

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 support 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 or crisis box?](#)

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 4](#) of this factsheet gives more information about how to make a crisis plan.

Look in your crisis box

A crisis box is personal to you and should be filled with items that make you feel happier about life.

If you don't have a crisis box you can make one. [Section 4](#) of this factsheet gives more information about how to make a crisis box.

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.

You could create a Wellness Action Plan to help you to be more self-aware. It can help you to identify triggers in your life which can make you unwell. It may help you to write down your triggers. If you can understand what your triggers are, it can help you to be more in control of your feelings or stress levels.

You can share your Wellness Action Plan with your family or friends if you want to. Sometimes it is helpful to share with your family and friends because it can help them to understand you more.

Click the below link to see an example of a Wellness Action Plan.
<http://webstore.cwp.nhs.uk/publications/WRAP.pdf>

Stay away from drugs and alcohol

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

Drugs affect the way you think and feel.² 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.³ Other drugs can cause hallucinations, confusion and paranoia. You may be more likely to take your own life if you take illegal drugs.

Go to a safe place

Go to a place where you feel safe. Below is a list of places 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, family or your GP.

Remember to be patient. Your friends and family may want to help but might not know how to straight away. 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, use an emotional support app or use an online support group.

You can find details of emotional support lines and apps at the end of this factsheet.

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 doing.

Below are some things you could do as a distraction.

- Read a book or magazine.
- Watch a film or TV.
- Go to a museum.
- Draw or paint.
- Listen to music.
- Play videogames. Or other games or puzzles you enjoy.
- Singing.
- 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.⁴ These are 'feel good' hormones.

Relax

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

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

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.

But some people find that using mediation or mindfulness makes their suicidal thoughts worse. If this happens then stop.

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

Breathing exercise for you to try

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.

Think about the people you will be leaving behind

You may be thinking thoughts such as the following.

- ‘The world would be a better place without me.’
- ‘My family would be better without me.’
- ‘No one would care if I’m not here.’

These thoughts are common, but not correct. **You matter.**

Choosing to end your life is likely to have a negative effect on those around you. Even if you don’t think it will. This may be friends, family, neighbours or it may be a healthcare professional such as a doctor or support worker.

You can find more information about ‘**Complementary and alternative treatments**’ at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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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 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.⁵

Crisis team or home treatment team

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

In some areas you can call the crisis team without a referral from a professional. You can search for your local crisis team online.

Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)

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

In some areas you can call the CMHT without a referral from a professional. You can search for your local CMHT online.

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 whilst you are in crisis. Some recovery houses let you stay for a few days. Some let you stay for a few weeks. It is not a hospital but there will be healthcare professionals onsite.

Usually your GP or other healthcare professional will have 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.

Charities

Some charities offer emotional support services or support groups. They help by listening to someone's concerns and giving them space and time to talk through how they feel. Emotional support services are not the same as counselling services.

You can find details of emotional support services at the end of this factsheet.

Rethink Mental Illness have support groups in some areas. You can find out what is available in your area by following this link:

www.rethink.org/about-us/our-support-groups.

Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them for details of local rethink services.

You can find support groups by doing an online search or contacting national mental health charities such as:

- Mind
- Richmond Fellowship
- Together
- Turning point

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4. How do I make a crisis plan or crisis box?

Crisis plan

A crisis plan is sometimes called a safety plan. A plan should be made 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.

Crisis box

A crisis box has lots of different names such as a 'happy box' or 'hope box.' You can call it whatever you like. The idea of a crisis box is that it is filled with items that make you feel better. You can use it when you feel anxious, stressed or suicidal.

The crisis box is personal to you. You can fill it with anything, such as:

- your favourite CD,
- something to distract you, like a puzzle or colouring book,
- reminders of positive things you have learnt in therapy sessions,
- a copy of your crisis plan,
- photographs of people you love and who make you happy, or
- your favourite sweets.

If you don't know what to put in your box you can look on line for ideas.

The charity Papyrus has more information about crisis boxes. Click the below link for more information:

papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/HOPEBOX-resource.pdf

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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.

Useful
Contacts

Sane

A charity offering 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 daily)

Textline: available through their website

Website: www.sane.org.uk

Samaritans

A charity that offers emotional support for people who are distressed. Local branches offer telephone support and sometimes face to face support.

Telephone: 116 123 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

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

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Website: www.samaritans.org

Shout

A charity that provides support if you're experiencing a personal crisis and are unable to cope.

