

My Safety Plan

When people are distressed it can be difficult for them to pin-point what would help to make them feel better. People can also find it hard to think about how best to keep themselves safe. This safety plan is designed to be a way of thinking ahead of time about what might be useful for you. Then, if you become distressed, you can follow the steps of the safety plan you have written until you feel safer.

This form can be used to help you plan for times when you have strong thoughts, feelings or urges to harm yourself or for when you have strong thoughts, feelings or urges to end your life. It might be helpful to spend some time thinking about when the safety plan would be most appropriate, and work best, for you.

This form can be completed on your own, or with support from a trusted friend or family member, health care professional, or support worker. If it is difficult to think of an answer for a step just now, that is okay – you can come back to it later.

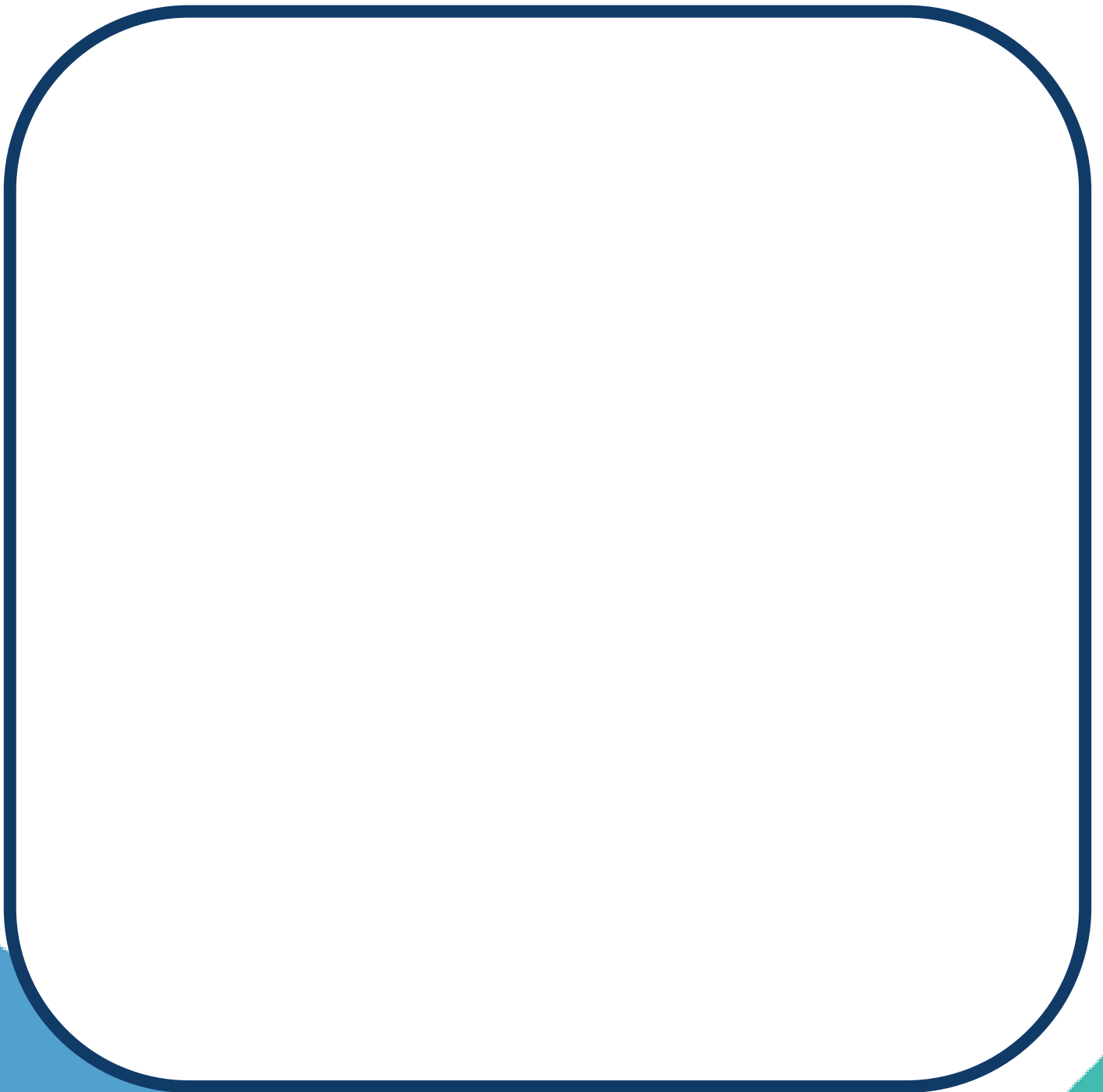
As well as thinking about what you may be able to do yourself, there is also space for you to provide information about how people can best support you when you feel distressed.

Different things might help you at different times. It might be useful to use the scale below to think about what helps you and when. You can label the scale with whatever makes most sense to you (e.g., calm at '0' to very distressed at '100', no self-harm thoughts at '0' to suicidal thoughts at '100'). We have used 0-100 as an example, but you can use any scale that feel right to you. We have provided more examples in the safety plan resource pack. In steps 1-4 of the safety plan you can think about what helps at different points on your scale.



What is important to me?

