

# Suicidal thoughts

## How to cope

This factsheet may help you if you are dealing with suicidal thoughts. It has ideas you can try to help you through a crisis. It explains how you can stay safe and where you can go for support.



KEY POINTS

- Just try to get through today rather than focusing on the future.
- Talk about how you are feeling with someone you trust or an emotional helpline.
- Contact a health professional such as your GP or Community Mental Health Team (CMHT).
- Try to do activities you enjoy which take your mind off what you are thinking.
- If you are in real danger of taking your own life call emergency services on 999 or go to Accident and Emergency (A&E).

### This factsheet covers:

1. [How can I help myself now?](#)
2. [How can I get emotional support?](#)
3. [How can I get professional support?](#)
4. [How do I make a crisis plan?](#)

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### 1. How can I help myself now?

#### Don't make a decision today

You don't need to act on your thoughts right now. The option of taking your own life isn't going to go away. You can make this decision tomorrow, next week or next month if you still want to.

Try to focus on just getting through today and not the rest of your life.

You may have had these thoughts before but you feel less able to cope today. You might find that you are more able to cope in a few days.

### **Look at your crisis plan**

Follow your crisis plan if you have one. You may have made a crisis plan with the help of a health professional or made your own.

If you don't have a crisis plan you could make one. You can start to think of some things which you will find helpful. Keep this plan safe and change it as you need to. [Section 5](#) of this factsheet gives more information about how to make a crisis plan.

### **Be aware of your triggers**

Triggers are things which might make you feel worse. Triggers are different for different people. You may find that certain music, photos or films make you feel worse. Try to stay away from these.

### **Stay away from drugs and alcohol**

Alcohol affects the parts of your brain that controls judgement, concentration, behaviour and emotions.<sup>1,2</sup> Drinking alcohol might make you more likely to act on suicidal thoughts.

Drugs affect the way you think and feel.<sup>3</sup> Different drugs have different effects. For example cocaine can make you feel happy and more likely to take risks when you take it. But you may feel depressed after the effects stop.<sup>4</sup> Other drugs can cause hallucinations, confusion and paranoia. You may be more likely to take your own life if you take illegal drugs.<sup>5</sup>

### **Go to a safe place**

Go to a place where you feel safe. Below is a list of place you could try.

- Your bedroom
- Mental health or spiritual centre
- Crisis centre
- Friend's house
- Library

Stay away from things you could use to harm yourself, such as razor blades or pills. If you have a lot of medication you can ask someone to keep it for you until you are back in control of your feelings.

### **Talk to other people**

It could be helpful for you to talk to someone about how you're feeling. There are different people who can help. You could speak to friends and family or your GP.

Remember to be patient. Your friends and family may want to help but might not know how to straight away.<sup>6</sup> If this happens, you should tell

them what you want from them. You may want to talk about how you're feeling or you may want them to help you get professional help.

If you don't want to talk to people you know, you could call an emotional support line or use an online support group.

### **Be around other people**

You may find it too difficult to speak to anyone at the moment. That's ok. But try not to spend too much time alone. You could go to a shopping centre, gym, coffee shop or park. Being around people can help to keep you safe, even if they don't know how you're feeling.

### **Distract yourself**

You might feel it is impossible not to focus on your suicidal thoughts or why you feel that way. If you focus on your thoughts it might make them feel stronger and harder to cope with. Try doing things that distract you. Think about what you enjoy to do.

Below are some things you could do as a distraction.

- Read a book or magazine
- Watch a film or TV
- Go to a museum
- Walk in a green space like a park
- Draw or paint
- Listen to music
- Sing
- Listen to nature
- Pay attention to nice smells such as coffee shops, your favourite food, a favourite perfume or soap
- Treat yourself to a food you like and pay close attention to how it tastes, how it feels in your mouth and what you like about it
- Wear something that you feel good in
- Spend time with your pet
- Set small goals to focus on. You could do the laundry, make a cake or tidy or organise something

### **Make a list**

Make a list of all the positive things about yourself and your life. It might be hard to think of these things right now, but try. Think about your strengths and positive things other people have said about you. At the end of every day write down one thing you felt good about, something you did, or something someone did for you.

### **Exercise**

Exercise can have a good effect on your mood and thinking. Exercise is thought to release dopamine and serotonin. These are 'feel good' hormones.<sup>7</sup>

## Relax

There are different things you could do to relax such as:

- meditation or mindfulness,
- breathing techniques or guided meditation. You can find these through a podcast or an online video website such as YouTube
- having a bath or shower, or
- looking at images that you like such as photographs.

Mindfulness is a type of meditation. It is when you focus on your mind and body. It is a way of paying attention to the present moment. When you practice mindfulness you learn to be more aware of your thoughts and feelings. Once you are more aware of your thoughts and feelings, you can learn to deal with them better.

You can try a breathing exercise to relax, like the one below.

Sit on a chair or on the floor. Keep your back straight and your shoulders back. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Think about how your breathing feels. Slow down your breathing as much as you can. You may find it useful to count as you inhale and exhale. If you start to have upsetting thoughts, bring your focus back to your breathing.

