



We exist to ensure that people do not face mental health issues alone and can lead their lives free from stigma and discrimination.



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In an emergency - always call 999 or visit A&E.

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How to

support someone who
feels suicidal

What are **SUICIDAL FEELINGS?**

Suicidal feelings can mean having abstract thoughts about ending your life or feeling that people would be better off without you. Or it can mean thinking about methods of suicide or making clear plans to take your own life.

The type of suicidal feelings people have varies person to person, in particular in terms of:

- **How intense they are**

suicidal feelings are more overwhelming for some people than others. They can build up gradually or be intense from the start. They can be more or less severe at different times and may change quickly.

- **How long they last**

suicidal feelings sometimes pass quickly, but may still be very intense. They may come and go, or last for a long time.



My own thoughts are driven by the desire to want this pain and suffering that I feel inside to cease. I feel my husband and children are better off without me. I feel worthless and undeserving of their love and affection. I don't see the person they do.



WHO IS AT *risk* **OF SUICIDE?**

Anyone can have suicidal feelings, whatever their background or situation in life. Suicidal feelings have a wide range of possible causes. They can be a symptom of an existing mental health problem or episode of mental distress, or sometimes a side effect of psychiatric or other medication. People may also experience suicidal feelings because of traumatic life events. When someone is feeling suicidal it is important to be aware of any medications

they are taking which might be causing or aggravating these feelings. To find out more about side effects of specific medications talk to your GP or contact NHS 111 in England or NHS 111 Wales in Wales.



What to include in a support plan?

Below are some examples of questions you could include in a support plan for somebody you want to help. Remember, it is a plan for the person who feels suicidal to fill in, so these suggested questions are written from their point of view

EXAMPLE SUPPORT PLAN:

What can I do to take care of myself?

This could include things like 'write down how I feel', 'cuddle a pet' or 'do some exercise like walking or swimming'.

How would I like to be supported?

This could include a list of names and numbers of friends, family or professionals you can contact when you need support and details of how you would like to be supported, like 'ask me how I'm feeling' or 'come to appointments with me'. It's also a good idea to list the details of helplines or peer support groups, which might include online support like Elefriends.

Who can be contacted in an emergency?

It's best to agree on what to do in an emergency, with names and numbers for crisis services. This could include things like 'call 999 for an ambulance', 'contact my Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) on...' or 'call 116 123 for Samaritans'.

HOW CAN I OFFER SOME *emotional* **SUPPORT?**

You don't need any special training to show someone you care about them. Here are some things you can do to offer emotional support:

- Listen - Simply giving someone space to talk, and listening to how they're feeling, can be really helpful in itself. If they're finding it difficult, let them know that you're there when they are ready.
- Stay calm - Even though it might be upsetting to hear that someone you care about is distressed, try to stay calm. This will help your friend or family member to feel calmer too.
- Try not to make assumptions. Your perspective might be useful to your friend or family member, but try not to assume that you already know what may have caused their feelings, or what will help.

What to do in

CASE OF EMERGENCY

If someone has already attempted suicide:

- call 999 and stay with them until the ambulance arrives.

If you are worried that someone is at immediate risk of taking their own life:

- Ring their GP or out of hours service for an emergency appointment
- Contact their CMHT if they have one
- Encourage them to ring the Samaritans (Freephone 116 123, open 24 hours a day)
- Go to your nearest A&E or Urgent Care Centre
- Call 999 for an ambulance
- Call NHS 111



It has helped me to have someone who loves me who accepts that I am feeling what I am feeling, and yet choose to remain with me quietly and encourage, but not force me, to have a sip of water or a bite of something, or go for a walk with them, etc



Helping to talk about SUICIDAL FEELINGS

If someone is feeling suicidal, talking to someone who can listen and be supportive may be their first step towards getting help. They could take to someone in their life or a professional such as a

doctor or therapist. If you feel able to listen, it could help if you could:

- **Ask open questions** - invite them to say more than yes or no answers such as "how are you feeling?" or "what happened next?"
- **Give them time** - You might feel anxious to hear the answers but it helps if you give them time they need
- **Take them seriously** - People who talk about suicide do sometimes act on their feelings so it's best to assume that they are telling the truth
- **Try not to judge** - You might be shocked or upset, but remember it is important not to blame the person for how they are feeling. They have taken a big step already by telling you
- **Don't skirt around the topic** - There is still a taboo around talking about suicide which can make it harder for the person experiencing these feelings. Direct questions about suicide can help someone talk about how they are feeling better.