Please use this space to write about what is important to you. This might be something meaningful to you that you can focus on when you feel unsafe. You may also like to attach a photo to this form (e.g., of a special person, a pet, something related to a hobby or interest, a poem, a song) or write a message to yourself.



Step 1 - What are my warning signs that I may start to have strong thoughts, feelings or urges to hurt myself and/or end my life?

(e.g., reduced enjoyment in a strong interest, change in routine, change in patterns of sleep, eating, mood)

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a dark blue border, intended for writing answers. To its left is a vertical bar with four colored segments: light blue, medium blue, dark blue, and darkest blue. The bottom of the page features abstract geometric shapes in blue and teal.

Step 2 - What can I do to help distract myself?

(e.g., engage in a particular activity or interest, a relaxation technique, or physical activity)

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a dark blue border, intended for writing notes. To its left is a vertical bar with four colored segments: light blue, medium blue, dark blue, and darkest blue. The bottom of the page features abstract blue and teal geometric shapes.

Step 3 - People I can contact to ask for help:

(e.g., family, friends, mentor, support worker)

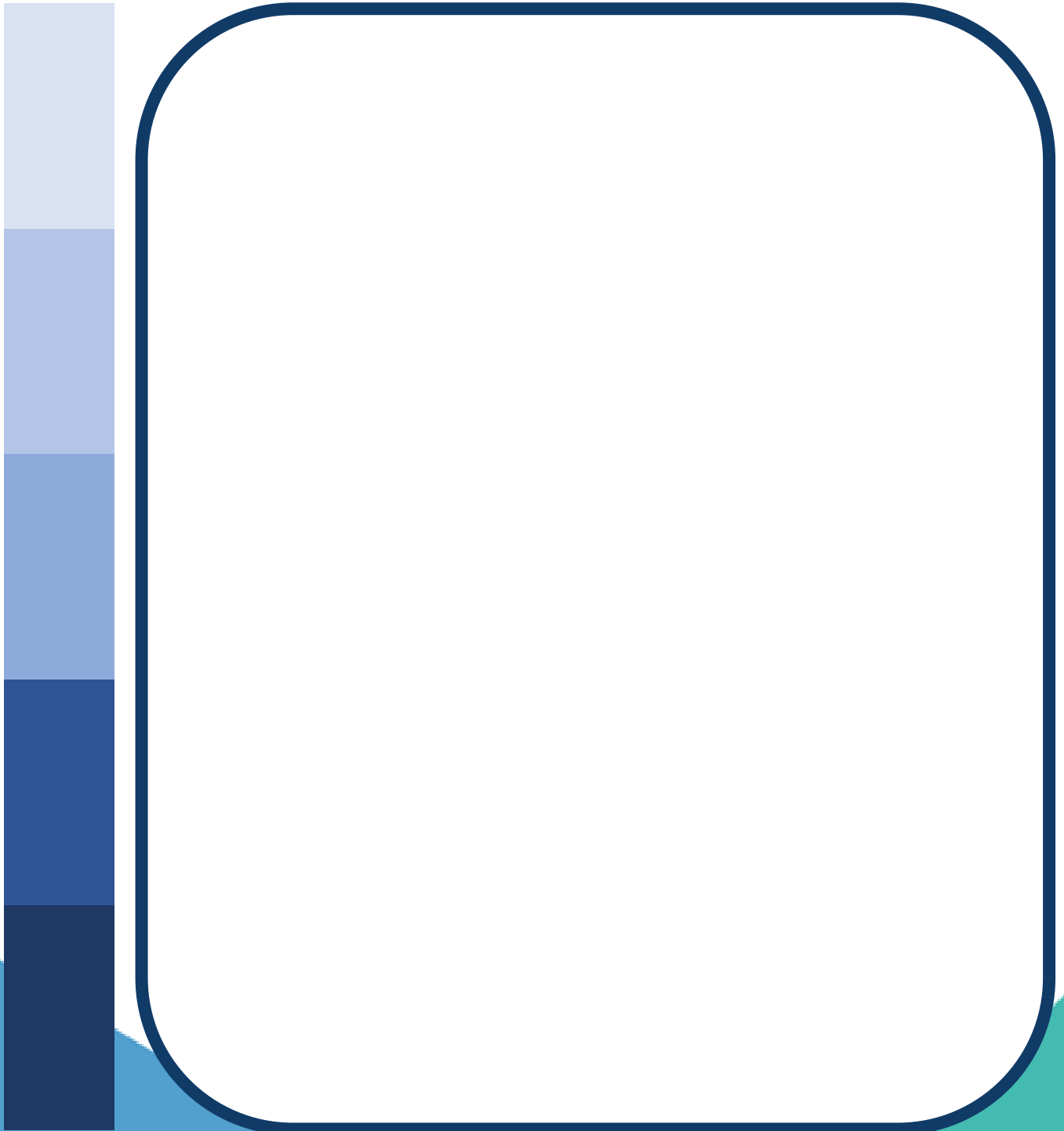
Remember to note down when people are, or are not, available (e.g., office hours).

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a dark blue border, intended for notes. It occupies the right two-thirds of the page, below the text instructions. The box is currently empty, providing space for the user to write down the names of people they can contact for help and their availability.