Text: text **shout** to 85258

SupportLine

Support line offers confidential emotional support by telephone, email and post.

Telephone: 01708 765200 (hours vary, ring them for details)

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

E-mail: info@supportline.org.uk

Website: www.supportline.org.uk/

PAPYRUS

Charity that offer emotional support to people under 35 who are suicidal. They can also support people who are concerned about someone under 35 who might be suicidal.

Telephone: 0800 068 41 41 (Monday to Friday 9am - 10pm.
Weekends and bank holidays 2pm - 10pm)

Text: 07786 209697

Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

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

A charity that offers emotional support, advice and information to men who are feeling suicidal and their families.

Telephone for outside London: 0800 58 58 58(5pm – midnight, every day of the year)

Telephone for inside London: 0808 802 5858 (5pm – midnight, every day of the year)

Webchat: through the website

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Switchboard

Switchboard gives practical and emotional support for people in the LGBT+ community.

Telephone: 0300 330 0630 (10am – 10pm every day)

E-mail: chris@switchboard.lgbt

Webchat: [through the website](#)

Website: www.switchboard.lgbt

The Mix

A charity offering support to people under 25. They also offer telephone counselling, webchat and crisis text.

Telephone: 0808 808 4994 (4pm – 11pm every day)

Crisis support: text **THEMIX** to 85258 for crisis support (24 hours a day, every day)

E-mail: [through the website](#)

Telephone Counselling: [through the website](#)

Webchat: 1 to 1 chat service [through the website](#)

Website: www.themix.org.uk

NAPAC

Support adult survivors of childhood abuse.

Telephone: 0808 801 0331. (Monday – Thursday 10am – 9pm and Friday 10am – 6pm)

E-mail: through the website. <https://napac.org.uk/contact/>

Address: NAPAC, CAN Mezzanine, 7-14 Great Dover St, London, SE1 4YR

Website: www.napac.org.uk

Combat Stress

Charity who offer support to ex-service men and women who are experiencing problems with their mental health. And their families.

Telephone for veterans and their families: 0800 138 1619. Open 24 hours everyday.

Telephone for serving personnel and their families: 0800 323 4444. Open 24 hours everyday,

Helpline text: 07537 404719

Address: Tyrwhitt House, Oaklawn Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0BX

Email: helpline@combatstress.org.uk

Website: www.combatstress.org.uk

Apps

Stay Alive: Health and fitness App - free

The Stay Alive app is a suicide prevention resource for the UK. It has useful information and tools to help you stay safe in crisis. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide. Or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide.

Website: www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/stay_alive_suicide_prevention_mobile_phone_application.html

Headspace

Headspace is designed to help you to manage your mental health. You can access the app for free, you will have access to basic packages. You will have to pay a subscription to access more content.

E-mail: help@headspace.com

Website: www.headspace.com

Smiling Mind

Free meditation app.

Website: www.smilingmind.com.au

Residential support

Maytree

Maytree is a national registered charity based in London. They provide a unique residential service for people in suicidal crisis so they can talk about their suicidal thoughts and behaviour. They offer a free 4 night, 5 day, one-off stay to adults over the age of 18 from across the UK. Their aim is to provide a safe, confidential, non-medical environment for their guests

Telephone: 020 7263 7070

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

Email: maytree@maytree.org.uk

Website: www.maytree.org.uk

Crisis plan example 1



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 example 2

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

References

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- ¹ National Institute for Health. *Alcohol's Affects on the Body* www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alphabets-effects-body (Accessed 16th September 2019).
- ² 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 (Accessed on 16th September 2019).
- ³ NHS Choices. *The affects of drugs*. www.nhs.uk/Livewell/drugs/Pages/Drugsoverview.aspx (Accessed 16th September 2019).
- ⁴ PMC. *Exercise Benefits Brain Function: The Monoamine Connection* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4061837/> (accessed 16th September 2019).
- ⁵ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. *Depression in adults: recognition and management*. CG90. London;Published 28th October 2009. 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

Did this help?

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

Drop us a line at: 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

 [facebook.com/rethinkcharity](https://www.facebook.com/rethinkcharity)

 twitter.com/rethink_

 www.rethink.org

Need more help?

Go to 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 or call 0121 522 7007 to make a gift. We are very grateful for all our donors' generous support.



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time to change
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