Why is it safe to ask someone if they feel suicidal?

Asking someone if they feel suicidal or are planning to end their life may not feel like the right thing to do but in fact professionals do recommend asking direct questions about suicide. Some people worry that this might indirectly encourage the person who is feeling suicidal to act on their feelings, but in reality research has shown that speaking openly about suicide decreases the likelihood of the person acting on their feelings. Asking simple, direct questions can encourage them to be honest about how they are feeling. Many people feel relieved and less isolated when they are asked.



You can find yourself tiptoeing around the subject because you're scared of saying the wrong thing and you wish you could make everything better. I knew from my own experiences that being told: don't say that, or you don't mean that, doesn't help. It can help just to say that you're here and you're sorry things are hard right now. You don't have to have all the answers



LOOKING AFTER *your* WELLBEING!

When you are caring for someone else, you can find that you think a lot about their wellbeing and not about your own. It's important to take care of your own physical health and mental health, including getting enough sleep, eating regularly and doing things you enjoy or find relaxing.

Take time for yourself

It's important to remember that you are a human being with needs of your own. To be able to care for someone else, you need to take time for yourself too. It can feel easier to take time for yourself if you make a support plan with the person you are concerned about, so you know that they have:

- Things they can do to help themselves
- Other ways of getting support

Be kind to yourself

It can be hard to accept that someone close to you feels suicidal. You might feel helpless, powerless, angry, sad, shocked, frightened or a whole range of other emotions unique to your own experience - there's no right or wrong way to feel. Some people worry that they are to blame if someone else feels suicidal, or their loved one doesn't feel better, but it's important not to blame yourself for what is happening.

Find support for yourself

You could have all sorts of feelings while supporting someone who feels suicidal. It may help to talk about your feelings and worries, or get support from people who have had similar experiences. You could:

- Talk to a friend or family member
- Call a helpline
- Try talking therapy and counselling
- Join a peer support group



USEFUL CONTACTS:

Rochdale and District Mind Infoline: 01706 752338

Mind Side by Side Online Support Community: sidebyside.mind.org.uk

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably): 0800 58 58 58 support for men at risk

Carers UK: 0808 808 7777 advice and support for people caring for others

MindOut: mindout.org.uk mental health service run by and for LGBTIQ+ people

MAKING A SUPPORT PLAN.

A support plan is a list that sets out how someone would like to be supported and what they can do to help themselves in a particular situation. It can encourage them to tell you what might help. It's also a useful way of keeping important information and contacts together in one place.

How can a support plan help?

Making a support plan is a way of working out what might be helpful and recording those ideas in one place, which some people find useful. It's not a legal agreement and it doesn't mean you have to help. As well as asking someone what they might find helpful, it's important to think about what help you feel able to give. If someone wants help you don't feel you can offer, it's okay not to agree and to find other options. You could encourage the person you are concerned about to make a support plan. The support plan is for them to fill in, although you might help them do this. It can be helpful to:

- Talk together about what to include
- Ask them what has or hasn't helped before
- Write or print more than one copy
- Keep it somewhere easy to find
- Save important numbers in your phones.

You could also help them to explore other ways of finding support.

Some people can say why they feel suicidal, but in other instances there may not be a clear reason, or they may be unable to talk about what they are feeling or experiencing. If someone feels suicidal, their feelings may become more intense if they:

- Drink alcohol
- Use drugs
- Have sleep problems

Studies show that some groups experience higher rates of suicide than others. Statistics show that men and people from LGBTIQ+ communities are more likely to take their own lives. People can also be more vulnerable if they:

- Have attempted suicide before
- Have self harmed in the past
- Lost someone to suicide



I wish other people would understand that I don't want these feelings, I didn't ask for these feelings and I want them to go away, but it isn't that simple



HOW CAN I *help* SOMONE WITH SUICIDAL FEELINGS?

It can be very distressing if you are worried about someone who feels suicidal. They may have talked about wanting to end their life, or you may be concerned that they are thinking about it. You might feel unsure of what to do, but there are lots of things that might help. You could:

- Encourage them to talk about their feelings
- Encourage them to seek treatment and/or support
- Offer emotional and practical support
- Help them to think of self-help ideas and create a support plan

It may also be helpful to remove things that someone could use to harm themselves, particularly if they have mentioned specific things they might use.