Step 4 - Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis:

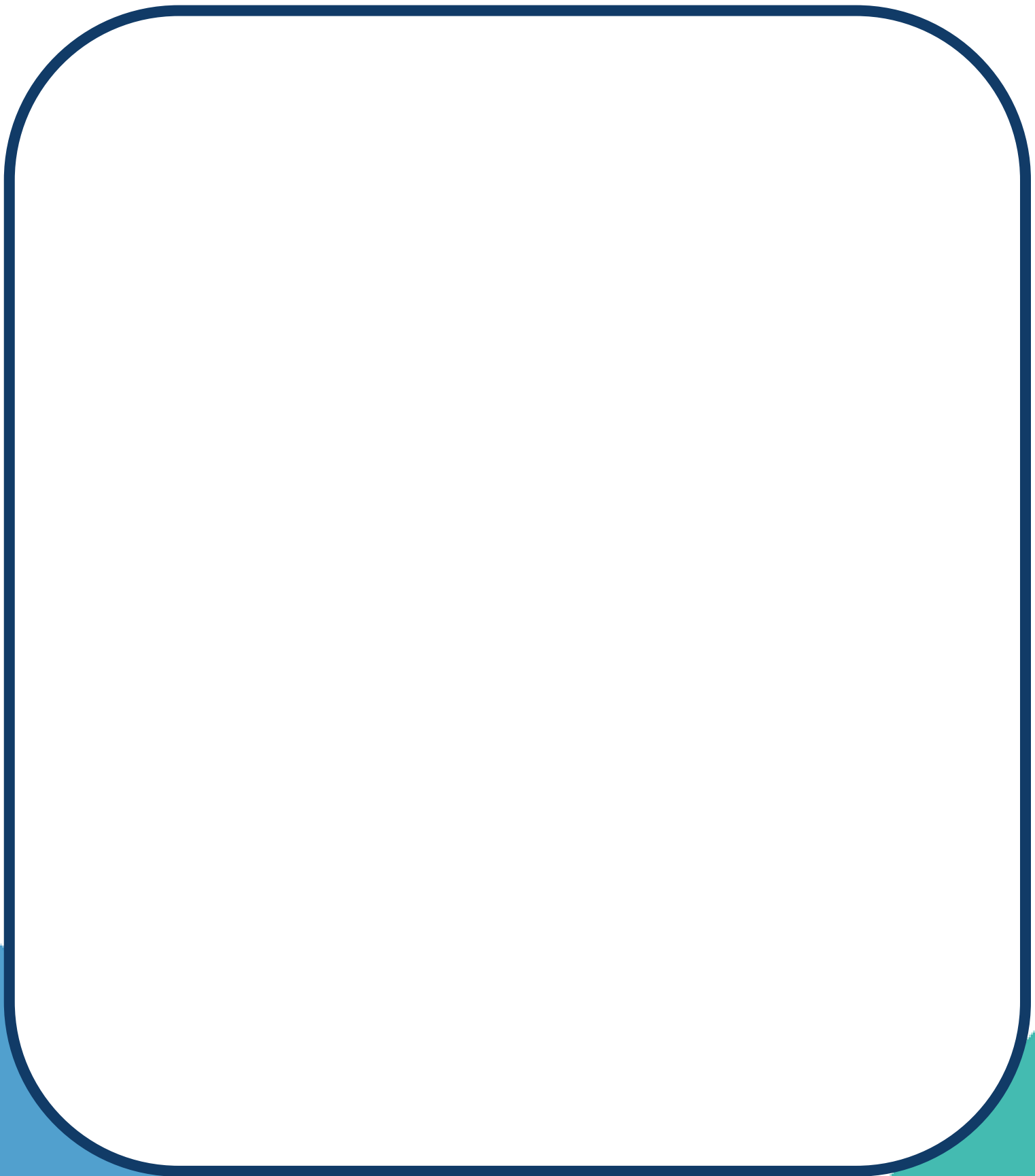
(e.g., Samaritans, Mind, A & E, Psychiatric Services)

Remember to note down when people are, or are not, available (e.g., opening hours).



Step 5 - What can I do to make the environment around myself safer?

(e.g., throwing away things that could be used to harm yourself)

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a dark blue border, intended for writing answers. The rectangle is centered on the page and occupies most of the vertical space below the header.

Step 6 - How can other people help support me?

How do I communicate distress?

(e.g., I shut down, I have a meltdown)

What stresses me/makes me unhappy?

(e.g., loud noises, being touched, change of plan, too much information)

What can help calm me/makes me happy?

(e.g., a strong interest, a quiet safe place to calm down, just sitting with me, giving me my own space)

