

## Integrating Substance Use Treatment Techniques into Evidence-Based Treatments for PTSD

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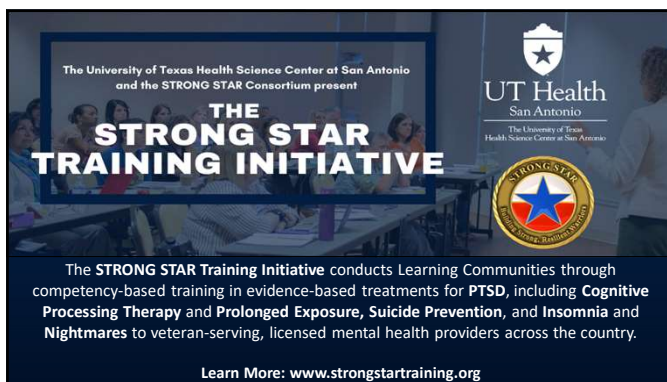
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The STRONG STAR Training Initiative conducts Learning Communities through competency-based training in evidence-based treatments for PTSD, including **Cognitive Processing Therapy** and **Prolonged Exposure, Suicide Prevention, and Insomnia and Nightmares** to veteran-serving, licensed mental health providers across the country.

Learn More: [www.strongstartraining.org](http://www.strongstartraining.org)

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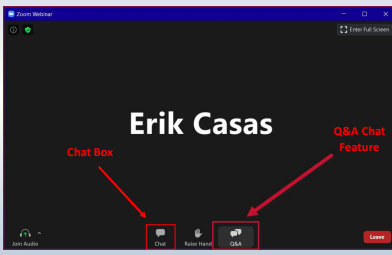
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## *Integrating Substance Use Disorder Treatment Techniques into Evidence-Based Treatments for PTSD*

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## Conflict of Interest Disclosure



The presenter(s) have no conflicts of interests to disclose.

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## Acknowledgements

- Sudie E. Back, Ph.D. Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), Staff Psychologist, Ralph H. Johnson VA, Charleston, SC
- COPE Treatment Developer
- Offered training for SSTI PE providers December 2021
  - Brian Lozano, Ana Santa, PhD, Yanya Saraiya, PhD

*Training materials today are based on COPE manual & COPE training*



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## Learning Objectives:

Describe the relationship between PTSD and substance use disorders (SUD)

- Science of PTSD & SUD & Treatment

Understand the rationale for integrated psychosocial treatment approaches for PTSD/SUD

- Support Conceptualization

Describe cognitive-behavioral techniques for SUD integrated with PTSD treatment

- With a PTSD treatment lens, how might you integrate SUD techniques

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## Myths

- If I ask about the trauma, they will relapse in their substance use (or get worse).
- Abstaining from substances is the only way to do PTSD treatment.
- Treatment won't help patients with co-occurring PTSD & SUD.

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# The Science of PTSD & SUD

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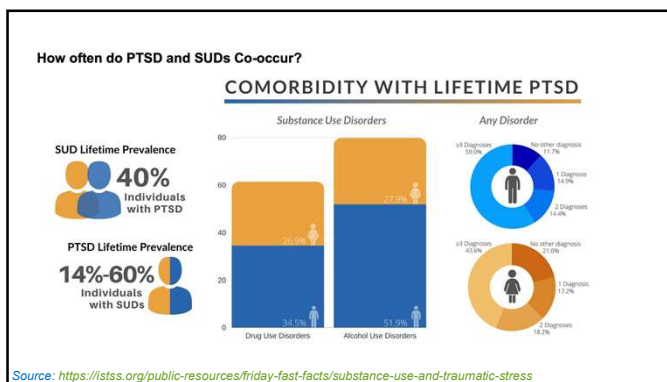
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## PTSD & SUD in Veterans

- More than 2 of 10 Veterans with PTSD also have SUD.
- Among first-time users of VA healthcare from 2001-2010 (N=456,502), 63.0% with alcohol use disorder had comorbid PTSD (Seal et al., 2011).
- Most Veterans (85%) indicate that their substance use increases when their PTSD symptoms get worse (Back et al., 2014)
- As it relates to treatment, Veterans with PTSD and co-occurring poly-SUD, may experience greater SUD improvement but less improvement in PTSD symptoms during integrated treatment (Jeffers et al., 2019)

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## PTSD & Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

Prescription opioids (e.g., hydrocodone, oxycodone) are the most commonly used drug, 2<sup>nd</sup> only to marijuana.

