

Creative Solutions

PTSD and substance abuse can lead to rigid thinking—limiting oneself to “same old” solutions.

PTSD. Anxiety may make you afraid to try new things. In trauma you felt powerless, so you may have come to believe that you cannot have control over your life.

Substance abuse. By using substances to cope with problems, you are relying on short-term, impulsive solutions rather than long-term, planned solutions.

Creative solutions are healthy, direct, adaptive, realistic, and specific.

★ Check off (✓) any strategies below that might help you accomplish your commitments:

- Write down your commitment and put copies everywhere (refrigerator door, car dashboard, bathroom mirror, paper-clipped to money in your wallet, taped to your computer). You can also send yourself a voice mail message or letter reminding you to do it.
- Use the “Do something, anything” rule—start anywhere. Don’t feel you have to start with the hardest part or at the beginning.
- Create an image to keep you going: Strong as steel . . . warrior . . . racing for the finish . . .
- Ask other people how they get things done.
- Get someone to help you (or go with you, if it’s an appointment).
- Ask your therapist if you can make a call that’s difficult *during* your session.
- Don’t drink coffee in the morning until you are already working on your commitment.
- Make a list of all the people you’ll hurt if you don’t do it (your family? yourself?).
- Schedule a time during the day to get it done.
- Rate your mood before and after the task. Do you feel better after?
- Plan a reward.
- Tell everyone in your life you’re going to get it done.
- Write your tasks on slips of paper and put them in a hat; pull out one at random and do it (or make up other “games”).
- Find a good location. If it’s hard to work at home, try a library or coffee shop.
- Give a \$50 check to a friend to keep if you don’t accomplish your goal; spend the \$50 on yourself if you accomplish the goal.
- Try to make it fun: Turn on the stereo while you work.
- Find meaning. Figure out what most motivates you and keep repeating it (getting it over with? doing a good job? doing it for your kids? creating a better life for yourself?).
- Use a special colored pen to check it off your list (these little things really can work).
- Buy files and use one file for each task (getting organized increases motivation).
- Leave brief messages on your therapist’s voice mail about your progress.
- If perfectionism is a problem, do small steps as “preparation” for the real thing.
- Record a cassette tape that motivates you to keep your commitment.
- Develop a “survival book” of pictures, poems, quotes, or other inspiration to keep you on track.
- Other strategies that work for you: _____