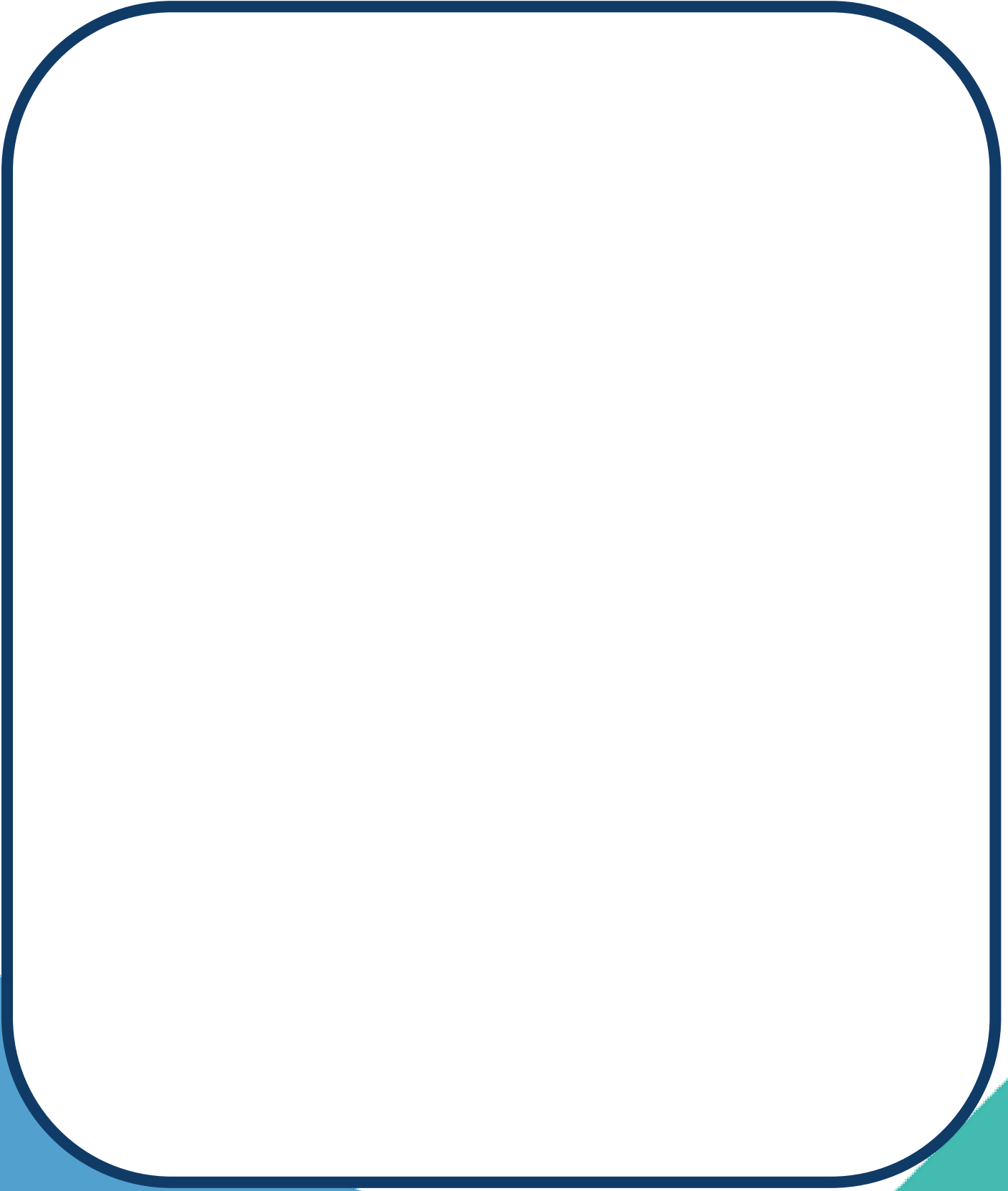
How I would like you to communicate with me?

(e.g., don't ask me to look you in the eye, speak softly, use visual supports, use plain English, keep in mind that I may take what you say literally)

Who I would like you to contact?

Step 7 – Sharing my safety plan:

It can be helpful to share your safety plan. This might be with a trusted friend or family member, health care professional, or support worker. Would you like to share your safety plan? Who would you like to share it with?



Storing my safety plan:

It can be helpful to think about where you will keep your safety plan so that you can easily access it if you need it (e.g., printed out, in my bag, in a 'crisis box', on my phone). It might also be useful to think of any prompts that could help you to remember to use your plan (e.g., having a card with the safety planning logo in it in your wallet to remind you that you have a safety plan).

My Safety Plan – Resource Kit

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How do I feel?