High rates of trauma (e.g., 92-97%) and PTSD (33-54%) among patients with opioid use disorder (OUD) (Mills et al., 2005, 2006; Peirce et al., 2009).

Among military service members, odds of having PTSD was 28 times higher in those with, vs. without, OUD (Dabbs et al., 2014).

Concurrent trauma-focused treatment may be important in retention and overall outcomes (Meshberg-Cohen et al., 2019).

Source SSTI COPE Training

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## PTSD & SUD: Treatment outcomes

Patients with PTSD & SUD have a more severe clinical profile, including suicidality, poorer well-being, psychosocial functioning. (Schäfer & Najavits, 2007; Back et al., 2000; Tate et al., 2007), making them harder to treat.

When PTSD gets better, SUD gets better, but not the reverse (Hien et al., 2010; Back et al., 2006; Brown et al., 1998).

EBTs for PTSD are well tolerated for PTSD/SUD patients and they show improvements (e.g., Kayser 2014), but poorer outcomes (Back 2010).

Impact of CPT on hazardous drinking: Treatment did not exacerbate hazardous drinking, and the hazardous drinking group showed significant reductions in drinking following PTSD treatment (Dondanville et al., 2019)

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## Sequential Model for Treatment

Historically, SUD Tx first then PTSD

Example:

- *SUD only treatment first (attain and maintain abstinence), then refer to PTSD treatment.*

Challenges:

- Can be difficult for some patients to achieve abstinence or reduce use, especially in the face of PTSD symptoms.
- Unknown about treatment engagement rates in this model.
- Longer time in treatment, higher costs for patient, greater burden on clinics and organizations.

Source SSTI COPE Training

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## Behavioral Health Integrated Treatments

Treatments that address PTSD and SUD together have been shown to improve PTSD symptoms without worsening SUD, & improving SUD (e.g., Back, 2010; Back et al., 2012; Brady et al., 2001).

Integrated treatments are more effective than treatment as usual (Roberts et al., 2015)

**Examples:**

- Seeking Safety (Najavits, 2006),
- Integrated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (ICBT) (Capone et al., 2018; McGovern et al., 2009).
- Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and SUD using Prolonged Exposure (COPE)

Source SSTI COPE Training

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## Integrated Model

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy that integrates evidence-based trauma-focused treatment for PTSD with evidence-based behavioral treatment for addiction.
- Delivered by 1 clinician during 1 treatment episode.
- Preferred model for patients (Back et al., 2014; Back et al., 2006; Brown, et al., 1998; Najavits, 2004).
- Recommended by VA/DOD and other clinical practice guidelines.

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✓ TREATMENTS THAT WORK

Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and Substance Use Disorders Using Prolonged Exposure (COPE)

— THERAPIST GUIDE —

SUDIE E. BACK  
EDNA B. FOA  
THERESSE K. MILLEN  
KATHERINE L. MILLS  
MAREE TESSON  
BONNIE DANSKY COTTON  
KATHLEEN M. CARROLL  
KATHLEEN T. BRADY

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### COPE

- COPE consists of 12, individual sessions, 90 minutes each, delivered weekly.
- Synthesis of two evidence-based treatments:
  1. Prolonged Exposure (PE) for PTSD (Foa)
  2. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for SUD (Carroll)
- Primary goals:
  - Psychoeducation regarding the functional relationship between PTSD and substance use.
  - Decrease PTSD symptoms via Prolonged Exposure.
  - Decrease substance use using cognitive behavioral techniques.

Back et al., 2014

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## COPE Studies to Date

Research to date includes **476 participants** in 4 RCTs, 2 open-label trials, and 2 case reports. Findings show COPE is safe, feasible, and results in significant reduction in PTSD and SUD.

