Piloting Signs of Safety: A Deaf-Accessible Toolkit for Trauma and Addiction Melissa L. Anderson, Ph.D., Kelly S. Wolf Craig, Ph.D., Amanda Sortwell, M.S., I.M.F., Douglas Ziedonis, M.D., M.P.H.



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The Deaf community - a minority group of 500,000 Americans who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) experiences trauma and addiction at rates double to the general population.

There are no evidence-based treatments that have been evaluated to treat trauma, addiction, or other behavioral health conditions among Deaf people.

Current evidence-based trauma and addiction treatments developed for hearing populations fail to meet the needs of Deaf clients.

See	king Sa	fety
constances and a second second	HANDOUT 1 Safety Is the Most Important Priority Right Now!	HANDOUT 2 Safe Coping Skills
ARECCA	This entire treatment revolves around one central idea: <i>You need to stay safe</i> . The good news is that you can learn to	Ask for help
SCOLOS	cope safely, no matter what negative life events come your way. Nothing has to make you use substances or engage in any other high-risk behavior.	Rev for help rev Inspire yourself Carry something positive (e.g., poem), or n
01:0	EXAMPLES Life situation. You lose your job; your mother criticizes you; you wake up depressed; someone offers you co- caine; your dog dies; you dissociate; your partner gives you a hard time; you have no money; you find out you have a	r≆ Leave a bad scene
Seeking SAFETY	tamine, you have a flashback; you can't sleep. Your coping. This is everything! <i>No matter what happens</i> in your life, you can cope <i>safely</i> .	F Persist Never, never, n
Sector 8 OTHERT	Unsafe Coping versus Safe Coping	জ Honesty Secrets and lying are at the core of PT
A Treatment	Use substances versus Ask for help Hurt yourself (e.g., cutting, burning) versus Take good care of your body Let someone harm you versus Set a boundary in a relationship	F# Cry
A Treatment	Act on impulse versus Rethink the situation	Far Choose self-respect Choose v
Manual for	The goal of this treatment is to help you become more aware of how you are coping and to teach you how to cope more safely. That's it!	Far Take good care of your body
EXCONTROL .	STAGES OF HEALING FROM PTSD AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE	ার্জ List your options
PTSD and	For both PTSD and substance abuse, <i>safety</i> is the first stage in healing, according to a great deal of research and clin- ical wisdom. The stages are as follows:	Far Create meaning Remind yourself what you are living
Substance	 Safety. This is the phase you are in now. The goals are to free yourself from substance abuse, stay alive, build healthy relationships, gain control over your feelings, learn to cope with day-to-day problems, protect your- self from destructive people and situations, not hurt yourself or others, increase your functioning, and attain sta- bility. 	■ Do the best you can with what you have
KING CA	Durity. 2. <i>Mourning.</i> Once you are more safe, you may need to grieve about the past—about what your trauma and substance abuse did to you. You may need to cry deeply to get over the losses and pain you experienced: loss of in-	العَّزَةُ Set a boundary
Abuse	nocence, loss of trust, loss of time. 3. Reconnection. After letting yourself experience mourning, you will find yourself more willing and able to re- connect with the world in joylul ways: thriving, enjoying life, able to work and relate well to others. You will get to	FF Compassion
SPECI	this stage if you can establish safety now!	For When in doubt, do what's hardest The
S COM		From Seeking Safety by Liaa M. Najawits (2002). Copyright by The Guilford Press. Permission
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Well-validated, NIDA-funded therapeutic intervention to treat people recovering from trauma and addiction

Signs of Safety



- Team of Deaf and hearing researchers, clinicians, filmmakers, actors, artists, and Deaf people in recovery developed Signs of Safety – Deaf-accessible prototype materials to be used with Seeking Safety:
- Includes therapist guide and client handouts for 25 individual or group sessions, each teaching clients a safe coping skill (e.g., "Asking for Help," "Coping with Triggers")
- **BARRIERS**:
 - Written English client materials
 - Not inclusive of Deaf culture, social norms, or history

- <u>Client toolkit includes visual handouts and ASL teaching stories</u>, which present key learning points via an "educational soap opera"
- Therapist companion guide offers tips to adapt Seeking Safety for Deaf clients, including vocabulary for ASL translation and information about how the 25 topics in Seeking Safety interact with Deaf experience and culture

• FACILITATORS:

- Use of visual aids and simple English
- Attention to gaps in health literacy
- Reliance on storytelling and visual metaphors
- Teaching concepts through examples
- Use of active treatment strategies, like role playing
- Creative uses of technology

We are currently conducting a pilot study of Signs of Safety, collecting data on feasibility (e.g., attendance, retention, enrollment, fidelity, assessment); participant satisfaction; and clinical outcomes (e.g., PTSD symptoms, substance use disorder symptoms).

Preliminary results show symptom reduction from baseline to follow-up and high levels of participant satisfaction with the model. These encouraging results suggest that further exploration of this line of research is warranted.

Future research efforts, which include a goal of randomized clinical trials, will be informed by the rich participant feedback received about how to further improve Signs of Safety materials for a professionalquality second iteration.

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