List of emotions

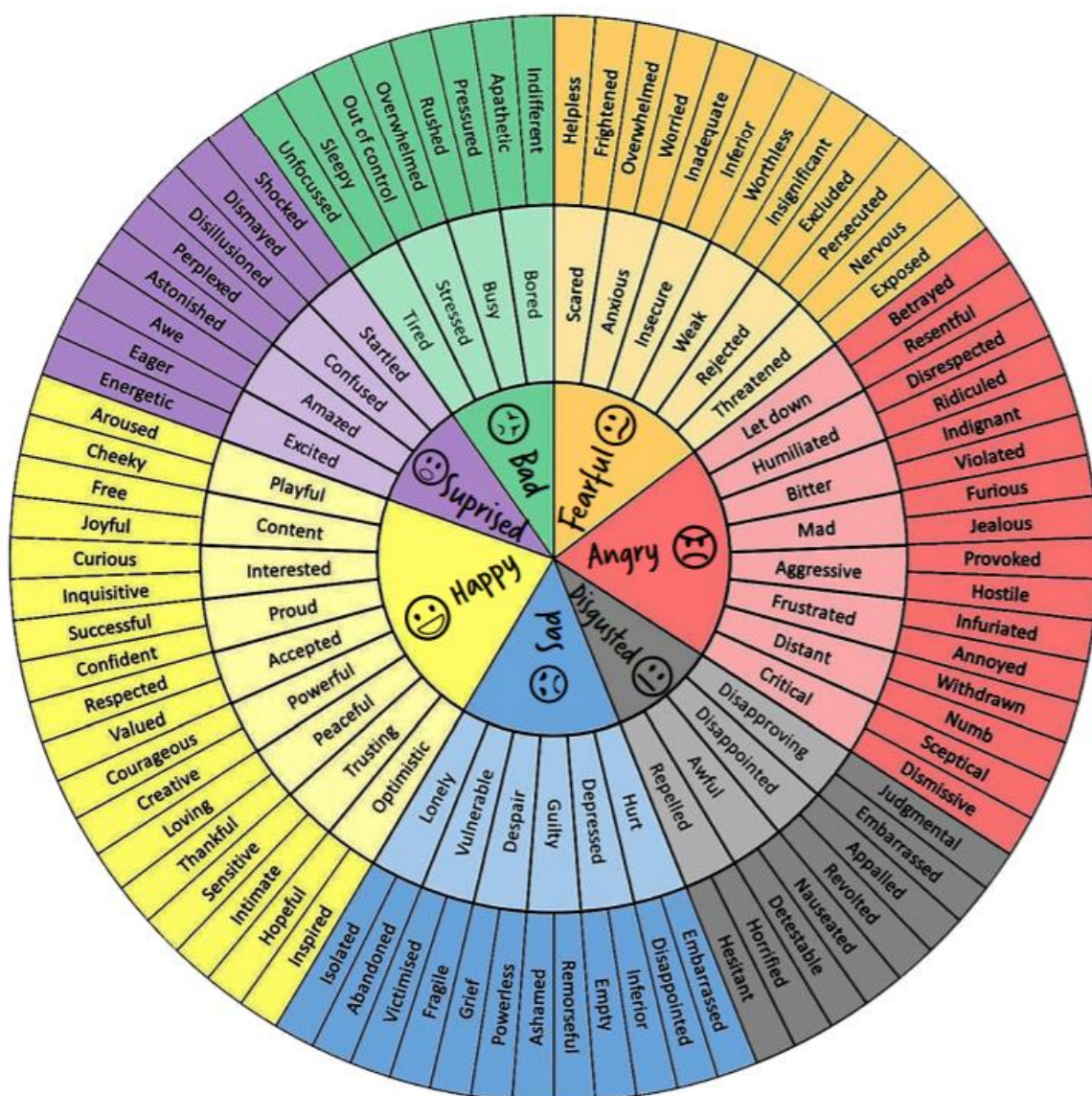
Sometimes it can be difficult to explain feelings. Below are some words and pictures you can use to express yourself.

								
LOVED	HAPPY	CONTENT	SLEEPY	SAD	HEARTBROKEN	STRESSED	WORRIED	ANGRY
								
ESTATIC	WARM	AFFECTIONATE	SHOCKED	ANXIOUS	HESITANT	CONFUSED	DEPRESSED	BETRAYED
								
INTELLIGENT	LUCKY	CONFIDENT	SKEPTICAL	SCARED	HELPLESS	DISAPPOINTED	IRRITATED	EXPLOSIVE
								
ACCEPTED	HOPEFUL	PLAYFUL	HOPELESS	INVISIBLE	FRUSTRATED	POWERLESS	DISGUSTED	VIOLENT
								
STRONG	SILLY	GOOD	UNSURE	EMPTY	WORTHLESS	GAURDED	SNEAKY	RAGE
								
UNBREAKABLE	EXCITED	ABANDONED	LOST	ALONE	REJECTED	TOXIC	HURT	OVERWHELMED

Feelings wheel

The emotion wheel is a visual aid to help understand our core emotions and give examples of the variations we can feel. This helps build self-awareness and ability to name emotions at their differing levels of intensity.

The wheel is separated into 7 coloured wedges which represent the core emotions found at the centre of the wheel. The outer ring contains examples of lower level intensity feelings while the middle ring contains names for more intense variations of the centre emotion. For example, for the emotion "mad", the lesser degree is "annoyance", represented on the outer edge of the slice, and the greater degree is "angry", situated by the centre of the emotion wheel.



Sometimes you feel emotions in your body. For example, churning in your stomach and an urge to avoid can mean you're feeling anxious. You can use the image below to mark these feelings.



