

Keeping myself safe

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Many people who have attempted or come close to suicide look back in gratitude that they were not successful in acting on their intentions. This worksheet aims to help you make more sense of your suicidal thoughts and learn strategies for surviving them. It guides you in creating a Safety Plan to help you keep yourself safe when you are at risk.

If you have made specific plans and think you may act on them imminently then it is vital that you get help now:

Ring 999 or get yourself quickly to your local hospital's A&E (accident and emergency) department, and tell them clearly that you are at risk to yourself.

If you are not on the point of acting but are concerned about a risk that you may act impulsively on suicidal thoughts use the general safety plan set out below or follow your own safety plan if you have one.

1. A general safety plan

If you are feeling actively suicidal at the moment then follow this general safety plan to keep yourself safe and get help:

- Make a deal with yourself that you will not act just yet – give yourself time to find help and work out a better solution.
- Tell someone else how you are feeling or find someone to be with you.
- If that is not possible right now, phone an all-hours contact from the list below:

Samaritans – 24hrs trained listening	T: 116 123 E: jo@samaritans.org
NHS 111 (England & Wales) T: 111 non emergency NHS 24 (Scotland) T: 111 textphone 18001 111	or phone your local GP's out of hours service
HOPEline UK – specialist suicide helpline for children, teenagers and young people up to the age of 35	T: 08000 684141 SMS: 0776 209697 E: pat@papyrus-uk.org
Get Connected – local counselling for under 25s (free from mobile phones)	T: 08088 084994
Nightline – all night student listening	www.nightline.ac.uk
International email and phone help details	www.befrienders.org

- If possible, ask someone to help you make a plan for keeping yourself safe – put dangerous items out of reach or give them to someone else to look after for you.
- Make a concrete plan for getting professional support as soon as possible eg. plan when you will phone to make an appointment with your doctor or a counsellor, or ask someone to help you do this.
- In the meantime, do something to distract yourself from your thoughts for a while – watch TV or a DVD; read a book; write in a diary; tidy your room or sort out a pile of papers etc.

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2. A personal safety plan

If you are not at immediate risk but the depression spiral sometimes brings you low enough to consider suicide then it is worth making a personalised Safety Plan. A Safety Plan gives you something to follow step by step to remind you of support you can call upon and strategies you can use to help reduce and cope with the pain you are feeling. It gives you concrete alternatives to acting on your thoughts.

The 'Surviving suicidal thoughts' page sets out a list of the types of strategies it would be good to include. A good safety plan includes discussion with members of your support network and negotiation about what support others can and can't offer. (If you feel you don't yet have a support network use the 'Build a support network' section to consider the many options which may be available to you.)

Use the Safety Plan framework attached to devise your safety plan, then make a copy for the important people in your support network.

To support yourself in taking positive steps forward it is very helpful to write an 'implementation intention' statement, ie. give yourself a clear goal for how you will take action. Can you take an important first step and commit to filling in this intention statement right now?

My Safety Plan intention statement:

I commit to making myself a Safety Plan by _____ (date).

I will ask _____ (trusted friend, family member, counsellor) to help me make the plan.

I will ask _____ (trusted friend, family member, crisis support worker) to keep a copy.



"Don't do it! Now that I feel a bit better the suicide pact I made with myself seems like a pretty silly idea – and that's what I would have said to someone else if they'd told me about it, but I applied it differently to myself at the time." – Charlie

It will be easier to devise a good safety plan with the help of a professional like a counsellor.



"My doctor suggested writing a letter from my 'well self' to my 'suicidal self' to read at times of crisis. It was very effective to read the words coming 'from myself', with options and things that might help." – Iona

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Fill in this Safety Plan with precise details that are relevant to you for each step, then keep it somewhere where you can access it easily when you need it.

If I am feeling overwhelmed and in danger of acting on suicidal thoughts, I will do the following:	
1. I will make a deal with myself not to act on this immediately and to follow my Safety Plan to reduce the risk of acting on these thoughts. <i>(Write a clear statement using 'I' that you can read and repeat to yourself: eg. "I will help the bit of me that does want to survive." "I will give myself time to try to take care of myself and help myself feel a bit better.")</i>	
2. I will speak to myself with compassion and caring, reminding myself of ways to calm myself down and soothe myself: <i>(Write down caring things you can say to yourself, thinking about what you might say to a friend who was feeling this bad eg. "It's hard to feel this way – try to be kind to yourself." "These are just thoughts – you don't need to act on them." "Remember your breathing and relaxation techniques.")</i>	I can say:
3. I will call one of the following people: <i>(It's a good idea to save these numbers in your phone contacts under a relevant heading like 'Help'. You could also see if one or more of the listed people would agree to keep a copy of your Safety Plan and help talk you through it if necessary)</i>	Friend: (Number) _____ Parent/relative: (Number) _____ Doctor: (Number) _____ Campus Nightline: (Number) _____ Samaritans: T: 08457 90 90 90 E: jo@samaritans.org HOPEline UK: T: 0800 068 41 41 SMS: 0776 209 697 E: pat@papyrus-uk.org Get Connected: T: 0808 808 4994 Other: (Number) _____
4. I will make myself safe from acting impulsively by: <i>(Write down what you can do to make it more difficult for you to harm yourself eg. not drinking alcohol or taking any drugs while you are feeling this way, also note who you can give medication stockpiles to, what items should be kept locked away, who you can call in an emergency to help you keep yourself safe.)</i>	I will _____ I will _____ I will _____ I will _____

5. Other people can help me by: <i>(Write down reminders of the kind of help you can ask other people for eg. keeping me company or letting me come over, being in touch with me online, taking away dangerous items for safe-keeping)</i>	
6. I will choose something from my list of self-soothing distractions and focus on it for at least 20 minutes: <i>(eg. watch TV or a light-hearted DVD; read a book; write in a diary; tidy my room; have a soothing bath; go for a walk with upbeat music on my mp3 player; focus on my breathing or listen to a relaxation or mindfulness mp3; etc – see ‘Taking care of myself’ for more self-soothing ideas)</i>	My self-soothing list: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____
7. I will remind myself of my coping statements and what has helped me before: <i>(Write down one or more coping statements that you can repeat to yourself: eg. “I have survived so far, and I will make a commitment to surviving for another hour/day.” “These are just thoughts – I don’t have to act on them.” “This feeling will pass.”)</i>	
8. If I still feel suicidal and at risk a safe place I can go to is: <i>(Write down places you may be able to go if you still feel at risk eg. friend who has agreed to be available – check limits to this; halls welfare officer; campus emergency support services; nearest A&E remembering to tell them you feel you are a danger to yourself)</i>	
9. Any other thoughts of my own that might help me when I’m low:	

