

Creating a suicide safety plan

A safety plan (crisis plan) can play a vital role in keeping you safe when you're feeling distressed or suicidal. It is intended to help you become aware of your own cues and triggers that signal a suicidal crisis may be developing and can take you through the feelings and guide you until you feel safe. The aim is to think through what would help you feel better.

Try to find a time when you're feeling well, calm and clear-headed, rather than when you're suicidal or distressed.

A safety plan can be completed by yourself, with a friend or family member or with a counsellor or therapist.

Creating or reviewing your safety plan

with a therapist or someone at a suicide hotline can be a tremendous help in learning how to both acknowledge and respond to your warning signs. They can talk you through the thoughts, images, thought process, moods, and behaviors that signal your suicidal thoughts. Being able to recognize all these components will help you more readily identify when you need to put your safety plan into action.

Know the warning signs and situations that may put you at risk of hurting yourself. Keep your plan where you can easily access it. Suicidal thoughts can be relentless so your list can help you focus your thoughts until the feelings pass.

1. Recognize the warning signs.

What kind of thoughts, images, mood, situations, behaviours tell me that a crisis may be developing?

The warning signs will tell you that you need to activate your plan.

Examples: When I feel suicidal...

I avoid my friends (I isolate myself)

I believe my family would be better off without me (I see myself as a burden to others)

I am agitated at work (I am not coping with routine stress)

I feel like things will never get better (I feel there is no hope)

2. Things I can do to calm and comfort myself.

Examples: relaxation techniques, taking a shower, walking the dog, exercising, working in the garden or breathing exercises

3. People I can ask for help.

Think about the person or people I would feel comfortable reaching out to when I am having suicidal thoughts.

It is vital that you choose people who will be helpful and supportive and not add any additional burden or stress. Let them know in advance that they are on your safety plan so they can know to get back to you immediately if they receive a message from you.

Examples: Your significant other, friends, relatives or a clergy member

4. Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis.

Have more than one contact in case someone is not available or it is after hours.

Clinician name and contact info: _____

Local crisis line: _____

Local Urgent Care services name, phone number and address: _____

5. List the things that are most important and worth living for.

Make a list of activities I like to do, people I care about and things I am grateful for.

In a time of crisis the pain may erode all positive feelings. Refer to your list to remind you of things that give you hope.

6. How can I make my environment safe or where can I go that is safe.

Remove and secure items that I may use to hurt myself. This includes firearms, pills and alcohol and lethal objects. I may need to enlist a friend or family member to store items for me.

Examples:

I will ask my friend to keep my guns at his house if I am feeling suicidal.

When I am thinking about hurting myself I will go to the community centre or the mall.

7. What to do if I am still not feeling safe.

If all other steps have failed to keep me feeling safe, I will go to the hospital emergency room and ask for assistance.

8. If I do not feel that I can get to the hospital safely on my own I will call 911 and ask for transport to the hospital.