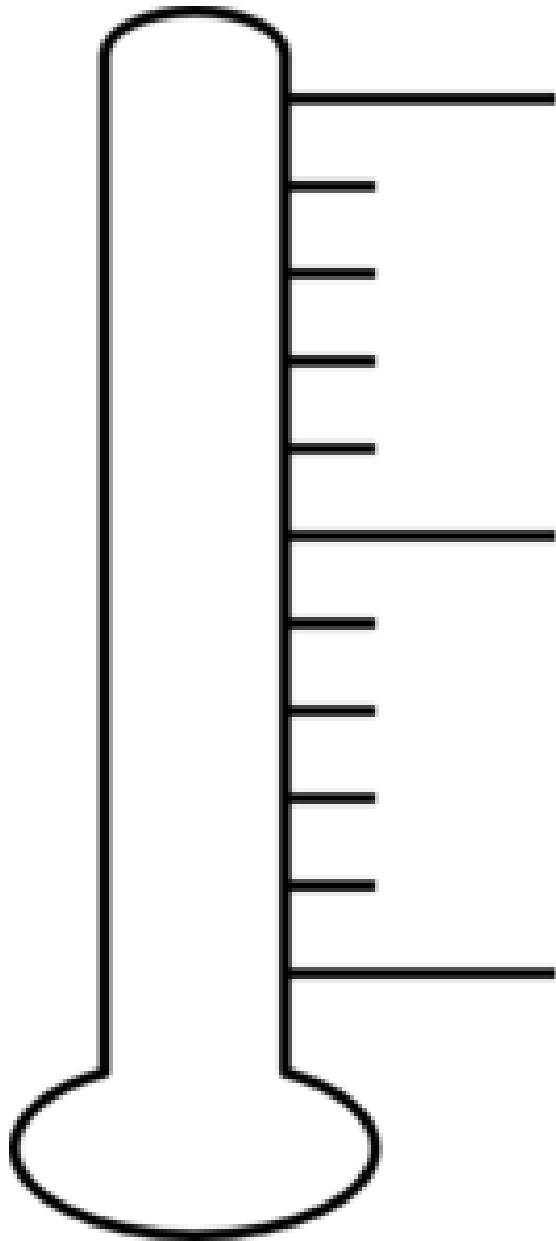
Example scales for safety plan

It might be useful to use a scale to think about what helps you. We have provided one example in the Autism Adapted Safety Plan, but there are more examples of scales you can use in the following pages. Also, there is a blank page for you to create your own scale if you want to.

Horizontal scale



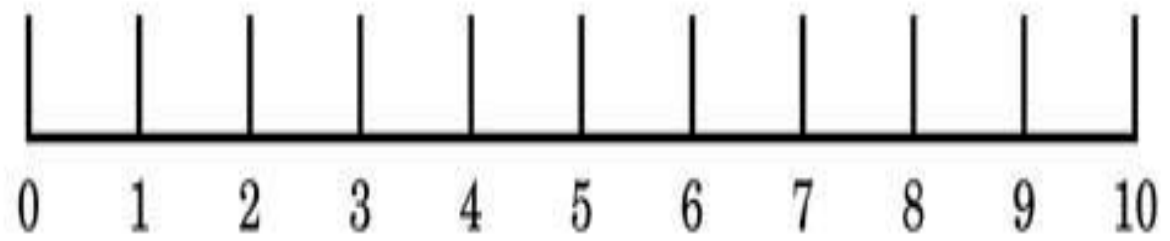
Thermometer



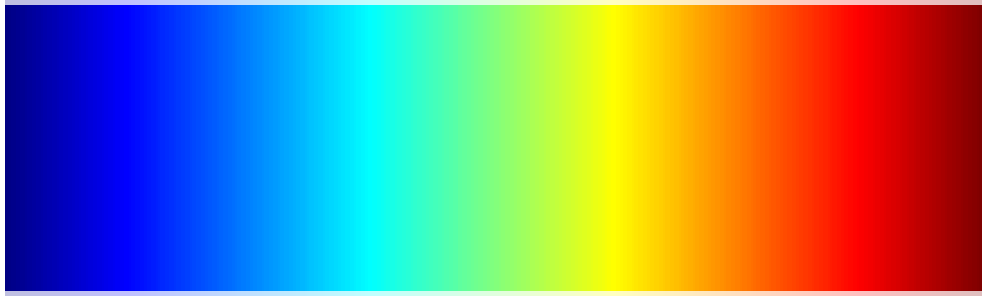
Emoji scale



Number scale



Colour scale



Blank page to create your own scale

Where can I go for help?

List of support services

Name of service	What the service offers	Contact details
Emergency		
999 Emergency telephone	Support if you have seriously harmed yourself	Call 999 for an ambulance or go straight to A&E. Or ask someone else to call 999 or take you to A&E.
Helplines		
Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)	Provides support in crisis through free, confidential support	Call 0800 58 58 58 Webchat https://www.thecalmozone.net/help/get-help/ Available daily, 5pm to midnight
NHS 111	Provides support during urgent medical problems and you're not sure what to do	Call 111 Website 111.nhs.uk Available 24/7
Papyrus	Provide confidential support and advice to young people (under the age of 35) struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person	Call 0800 068 4141 Available daily, 9am to midnight
Samaritans	Provide confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair	Call 116 123 Email jo@samaritans.org (response within 24 hours) Available 24/7
Shout	Provides support in crisis through free, confidential support	Text SHOUT to 85258 Available 24/7
SOS Silence of Suicide	Provides support in crisis through free, confidential support	Call 0808 115 1505 Mon-Fri, 8pm until midnight, Sat & Sun, 4pm until midnight
Local crisis support		
Newcastle Crisis Resolution Team	Crisis resolution service	Call 0191 219 4690 Available 24/7
Nottinghamshire mental health crisis line	Crisis resolution service	Call 0808 196 3779 Available 24/7

Self-care

Introduction

Safety plans involve discussion about sensitive topics, which can be distressing for the autistic adult and the service provider. Wellbeing is important to consider within the project as in order to help others, we need to know how to help ourselves.

