MINDLER

A Guide to Help with Noticing and Managing Suicidal Thoughts

Suicidal thoughts are a natural response to feelings of hopelessness and isolation which may be more likely when we are feeling depressed or low in mood. They may surface in times of overwhelming difficulties and problems, and when it may seem like there are not many options.

It can be helpful for us to recognise suicidal thoughts, impulses/urges as signs or symptoms that there are difficulties in your life right now that may need addressing. If we can spot them as this, then we are more likely to be able to stand back from them a little and start to think about ways of managing them that can break us out of our negative patterns.

It is understandable that by their very nature they are distressing to us and can be overwhelming. They don't have to dictate your life however, and we have provided a leaflet that we think will add to your existing tool bag of how to cope when things start to feel troublesome.

Initial Steps

The first thing to do might be to ask yourself if you have the 3 things below covered:

1. **If you are worried you might act on your thoughts right now** - **STOP**
   S - Stop: pause whatever you are doing and notice your physical or mental reaction
   T - Take a breath: take a slow, deliberate breath (or two). Focus completely on your inhalation and exhalation to help calm your body
   O - Observe: become an observer of your current state. Notice your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations without judgment
   P - proceed mindfully: consider your options and ask yourself what is the most helpful or effective way to respond to the situation

2. **Calm your body and mind -** choose an activity to try from the Big List of Soothing/Distracting Activities

3. **Tell someone how you are feeling**
   Friends, family, health professionals, and support groups. Sometimes we fear we will burden people or that others won't understand, but there are people who will be willing to listen and help. To know that you are not facing this alone can be hugely helpful.

4. **Remove potential dangers.**
   Often feeling suicidal or having thoughts of harming ourselves can come on quickly and it is important to buy ourselves some time to reduce impulsive action. If we can remove

the potential dangers in our living space, then we allow ourselves to feel safer when we are most vulnerable. Can you remove things like razors, pills, sharp objects, alcohol and so on? If this is too difficult is there a way that you can increase the time it takes to access them e.g. wrapping them up in many containers or placing them in a difficult to reach place

5. **Create a safety plan.**
   A safety plan is a good way of tackling suicidal thoughts because if it is well written then it will include all the things that are meaningful to you and add value and perspective to your life. It is intended to be written when you are feeling more relaxed and comfortable so that you can access the kinds of positive thoughts and pleasurable/contented feelings that are likely to be absent in times of despair.

EMERGENCY: If you have hurt yourself and you are not able to take yourself to A&E, you can call 999.

Strategies for Coping:

- Exercise: regular exercise has been shown to be as effective as medication in some studies.
- Talking to others and writing about your concerns.
- Problem solving current difficulties.
- Routine: developing a balanced routine of pleasurable, routine, and necessary tasks.
- Professional help: seeking help from your GP or discussing fears with your clinician.
- Absorption: engaging in valued activities that you can 'get lost' in.
- Support groups: reach out to local or online support groups.
- Mindfulness: regular practice of relaxation and meditation exercises can help us stand back from the 'tornado of thoughts'.
- Tracking: keep a diary of the times you feel this way. This can build understanding of the situations that trigger difficult feelings and our responses to them.
- Perspective: remember that suicidal thoughts are like thunderstorms, they will pass. Remind yourself that you deserve support and you can get through this.

8 Steps to Problem Solving:

1. Define the problem: Work out exactly what is bothering you.
2. Be specific: instead of "I have no money," use "I cannot afford my electricity bill this month, which is £80."
3. Record options: be creative and record every possible option without dismissal.
4. Pros and cons: list the pros and cons of each option in writing.

5. Choose: review your options and select one.
6. Plan: decide how you will implement the chosen plan.
7. Action: try out the plan.
8. Review: if successful, consider what you learnt. If not, go back to your list of options.

"Acting As-If" Strategy

In CBT, 'acting as-if' involves reversing behaviours we feel drawn to (like isolating) for ones we don't feel drawn to (like calling a friend). While alcohol or drugs might offer a short-lived escape, 'acting as-if' I were happy and positive about my future' can be a powerful antidote. It may feel unnatural at first, but it helps break the vicious circle.

Make a self-soothing/happy box

Fill a box with memories and items that can distract you, give you comfort and help lift your mood when you have suicidal thoughts. Some people might also call this a 'hope box'. The box can contain anything that's meaningful and helpful to you. For example:

- A favourite book or article
- Positive quotes
- Photos
- Letters
- Poems
- Art work
- A compassionate letter to yourself
- A cuddly toy or blanket
- A perfume or smell that's important to you

You could also make a virtual happy box on your computer or phone. It could include links to things that help you feel better. For example, self-care apps, photos, playlists, or videos that make you laugh.

Useful Contacts & Resources

- **NHS 111-** To get urgent mental health support, call 111 and select option 2 or visit www.111.nhs.uk
- **Mind support line -** This is a safe space for you to talk about your mental health. Call Mind's support line on 0300 102 1234.

- **Samaritans -** Samaritans is there for anyone who wants to talk. You can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year: Call 116 123 (free from any phone). Call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day). Visit some branches in person
- **SANEline -** If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can call SANEline on 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm–10pm every day).
- **National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK -** Offers a listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK on 0800 587 0800/0800 689 0880 (6pm to midnight every day).
- **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) -** You can call the CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight every day) if you're affected by suicide or suicidal thoughts. Or if you prefer not to speak on the phone, you could try the CALM webchat service
- **Shout -** If you would prefer not to talk you can text SHOUT to 85258. Shout offers a confidential 24/7 text service providing support if you need immediate help.
- **Papyrus HOPELINEUK -** If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call Papyrus HOPELINEUK on 0300 102 2470 (24 hours, 7 days a week), email pat@papyrus-uk.org or text HOPE to 88247.
- **Switchboard -** If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can call Switchboard on 0300 330 0630 (10am–10pm every day), email chris@switchboard.lgbt or use their webchat service. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+.

Recommended Websites:

- CCI Health: cci.health.wa.gov.au (Free self-help workbooks)
- Living Life to the Full: livinglifetothefull.com (Online life skills course)
- https://self-compassion.org/self-compassion-practices/ (free self compassion meditations)
- https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/suicidal-thoughts-and-suicide-prevention/coping-and-self-care/#FocusOnGettingThroughTheNext5Minutes