### Completed COPE Studies

Brady et al., 2001	First open-label trial (cocaine and PTSD)
Mills et al., 2012	First RCT (polysubstance and PTSD, Australia)
Back et al., 2012	First OEF/OIF military Veteran (alcohol and PTSD)
Ruglass et al., 2017	RCT in civilians with sub-threshold or full PTSD (polysubstance)
Persson et al., 2017	Open-label trial of translated manual (women with alcohol and PTSD, Sweden)
Jaconis et al., 2017	First telehealth case (female Veteran with alcohol and MST)
Back et al., 2019	First RCT in military Veterans (mostly alcohol and PTSD)
Norman et al., 2019	First comparison of COPE vs. Seeking Safety (military Veterans with alcohol and PTSD)

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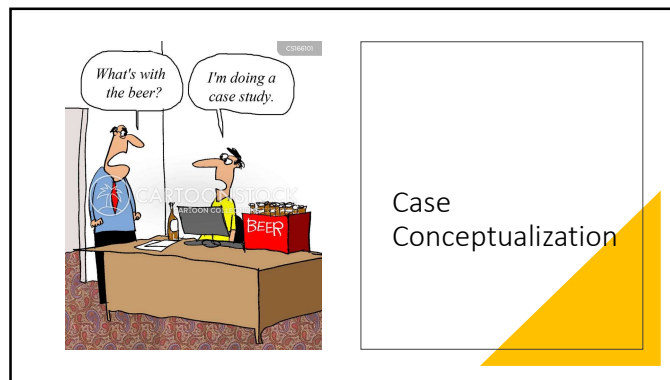
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PASSWORD #1:

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## Functional Association Between PTSD & SUD

**Self-medication model:** Substances are used to manage (avoid) PTSD symptoms such as emotional pain, intrusions, poor sleep, guilt or anxiety. (Khantzian, 1985, 1990, 1997; Reed, et al., 2007)

**High Risk model:** Substances and/or high-risk contexts (e.g., drug-related crime) lead to trauma exposure and the development of PTSD. (Chilcoat & Breslau, 1998; Acierno, et al., 1999)

**Susceptibility model:** Early stress exposure leading to PTSD makes people more vulnerable to develop SUD later on. (Kendler et al., 2000; Young-Wolff et al., 2011)

**Shared liability and mutual maintenance model:** There are shared reinforcing relationships between traumatic stress and SUD that underlie and maintain both disorders (Norman et al., 2012; Lopez-Castro et al., 2015)

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## PTSD & SUD

### Biopsychosocial Framework of Understanding SUD:

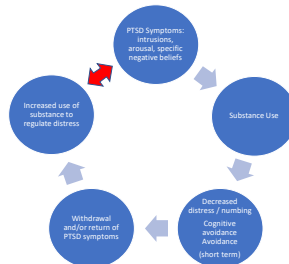
Addiction is not a "lack of will power" or moral failing.

Biopsychosocial framework helps understand there are numerous factors contribute to SUD.

Social determinants can result in inequities in SUD and affect risk and resilience.

SUD is a chronic but treatable medical condition that, at the brain level, involves dysregulation in neural circuits involved in reward, stress, and self-control that are "hijacked" by alcohol/drugs (Volkow, NIDA).

Source SSTI COPE Training



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## Talking to patients about integrated treatment

Discuss	Discuss substances as a way to avoid
Elicit	Elicit their experiences with substances as avoidance
Ask about	Ask about short term relief vs long term consequences
Offer	Offer treatment model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat both PTSD &amp; SUD</li> <li>• Manage trauma symptoms without substances</li> <li>• Recovery from both conditions</li> <li>• Long term relief</li> </ul>

Black et al., 2014

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## Abstinence vs. Harm Reduction

### Abstinence is one option

- Safest option (only way to avoid all negative consequences from use) so it's encouraged, but not required to receive care.
- Identified as a goal by older veterans, those with more severe SUD, and comorbid alcohol and drug use disorders.
- Consider severity of SUD, negative consequences (medical, legal, family/social), previous attempts to cut down, withdrawal symptom severity (seizures, hospitalizations), and family history density.

### Harm reduction is another option

- Harm reduction refers to practices aimed at minimizing harmful effects of use.
- Identified as a goal by younger veterans (average of 12 yrs younger), OEF/OIF theatre, employed, and less severe SUD.
- Be specific about amount and frequency of reduction goals.
- Aim for having some DAYS with no use (therapy appt, practice assignments)
- Revisit goals throughout therapy.