Guidance for work

Support staff should:

- Wherever possible, avoid completing the safety plan on Friday afternoons (or their last working day of the week if different) when regular support might not be available afterwards
- Schedule in 'head space/down time' after potentially upsetting tasks. For example, going for a 30-minute walk, mindfulness. Once/ if ready to carry on working, undertake tasks that are less impactful.
- If possible, avoid having more than 3 safety plan meetings per week, and no more than one per day. If this is not possible, ensure sufficient time is allocated as down time after each one
- Break large tasks down with smaller tasks that can be completed quickly

Self-care and wellbeing suggestions

- Discuss with a supervisor any signs that indicate that support is needed. (see Appendix 1)
- Physical activity such as walking, running or at home online workouts.
- Write a list of things you enjoy doing. If work becomes challenging, choose one of these things to do. Schedule an activity into a day that you know may be particularly challenging
- Write a few things that have been good about your day or that you are thankful for. Look back at these when feeling low
- Contacting friends and family to have a chat
- Use the NHS 'Mind Plan'. It's an interactive quiz to get the best advice tips for wellbeing
- Mindfulness activities such as colouring, meditation or yoga.

Appendix 1: Guidance for discussion about coping

This guidance can be used to aid discussions with managers about coping. If you feel comfortable, you can share it with colleagues. Alternatively, it can be used as a personal reference to check in on your wellbeing.

What I can do to help distract myself (e.g., engage in a particular activity or interest, a relaxation technique, or physical activity):



What are the signs that I am coping well (e.g., for some people, crying can be a positive sign)?



What are the warning signs that I am having difficulty?



How can my colleagues help support me?



Autism Adapted Safety Planning (AASP) Topic Guide

We have outlined some suggested text (in bold) to help you introduce the different aspects of the safety plan. Text in normal font is directly from the safety plan. Feel free to use or adapt any of this text for your purposes.

Section of the AASP	Section in the plan	Potential prompts
Introducing the safety plan:	When people are distressed it can be difficult for them to pin-point what would help to make them feel better. People can also find it hard to think about how best to keep themselves safe. This safety plan is designed to be a way of thinking ahead of time about what might be useful for you. Then, if you become distressed, you can follow the steps of the safety plan you have written until you feel safer. This safety plan can be used to help you plan for times when you experience [repeat what they have said about their experiences]. We will spend some time thinking about when the safety plan would be most appropriate, and work best, for you. If it is difficult to think of an answer for a step just now, that is okay – you can come back to it later. As well as thinking about what you may be able to do yourself, there is also space for you to provide information about how people can best	You said that you have experienced [repeat what they have said about their experience of self-harm thoughts, self-harm behaviours, suicidal thoughts or behaviours]. We want to take some time to discuss what you can do to keep yourself safe if those thoughts, feelings or urges return or intensify. We call this a safety plan. Do you already have a safety plan? [if yes] That's great. That will be a really helpful basis for some of the things that we are going to think about today, if that's okay? [if no] No problem at all. We are going to think together today about what might help and come up with a plan, if that's okay?

	support you when you feel distressed. Different things might help you at different times. It might be useful to use the scale below to think about what helps you and when. You can label the scale with whatever makes most sense to you (e.g. calm at '0' to very distressed at '100', no self-harm thoughts at '0' to suicidal thoughts at '100'). We have used 0-100 as an example, but you can use any scale that feels right to you. We have provided more examples in the Safety Plan resource pack. In steps 1-4 of the safety plan you can think about what helps at different points on your scale.	
What is important to me?	Please use this space to write about what is important to you. This might be something meaningful to you that you can focus on when you feel unsafe. You may also like to attach a photo to this form (e.g., of a special person, a pet, something related to a hobby or interest, a poem, song) or write a message to yourself.	It can be helpful to have something positive to focus on if you feel distressed. What things are important to you? Some people that we have talked to have spoken about activities they like doing or interests that they have. What do you do with your free time? Do you like to [give examples of common activities people enjoy]?
Step 1: Recognising warning signs NOTE: The resource pack contains supporting documents	What are my warning signs that I may start to have strong thoughts, feelings or urges to hurt myself and/or end my life?	It can be useful to think about what happened the last time you experienced [use person's own words here]. What was happening before you [person's own words] / What kind of things were you doing/ What were you finding difficult at that time? Have you experienced [use person's own words here] on any other

		occasions? [if yes] were similar things difficult then? You said that you were experiencing X, Y and Z before you [person's own words]. Was there anything else happening at that time? So possible warning signs for you are ... Does that sound right? Can we put these warning signs here? If you cannot think of everything now, that is OK. You might remember other things later, and we can add always those. [If someone is struggling to think about their warning signs, perhaps consider more concrete things] e.g., What does a 'normal' day look like for you? For example, how much do you usually sleep? Does this change when things are more difficult? <u>Remember to think about capturing thoughts, feelings and behaviours.</u>
Step 2: Distraction	What can I do to help distract myself?	The next step of your safety plan involves coming up with activities that help you relax or distract yourself. Are there things that you do already to relax and distract yourself when you are experiencing these [really difficult moments of distress/ insert participants own words here]? Thinking back to the last time you experienced [use person's own words], was there anything which helped distract you? [Look at the list of things identified as important to the individual, if appropriate, ask whether the autistic adults has found any of these things helpful for distraction when distressed/ in a crisis;

You said earlier that you enjoyed [x], could this be helpful to distract you when you experience [person's own words]?

