tending to physical health

Reframing/rethinking

Socializing

Soothing self-talk

Spending time with pets

Getting organized

Playing games

Opposite Action

Giving back/Volunteering

Acceptance

## Maladaptive/Unsafe/Ineffective

Substance use

Denial

Isolation

Oversleeping

Self-harm

Procrastination

Avoidance

Taking unnecessary risks

Lying

Aggression

Excessive spending

Suppressing emotions

Rumination

Compulsive behaviors

# Integrating the Split Self

The concept of split self is that we have different sides/part of our self, some of which may have been **rejected** or **invalidated** at some point in our life by others –or even ourselves. It can also be thought of in **angel vs devil** or **Jekyll and Hyde** terms

Click the clapping emoji on zoom if you can relate to any of these statements:

- *Part of me feels like I'm valid for being upset, but I don't want to be seen as mean/rude/aggressive/disrespectful*
- *Sometimes I want to do the right thing, but other times I want to do the thing that feels the best in the moment*
- *I really like this side of my self, but don't like this side*



# Boundaries

Boundary problems are described as either too much closeness (difficulty saying “no” in relationships) or too much distance (difficulty saying “yes” in relationships). Boundary themes = emotional, financial, spiritual, time, intellectual, informational

| Rigid (separate)                               | Porous (enmeshed)                                 | Healthy/Flexible                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Avoids intimacy and close relationships        | Overshares personal information                   | Values individual opinions                                           |
| Unlikely to ask for help                       | Difficulty saying “no” to the requests of others  | Values connection                                                    |
| Very protective of personal information        | Overinvolved with other people’s problems         | Doesn’t compromise values for others                                 |
| May seem detached, even with romantic partners | Dependent on the opinion of others                | Shares personal information appropriately for situation/relationship |
| Keeps others at a distance to avoid rejection  | Accepting of abuse or disrespect                  | Knows personal wants and needs and can communicate them as needed    |
| Difficulty saying “yes” to requests            | Fears rejection if they do not comply with others | Accepting when others say “no” without isolation                     |
|                                                |                                                   | Differentiation of Self                                              |

# Setting Boundaries

Know what **your needs are versus your wants** in the relationship

Plan ahead when appropriate -- think out what you want to say, write it down

Choose an intentional time for a boundary conversation: **all parties should be aware and prepared**

Use Confident Body Language

**Be respectful** -- Don't put down the other person, and consider using "I statements"

Compromise - when appropriate, listen to and consider the needs of the other person

Phrases: *"Not at this time"*

*"I am not comfortable with this"*

*"I can't do that for you"*

*"This is not acceptable"*

*"Please don't do that"*

*"This doesn't work for me"*

# Warning Signs of Risky Behavior/Suicide

## *Verbals:*

Statements expressing SI or thoughts of suicide

Talking about wanting to die

Suddenly talking about or daydreaming about risky/concerning behavior

Sense of hopelessness

“I can’t do this anymore”

“I don’t deserve to live”

“I have no reason to live”

Talking about being a burden on others

## *Behaviors:*

Behavior differing from baseline/usual presentation

Giving stuff away

Saying goodbye (e.g. writing suicide notes/letters)

Withdrawal and isolation

Increase in substance/alcohol use

Increase in risky behaviors

Mood swings

Body scars

*Please notify the treatment team if you notice any of these signs*

# Case Examples: What should you do to increase safety?

1. You notice fresh cuts on your loved one's upper arm.
2. Your loved one texts you to say, "I feel so overwhelmed with classes and everything, I just can't take it anymore"
3. You observe that your loved one continues to drink excessively, even though you shared concern
4. You notice a sudden decline in hygiene (greasy hair, body odor, unwashed clothes, etc.)

# Resources

1. LISA M. NAJAVITS. 2002. SEEKING SAFETY A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse. The Guilford Press: New York. p. 5-6.

## For Additional Learning:

Childhood ACE's:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_lifetime?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en)

A helpful video of what a [traditional SS group looks like](#)