You can find more about '**Complementary and alternative treatments**' at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org). Or call 0121 522 7007 and ask us to send you a copy.

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## 2. How can I get emotional support?

Remember that however you feel there are people who will listen and who want to help. Let family or friends know what you are going through. They may be able to offer support and help keep you safe. They may not be able to make you feel better straight away. But tell them how you feel. They may help you see your situation in a different way or think of other options.

If you can't talk to family or friends you may be able to get emotional support from other places. You could talk to:

- someone from an emotional support line,
- therapist or counsellor
- teacher, tutor or colleague
- religious or spiritual leader

There is a list of emotional support lines at the end of this factsheet.

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### 3. How can I get professional support?

#### **Emergency services and Accident and Emergency (A&E)**

If you feel you will take your own life you should call the emergency services on 999. Ask for an ambulance. Or go to Accident and Emergency (A&E) at your local hospital.

#### **NHS 111**

NHS 111 service can help people when it isn't an emergency. You can call them if you do not have a GP or you do not know who to call. Dial 111 on your phone, it is free. This line is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

#### **Your GP**

Your GP might be able to help you get support in a crisis. A GP should be available to speak to you 24 hours a day. If you call your surgery when it's closed there will be a message to tell you who to call.

Your GP can discuss hospital treatment or refer you to the crisis team. They should do this if you suffer with depression and are a high risk of suicide, self harm or neglect.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)**

If you are under a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) call your CPN or care coordinator. If they are not there, you could talk to whoever is on duty that day.

#### **Crisis team**

If you are under a crisis team, call them. The crisis team are sometimes called the home treatment team.

#### **Recovery or crisis house**

A recovery house may be able to help if you are in crisis. A recovery house is a place you would stay for a few days. It is not a hospital but will have healthcare professionals there. You can only stay for a short time. Your GP or other healthcare professional has to refer you. There may not be a recovery house in your area. You can check with your crisis team, CMHT or search online to see what is available in your local area.

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### 4. How do I make a crisis plan?

A crisis plan is sometimes called a safety plan. You should make a plan before you are in crisis, but it is never too late to start. You may need someone to help you to make a crisis plan such as a friend or support worker.

The aim of a crisis plan is to think about what support you need when you are in crisis. You could make a list of things that you could do to help yourself. You can write down the names and numbers of people who would be able to help you. You may find it helpful to include the good things in your life or things that you are looking forward to as part of the plan.

There is no set way for how a crisis plan should look. There is a crisis plan template at the end of this factsheet which you can use.

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FURTHER  
READING

Mary Ellen Copeland, PhD. ***Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Plus. Formerly living without Depression and Manic Depression.*** Dummerston, Vermont: Peach Press; 2010.

### **Samaritans**

They have a national helpline which gives confidential emotional support for people who are distressed. Local branches offer telephone support and sometimes face to face support.

**Telephone:** 116 123 (Open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week)

**Address:** Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, Chris, PO Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA

**Email:** [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**Website:** [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

USEFUL  
CONTACTS

### **C.A.L.M. (Campaign Against Living Miserably)**

This organisation are aimed at men dealing with suicidal thoughts or emotional distress. They have a national helpline, webchat and online resources for support.

**Telephone (outside London):** 0800 58 58 58 (5pm to midnight, 7 days per week)

**Telephone (London):** 0808 802 5858 (5pm to midnight, 7 days per week)

**Webchat:** [through the website](#)

**Address:** CALM, PO Box 68766, London SE1P 4JZ

**Website:** [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

### **Sane**

They run a national, out-of-hours helpline. They offer emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness. This includes family, friends and carers.

**Telephone:** 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm to 10.30pm 7 days per week)

**Website:** [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

### **SupportLine**

They offer confidential emotional support to everyone by telephone, email and post. They can talk to you about any issue. They have details of counsellors, agencies and support groups in the UK.

**Telephone:** 01708 765200 (hours change, ring to find out)

**Address:** PO Box 2860, Romford, Essex RM7 1JA

**E-mail:** [info@supportline.org.uk](mailto:info@supportline.org.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.supportline.org.uk/>

### **Switchboard – LGBT + Helpline**

Switchboard gives practical and emotional support for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people. You can talk to them about any issue.

**Telephone:** 0300 330 0630 (open 10am – 11pm)

**E-mail:** [chris@switchboard.lgbt](mailto:chris@switchboard.lgbt)

**Webchat:** [through the website](#)

**Website:** [www.switchboard.lgbt](http://www.switchboard.lgbt)

### **Maytree, Sanctuary for the suicidal**

Maytree may be able to give you somewhere to stay for a few nights and someone to talk to. They are a non-medical service. You can self-refer or be referred by a health professional.

**Telephone:** 020 7263 7070

**Address:** 72 Moray Road, Finsbury Park, London, N4 3LG

**Email:** [maytree@maytree.org.uk](mailto:maytree@maytree.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.maytree.org.uk](http://www.maytree.org.uk)

### **PAPYRUS**

This is a national charity which helps to stop young suicide. They run HOPELineUK. HOPELineUK give practical advice and information to:

- children, teenagers and young people up to the age of 35 who are worried about how they are feeling, and
- anyone who is concerned about a young person.