Has anything been useful for distracting you from feeling distressed or unhelpful thoughts before? What kind of things have helped?

Is there anything that relieves these feelings, even a little bit?

[If struggling to identify anything] That's okay, what are some things that you generally enjoy doing that you might consider doing in a situation where you are experiencing these thoughts?

[If still struggling to identify anything] Do you like to do things like taking a walk? Reading? Watching TV? Some people that we speak to say they can find reading distracting or completing puzzles. Do you think anything like that could help?

[If completely resistant reassure that it is okay that they can't think of anything just now, that there are other steps that might help and that steps can be revisited later on]

Think about barriers to using the safety plan:

How would you use these strategies when you experience [person's own words]? Would they ever be difficult to use or access? What would happen then? Would anything help you to use these strategies?

Where possible, ensure that several distraction activities are identified that are easy to access

		<u>regardless of time or day or location.</u>
Step 3: People I can contact to ask for help	(e.g., family, friends, mentor, support worker) Remember to note down when people are, or are not, available (e.g., office hours).	Is there anyone who you have contacted before when you feel distressed or are finding things difficult? Like a friend, family member, support worker, through peer support or online? What times would they be available? How would you be able to contact these people? [If no] That makes sense – this can be a difficult topic to discuss with people. Is there anyone that you can reach out to for a more general chat, to help take your mind off things? <u>Barriers to using the safety plan:</u> What would you do if you could not contact them or get hold of them? Would you be able to contact them if you were distressed? What might make it difficult to contact them? What could help you contact them/what would you need to contact them? What would you do if you could not contact them or get hold of them?
Step 4: Professionals that I can ask for help NOTE: The resource pack contains supporting documents	(e.g., Samaritans, Mind, A & E, Psychiatric Services) Remember to note down when people are, or are not, available (e.g., opening hours).	Are there any professionals or agencies who you have contacted before when you feel distressed or are finding things difficult? Was that helpful to you? Are you able to contact [insert support service currently working with]? How would you do that? We have this list of local and national support services. Would you be comfortable contacting any of these organisations? Would you be comfortable contacting the service you were recruited through? It might be helpful to

		make a note of when they are open and available. What could help you contact them/what would you need to contact them? Would you need to be able to contact someone who can respond to you immediately? Would it be a good idea to have such a service somewhere on that plan, just in case? How would you contact these professionals/ agencies? <u>Barriers to using the safety plan:</u> Would you be able to contact them if you were distressed or experiencing [person's own words]? What would you do if you could not contact them or get hold of them? What might it difficult to contact them?
Step 5: Making the environment safer	What can I do to make the environment around myself safer? (e.g., <i>throwing away things that could be used to harm yourself</i>)	You said that you had experienced [person's own words]/used [x] to harm yourself before. Would there be a way of keeping yourself safer by getting rid of [x]? [If no to throwing away] Is there anyone that you trust that you could give [x] to for a while to safekeep it/them? That way it is still there, but you are safe for now. [if no to throwing away] That's okay, we appreciate that this can be a hard thing to think about doing. Where do you currently keep [x]? Could we think about if there is a safer place to keep [x]? [if they say that you can use anything to harm yourself] We appreciate that this is true. Can we think together about how to

		keep <u>you</u> as safe as possible from the things that you are most likely to harm yourself with? Be aware that some people in the autistic adults focus groups talked about making the environment safer by doing things like removing themselves temporarily from social media, avoiding certain people/places/organisations.
Step 6: How can other people help support me?	How can other people help support me? • How do I communicate distress? (e.g., I shut down, I have a meltdown) • What stresses me/makes me unhappy? (e.g., loud noises, being touched, change of plan, too much information) • What can help calm me/makes me happy? (e.g., a strong interest, a quiet safe place to calm down, just sitting with me, giving me my own space) • How I would like you to communicate with me? (e.g., don't ask me to look you in the eye, speak softly, use visual supports, use plain English, keep in mind that I may take what you say literally) • Who I would like you to contact?	
Step 7: Sharing the Safety Plan	It can be helpful to share your safety plan. This might be with a trusted	

	friend or family member, health care professional, or support worker. Would you like to share your safety plan? Who would you like to share it with?	
Step 8: Storing the Safety Plan	It can be helpful to think about where you will keep your safety plan so that you can easily access it if you need it (e.g., printed out, in my bag, in a 'crisis box', on my phone). It might also be useful to think of any prompts that could help you to remember to use your plan (e.g., having a card with the safety planning logo in it in your wallet to remind you that you have a safety plan).	How would it be best for you to keep the safety plan so that it is there and ready if you need it? Some people have crisis or self-care boxes. Is there a place in your house that you go to when things are difficult? Could you store your Safety Plan there? Would it be helpful to have your safety plan close to hand? If so, perhaps you could take a photo of the plan and store it on your phone? How will you remember to use your safety plan when you need to?
Finishing up:		Do you feel comfortable with the plan? Is there anything that we need to go back and think about again at the moment or anything that you want to add? Do you think that you will be able to use the plan in the future? [if no, explore why and try and counter any barriers]