Source SSTI COPE Training (Logan & Marlatt, 2014; Marlatt 1998; Lozano et al., 2015; 2021)

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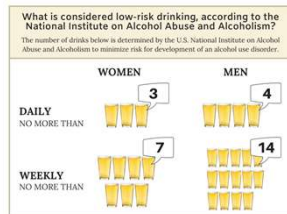
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## For alcohol, use National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Guidelines

- NIAAA has defined low-risk drinking limits:
- Low risk is not no risk
- May be difficult for some to stay in this limit, therefore abstinence being a better choice.



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## Integrated Treatment Techniques

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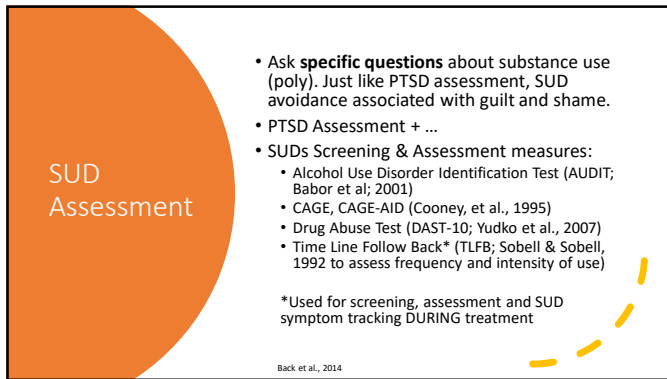
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**SUD Assessment**

- Ask **specific questions** about substance use (poly). Just like PTSD assessment, SUD avoidance associated with guilt and shame.
- PTSD Assessment + ...
- SUDs Screening & Assessment measures:
  - Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT; Babor et al; 2001)
  - CAGE, CAGE-AID (Cooney, et al., 1995)
  - Drug Abuse Test (DAST-10; Yudko et al., 2007)
  - Time Line Follow Back\* (TLFB; Sobell & Sobell, 1992 to assess frequency and intensity of use)

\*Used for screening, assessment and SUD symptom tracking DURING treatment

Back et al., 2014

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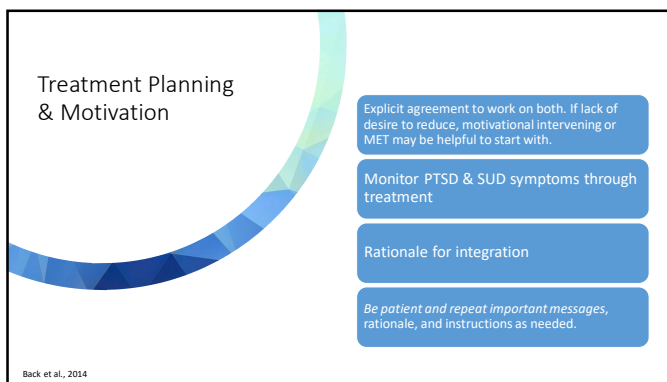
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**Treatment Planning & Motivation**

- Explicit agreement to work on both. If lack of desire to reduce, motivational intervening or MET may be helpful to start with.
- Monitor PTSD & SUD symptoms through treatment
- Rationale for integration
- Be patient and repeat important messages, rationale, and instructions as needed.

Back et al., 2014

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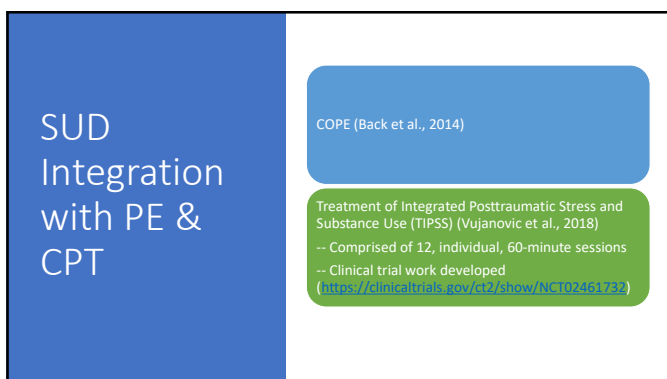
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**SUD Integration with PE & CPT**

