

Creating a Suicide Safety Plan

Worries and anxiety about COVID and its impact can be overwhelming. Social distancing makes it even more challenging. Learn ways to cope during this pandemic. The COVID pandemic has likely brought many changes to how you live your life, and with it uncertainty, altered daily routines, financial pressures and social isolation. You might feel depressed. .

If you have depression, the emotional pain that has triggered these thoughts may feel overwhelming, **does not mean that you will lose control** or act on your thoughts. In fact, having a suicide safety plan in place is one method you can use to cope with your bad feelings until circumstances change.

Information to Include

Your suicide safety plan should include several steps and be written in the order presented below. AN EXAMPLE OF EACH STEP IS PROVIDED TO HELP YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT STEP MEANS FOR YOU.

When to Use the Plan

The first step in creating your suicide safety plan is to familiarize yourself with the types of situations, images, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that might precede or accompany suicidal urges for you.

List these warning signs so that you can refer back to them when deciding whether to activate your plan. It's also helpful to familiarize yourself with some of the risk factors for suicide in order to recognize these warning signs if present.

A warning sign could be that you tend to isolate yourself and not take good care of your health when you get depressed.

How to Calm/Comfort Yourself

Create a list of activities that can be soothing to you when you're upset.

If you can't think of any examples off-hand, you may wish to brainstorm and try some mind-body methods that have helped others such as breathing exercises or body scan meditation. Or take a look at the different ways to reduce stress to see if any methods might be helpful for you. A few self-soothing ideas to consider: taking a hot bath, listening music, or exercising.

List Reasons for Living

Create a list of your reasons for living. When you are feeling suicidal, it is very easy to get caught up in the pain you are feeling and forget the positives in your life. Your list will help you refocus your attention on the reasons to keep going until your suicidal thoughts and feelings pass.

Some people with or without depression find that keeping a gratitude journal is helpful. If you find yourself feeling suicidal, looking at what you have written may help you focus on the positives in your life until the feelings pass.

Consider writing about blessings like your family, friends, dog, health, or faith.

Trusted Contact Information

Keep a list of contacts you can talk to if you are unable to distract yourself with self-help measures. List names, phone numbers, or other contact information, and be sure to have backups in case your first or second choices are unavailable.

Your list of trusted contacts may include your significant other, friends, relatives, or your religious leader.

Professional Assistance Resources

Create a list of all professional resources available to you, along with their phone numbers, email addresses, and other pertinent contact information. This is also a good place to keep a number for a crisis hotline such as the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK** (800-273-8255).

Members of your professional health care team can include your psychiatrist and your therapist as well as a crisis hotline.

If you haven't yet seen a mental health professional, take a moment to learn about the different types of therapists who care for people with depression, and make an appointment today.

Make Your Environment Safe

Plan what steps you can take to make yourself safe. This may involve removing or securing any items that you are likely to use to hurt yourself, or going to another location until the urges have passed. It may also involve getting another person involved to help you.

If you feel like hurting yourself, you might plan to go to a public place like a mall, restaurant, or library to distract yourself. Or if you are feeling suicidal, you might ask someone to keep your gun at their house.

When a Suicide Safety Plan Isn't Enough

If all other steps have failed to keep you feeling safe, go to your nearest hospital emergency room and ask for assistance.

Keep the name, address, and directions to the hospital listed in your plan for easy access or save it in your GPS.

If you do not feel that you can get to the hospital safely on your own, call 911 or the emergency contact number appropriate for where you live and ask for transport to the hospital.

What to Do If a Friend Is Suicidal

Many people with depression have friends who are coping with similar challenges. This could be a friend you have met in a depression support group, or simply a friend or family member you have known for a long time. After all, depression is common.

After you have completed your own safety plan, encourage others who are coping with depression to create a plan for themselves.

How to Use a Suicide Safety Plan

If you begin to experience any of the warning signs of suicide listed in your suicide safety plan, proceed through the steps you have previously outlined for yourself, one by one, until you are feeling safe again. An exception would be if you are feeling out of control and are strongly thinking of suicide. In that case, it is best to call either a trusted friend who can be with you immediately or 911.

While you will likely have your suicide safety plan in your home, there are now smartphone safety plan apps that you can take with you anywhere. These apps may be of particular benefit for younger people and those in regions where suicide support options are lacking.