

Learning About Making a Suicide Safety Plan



Overview

A safety plan is a set of steps you can take when you feel suicidal. It includes your warning signs, coping strategies, and people to ask for support. You can write your own safety plan or use a free phone app. But it's best to work with a therapist to make your plan.

How can you make and use your plan?

If you feel like you can't keep from hurting yourself or someone else, get help right away. Call **911**.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

Having a safety plan is important for anyone who thinks about suicide. It can help you (or someone you care about) get safely through times of crisis. If possible, try to make your plan during a time when you aren't in a crisis so it's ready when you need it.

To use the plan, move through it step-by-step. So first, check your warning signs. Then try your own coping strategies. If those don't help, move through the rest of the steps until you have the help you need to get through the crisis.

Here's how to make a safety plan.

1. Make a list of your crisis warning signs.
What happens when you start to think about suicide? Make a list of your warning signs—the things you think, feel, or do when you start to feel suicidal.
2. List your personal coping strategies.
What can you do or think about to avoid acting when you feel suicidal? This may include your reason(s) to live. Rank these ideas by how well you think they'll work. What might keep you from using them? What might make you more likely to use them?
3. Come up with some sources of support and distraction.
Think of people and places that could help shift your attention away from painful feelings or thoughts of dying. This may include children you care about or a safe social space, like a coffee shop or a bookstore.
4. Make a list of people you can count on for help.
Think about who you could contact in a crisis. Who do you trust and confide in? Who is always there when you need them? This might be a friend, a family member, or someone else, like a caregiver or pastor. If no one comes to mind, that's okay. Be sure you have some professional support, such as a doctor or counselor.
5. List your professional sources of support.
This may include your doctor or therapist, local emergency rooms, and local crisis hotlines.
6. Think through ways to keep yourself safe.
Do you have weapons or other means to hurt yourself? Consider how to limit your access to them. For example, if you have a gun, maybe you could ask a friend or family member to lock it up for you.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel you cannot stop from hurting yourself or someone else.

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Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have one or more warning signs of suicide. For example, call if:
 - You feel like giving away your possessions.
 - You use illegal drugs or drink alcohol heavily.
 - You talk or write about death. This may include writing suicide notes and talking about guns, knives, or pills.

- You start to spend a lot of time alone or spend more time alone than usual.
- You hear voices.
- You start acting in an aggressive way that's not normal for you.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

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