- COPE (Back et al., 2014)
- Treatment of Integrated Posttraumatic Stress and Substance Use (TIPSS) (Vujanovic et al., 2018)
  - Comprised of 12, individual, 60-minute sessions
  - Clinical trial work developed (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02461732>)

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### Development of a Novel, Integrated Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Co-Occurring Posttraumatic Stress and Substance Use Disorders: A Pilot Randomized Clinical Trial

CPT + Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for SUD (Carroll)

Vujanovic, A. A., Smith, L. J., Green, C. E., Lane, S. D., & Schmitz, J. M. (2018). Development of a novel, integrated cognitive-behavioral therapy for co-occurring posttraumatic stress and substance use disorders: A pilot randomized clinical trial. *Contemporary clinical trials*, 65, 123–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2017.12.013>

#### Summary of Session Content: TIPSS for PTSD/SUD

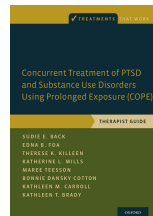
Session	Topics <sup>a</sup>
1	Introduction/Motivational Interviewing for PTSD/SUD Treatment Engagement
2	Psychoeducation on PTSD/SUD; Trauma- and Substance-Related Triggers
3	Values and Valued Action
4	Coping Skills for Managing PTSD and SUD Symptoms
5	Impact of Trauma and Substance Use on Beliefs about Self, Others, and World
6	Identification of Thoughts and Feelings about PTSD and SUD
7	Remembering the Trauma I
8	Remembering the Trauma II
9	Challenging Questions regarding PTSD and SUD
10	Problematic Thinking regarding PTSD and SUD
11	Themes: Trust, Safety, Power/Control, Esteem, Intimacy
12	Themes: Trust, Safety, Power/Control, Esteem, Intimacy / Graduation

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### COPE Session Overview

PTSD	SUD
1. Introduction: Psychoeducation, Therapy Contract and Goals, Breathing Retraining	
2. Common Reactions to Trauma	Awareness of Cravings
3. In Vivo Hierarchy	Managing Cravings
4. First Imaginal Exposure	Review Coping Skills
5. Imaginal Exposure continued	Planning for Emergencies
6. Imaginal Exposure continued	Awareness of High Risk Thoughts
7. Imaginal Exposure continued	Managing High Risk Thoughts
8. Imaginal Exposure continued	Refusal Skills
9. Imaginal Exposure continued	SUD: Seemingly Irrelevant Decisions
10. Imaginal Exposure continued	Awareness of Anger
11. Imaginal Exposure continued	Managing Anger
12. Review & Termination	

Back et al., 2014



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### Structure of integrating SUD Content

#### COPE & TIPSS provides a roadmap

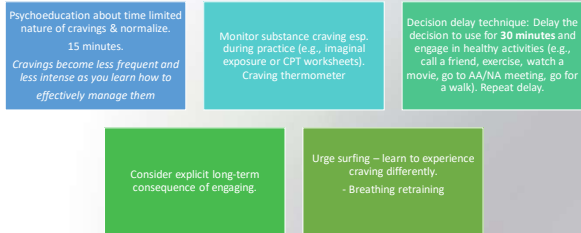
- Introduce the concept in the treatment session
- Assign as integrated in homework
- Homework review & problem solving at next session

#### Session structure:

- Fully integrated content (60 minutes for CPT + SUD, 90 minutes for COPE)
- 2 sessions per week – one dedicated to PTSD and SUD each

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## Managing Cravings



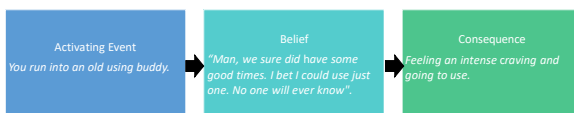
Back et al., 2014

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## Awareness & Managing High-Risk Thoughts

- Escape
- Relaxation
- Nostalgia
- Testing Control
- Crisis
- Feeling Uncomfortable When Abstinent or Clean
- To-Hell-With-It

ABC Model



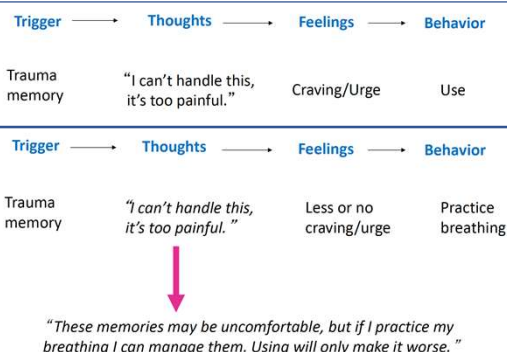
*"Are my thoughts helping me achieve my goals? What can I do to change the situation? Or change my thoughts about the situation."*

- Example alternative actions:
- Leave the situation immediately.
  - Distract yourself with a pleasant, healthy activity.
  - Use the Decision Delay technique.
  - Remind yourself of the positive benefits of not using.

