

Coping with suicidal thoughts

A guide for people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts



We all have a role to play
in suicide prevention

If you are at immediate risk of
suicide call 999 for help

It is estimated that around 1 in 20 people can be experiencing suicidal thoughts at any one time.

That means that you're not alone, there are thousands of other people like you; people who might be struggling with thoughts of suicide, who, just like you, feel a whole number of different emotions.

Each person's experience of feeling suicidal is different, some people might have thoughts of ending their own life, or think that people would be better off without them, others might think about different methods of suicide or have made a plan to end their life. Thinking about suicide is not necessarily about wanting to die; it can be about not wanting to live, which is not the same thing.

Talking about suicidal thoughts

People with suicidal thoughts often find themselves struggling with the situation that they are currently in and that they can't see a way out.

Talking with someone can help to unload some of the feelings that you are having and you might feel better for bringing them into the open.

Telling someone that you are feeling suicidal can be something that you are worried about but it's important to find a person to talk to who will really listen to what it is being said and not try to suggest solutions.

There are hundreds of people living and working in the Scottish Borders who have been trained to talk with people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts, and many more people who are already great listeners so you may well find that you know someone who is supportive.



There are also emotional support helplines listed on the back of the leaflet that you can call if you would find it easier to talk to someone you don't know.

There are also things you can do to help yourself cope.

Focus on today



If you are having suicidal thoughts try to focus on what will keep you safe that day, for the next few hours or even few minutes. You don't need to act on your thoughts right now and there are things you can do to keep yourself safe. Agree with yourself not to end your life today. You should remove anything that you could use to harm yourself or ask someone else to remove them. It's also best to stay away from drugs and alcohol as these can make you feel worse.

Try to think about what has kept you safe in the past or do something that you enjoy doing or that might be a distraction, this could be as simple as pairing socks, watching and listening to the birds out of your window or tearing up a piece of paper into tiny pieces. You may have a place that you feel safe that you could go to such as your bedroom, spending time in the garden or connecting with others online.


Build on your coping strategies


There are things that you can do to help to support your mental wellbeing and that can help you if you feel suicidal, some ideas are below:


- ☒ Make a list of the positive things about your life. Everyday try to write down something positive that happened and store them in a jar. You can read these whenever you're feeling low.
- ☒ Exercising and eating healthily can help to support your wellbeing. Find an exercise that you enjoy and can take part in regularly and set yourself a goal of increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables that you eat.
- ☒ Try to identify if there are any triggers that make you feel worse and do your best to avoid these.
- ☒ Many people find mindfulness or breathing techniques a useful way of coping with distress. These techniques help you to focus on the present moment and become more calm.
- ☒ If you have overcome suicidal thoughts before try capturing what helped in a journal so that you can look back at it if you find yourself experiencing suicidal thoughts again.

Support for suicidal thoughts

Some people find that talking with friends and family about their feelings can be a real source of support for coping with suicidal thoughts. It might be helpful for you to map your support network, and think about people you could call if you're feeling suicidal. Other people may prefer to seek more professional support or call a helpline.


Talk to your GP  Your GP can support you and discuss whether medication or referral to specialist support services might be helpful.


NHS 24 Mental Health Hub  **111** (24hrs/day) For those in need of urgent psychological or emotional support. The Mental Health Hub also have a direct referral Pathway to the Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) programme. DBI provides an 'ask once - get help fast' early intervention for people in distress/emotional pain and who do not need urgent medical or clinical treatment.

Samaritans  **116 123** (24hrs/day) or email jo@samaritans.org
Provides confidential emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide. Calls are free. www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space  **0800 83 85 87** (Mon–Thurs: 6 pm – 2 am, Fri: 6 pm–Mon 6 am) A free, confidential helpline for anyone experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression, or who is unusually worried and needs someone to talk to. www.breathingspace.scot

SHOUT: Crisis text line  **85258** (24 hrs/day) Texts are free.

Stay Alive App  Download on the App Store or Google Play. The App is full of useful information and tools to help you stay safe in a crisis.

Wellbeing Point  You can find more information about improving your wellbeing in our Six Ways to Be Well resources and on the Wellbeing Point at www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/wellbeingpoint

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