**Telephone:** 0800 068 41 41 (open Mon-Fri: 10am to 10pm, weekends: 2pm to 10pm & bank holidays: 2pm to 5pm)

**SMS:** 07786 209697

**Address:** 67 Bewsey Street, Warrington, Cheshire WA2 7JQ

**Email:** [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

**Website:** [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

### **Childline**

Childline gives advice and support for children and young people coping with distress.

**Telephone:** 0800 11 11 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days per week)  
(freephone)

**E-mail:** <http://www.childline.org.uk/Talk/Pages/Email.aspx>

**Webchat:** [through the website](#)

**Website:** [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**The Mix (it was Get Connected)**

They offer a free, confidential helpline service for young people under 25.

**Telephone:** 0808 808 4994 (Open 11am – 11pm 7 days a week)

**E-mail:** [www.getconnected.org.uk/email-us/](http://www.getconnected.org.uk/email-us/)

**Telephone Counselling:** [through the website](#)

**Webchat:** [through the website](#).

**Website:** [www.getconnected.org.uk](http://www.getconnected.org.uk)





**List three people you can call if you are feeling suicidal**

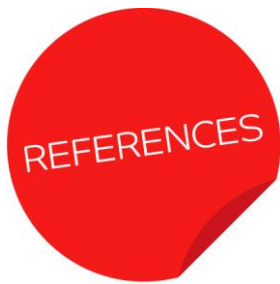
Name	Telephone number

**1. List ten things you could do to help yourself**

	For example. Call the Samaritans.
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

## Crisis Plan

<b>Who can help me and how?</b>	<b>Who can I call?:</b>  <b>Friend</b>  <b>Professional</b>  <b>Helpline</b>	<b>What would I say to someone else in my situation?</b>
<b>Where can I go that I feel safe?</b>	<b>What have I done before that's worked?</b>	<b>If the suicidal feelings won't go away what should I do?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Go to A&amp;E</b></li><li>• <b>Call 999</b></li></ul>
<b>What can I do to distract myself?</b>	<b>What things make me feel worse that I should avoid?</b>	<b>Any other helpful thoughts, ideas.</b>



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- <sup>1</sup>Public Health Agency. *Know ...the effects of alcohol*. [www.knowyourlimits.info/know%E2%80%A6-effects-alcohol](http://www.knowyourlimits.info/know%E2%80%A6-effects-alcohol) (Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016).
- <sup>2</sup> National Institute for Health. *Alcohol's Affects on the Body* [www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alcohols-effects-body](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alcohols-effects-body) (Accessed 19th May 2016).
- <sup>3</sup> National Institute for Health: National Institute on drug addiction. *Drugs, brains and behaviour: The science of addiction*. [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain) (Accessed on 19th May 2016).
- <sup>4</sup> NHS Choices. *The affects of drugs*. [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/drugs/Pages/Drugsoverview.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/drugs/Pages/Drugsoverview.aspx) (Accessed 19th May 2016).
- <sup>5</sup> NHS Choices. *Suicide - Causes* <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/suicide/Pages/Causes.aspx> (Accessed 21st July 2016)
- <sup>6</sup> Royal college of psychiatrists. *Physical Activity and Mental Health*. [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/physicalactivity.aspx?theme=mobile](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/physicalactivity.aspx?theme=mobile) (Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016).
- <sup>7</sup> As note 6.
- <sup>8</sup> National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. *Depression in adults: recognition and management*, CG90. London, The Stationery Office; Published 28<sup>th</sup> October 2009, last updated April 2016. Para 1.10.2.1.

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This factsheet is available  
in large print.



## Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service

Phone 0300 5000 927

Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm  
(excluding bank holidays)

Email [advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org)

### Did this help?

We'd love to know if this information helped you.

Drop us a line at: [feedback@rethink.org](mailto:feedback@rethink.org)

or write to us at Rethink Mental Illness:

RAIS  
PO Box 17106  
Birmingham B9 9LL

or call us on 0300 5000 927.

We're open 9:30am to 4pm  
Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)



Leading the way to a better  
quality of life for everyone  
affected by severe mental illness.

For further information  
on Rethink Mental Illness  
Phone 0121 522 7007  
Email [info@rethink.org](mailto:info@rethink.org)



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[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

### Need more help?

Go to [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org) for information on symptoms, treatments, money and benefits and your rights.

### Don't have access to the web?

Call us on 0121 522 7007. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and we will send you the information you need in the post.

### Need to talk to an adviser?

If you need practical advice, call us on 0300 5000 927 between 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Our specialist advisers can help you with queries like how to apply for benefits, get access to care or make a complaint.

### Can you help us to keep going?

We can only help people because of donations from people like you. If you can donate please go to [www.rethink.org/donate](http://www.rethink.org/donate) or call 0121 522 7007 to make a gift. We are very grateful for all our donors' generous support.



Rethink Mental Illness is a partner in:

**time to change**

let's end mental health discrimination