Back et al., 2014

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Cognitive-Behavioral Chain



Source: SSTI CCOPE Training

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## Refusal Skills

**Psychoeducation**

- Overt and covert pressures

**Guidelines**

- Avoid high-risk alcohol/drug situations whenever possible.
- Not avoiding safe trauma-related triggers.
- Give a convincing "No" without hesitation.
- Change the subject to avoid long discussions.
- Suggest another activity.
- Avoid excuses (i.e., I'm on medication).
- Don't feel guilty.
- Request behavior change.

**Practice**

- in session role play / writing out responses for specific situations for practice.

Back et al., 2014

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## Check in about Goals Midway

If the Patient's Substance Use Is Improving:	If Not Improving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight this fact and offer ample praise.</li> <li>• Ask about skills or techniques using in order to make this progress. Encourage continuing using them.</li> <li>• Where possible, link improvements in substance use to improvements in PTSD symptoms (e.g., "I noticed that as your substance use decreased you started sleeping better. Do you think those are related?").</li> <li>• Determine if the patient wants to continue with those same substance abuse goals or revise them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss this with the patient in an empathetic and nonjudgmental manner.</li> <li>• Inquire about the patient's perspective. Be sure that the original</li> <li>• Substance abuse goals established in session 1 were realistic.</li> <li>• If necessary, revise the goals to make them more realistic and achievable.</li> <li>• Ask the patient to help you identify obstacles that may be getting in the way of substance use improvements ("What do you think is currently going on that makes it difficult for you to reduce/stop your use?" "How can you handle these situations differently?").</li> </ul>

Back et al., 2014

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## Final Reflections

- SUD is on a continuum. Research focusses on SUD. There are many patients using substances in a way that isn't helpful.
- SUD strategies may help with these patients too.
- If you see a SUD / PTSD population strong recommendation to receiving training in EBTs plus SUD (e.g., can use COPE).
- The science is clear that integrated treatment is the clinical standard.

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PASSWORD #2:

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## Resources

- Back, S. E., & Killeen, T. K. (2014). Concurrent treatment of PTSD and substance use disorders using prolonged exposure(COPE): Therapist guide. Treatments That Work. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780199334537.001.0001>
- PTSD Research Quarterly: Behavioral Interventions for Comorbid PTSD and Substance Use Disorder by the National Center for PTSD for a detailed review of the state of the research on interventions for PTSD and substance use disorders ([https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/rq\\_docs/V31N2.pdf](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/rq_docs/V31N2.pdf))
- ISTSS Fast Fact Fridays & podcast <https://istss.org/public-resources/friday-fast-facts/substance-use-and-traumatic-stress>
- Posttraumatic Stress and Substance Use Disorders: A Comprehensive Clinical Handbook by Dr. Anka Vujanovic and Dr. Sudie Back
- McCauley, J. L., Killeen, T., Gros, D. F., Brady, K. T., & Back, S. E. (2012). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders: Advances in Assessment and Treatment. *Clinical psychology : a publication of the Division of Clinical Psychology of the American Psychological Association*, 19(3), 10.1111/cpsp.12006. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cpsp.12006>

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## Q&A



- Please type your questions in the Q&A feature at the bottom of the screen.



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## Next Month's Webinar



- ***CPT: An Empowerment Approach to Treating PTSD in Sexual Assault Survivors***
- Presented by Tonya Edmond, Ph.D., interim co-dean of the Brown School, and co-director for the Center of Violence and Injury Prevention and faculty affiliate for the Center for Mental Health Services Research.
- **When:** Thursday, April 7 at 1pm CST/ 2pm EST



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