



Suicidal thoughts



Sometimes people may find themselves having thoughts about suicide. Often, people experiencing suicidal thoughts can't see a way out of the problems they are facing and view suicide as their only option at that time. But it is important to remember that you are not alone and that there is support available.



What are suicidal thoughts?

Suicidal thoughts are thoughts about how to kill oneself, which can range from a fleeting thought to a detailed plan. Most people with suicidal thoughts do not actually want to die. It is important to remember that for many people thinking about suicide does not lead to planning or acting on these thoughts. However, for others the thought of suicide might begin to seem like a real alternative to a situation that appears hopeless. Either way, it's important to seek help and get support.

How to cope?

Don't make a decision today

You don't need to act on your thoughts right now. You might be feeling despair and thinking about suicide but give yourself some distance between your feelings and thoughts and taking action. Focus on just getting through today.

Distract yourself

You might feel it is impossible not to focus on the suicidal thoughts or how bad you are feeling at this time. If you focus too much on your thoughts it might make you feel worse and make it even harder to cope. Try to do things that will distract you. Some examples might be to read a book, watch a film, go for a walk, or listen to music.

Be aware of your triggers

Triggers are things which might make you feel worse. They are different for different people (e.g. certain music, images or films). Try to stay away from these and focus on positive distractions.

Talk to other people

Don't keep these feelings you are experiencing to yourself. There are different people who can help (e.g. friend, family member, GP, or an experienced counsellor). Let them know how bad things feel right now. Talking about how you got to this point in your life can help release a lot of the pressure. If talking is too difficult, that is ok. It is also important not to be alone. Being around people can help to keep you safe and distracted, even if they don't know how you are feeling.

Remember your personal goals

Remind yourself, you CAN get through this – these feelings will pass no matter how hopeless you are currently feeling. Remember your personal goals and the things you have always wanted to do. Try to write your personal goals down as a way to remind yourself of your reasons for living.

Avoid alcohol and drugs

Although it may feel as if drugs and alcohol mask the pain, suicidal thoughts can become even stronger if you are affected by these substances.

Make a list of all the positive things in your life

Make a list of all the positive things about yourself and your life. This may be difficult to do, but try. Try to think about your individual strengths and all the nice things that other people have said about you. At the end of every day write down one thing you felt good about that day.

Schedules

Make a written schedule for yourself every day and stick to it, no matter what. Keep a regular routine as much as possible, even when your feelings seem out of control.

Safety plan

Look at developing a safety plan or a set of steps that you can follow when experiencing suicidal thoughts. Keep this plan close to you in a place which will be easy to access, (e.g. in your phone or on a noticeboard in your bedroom). Include instructions to call emergency services in a moment of crisis, a treating practitioner (such as your psychologist/counsellor and doctor), the Mental Health Access Line (1800 011 511) or Lifeline (13 11 14).

How can I access professional support?

If you feel you will take your own life you should:

- Call the emergency services on 000. Ask for an ambulance or the Police.
- Go to the emergency department at your nearest hospital.
- Contact the NSW Mental Health Access Line (24/7) on 1800 011 511.
- If you are having suicidal thoughts but aren't in immediate danger, make an appointment to see a mental health professional as soon as possible.

For free university counselling with a qualified psychologist, contact the University's Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS):

- +61 2 8627 8433
- sydney.edu.au/counselling

To see a general practitioner or to get a referral for a psychologist, psychiatrist, or other mental health professionals, contact the University's Health Service:

- +61 2 9351 3484
- sydney.edu.au/unihealth

For a 24/7 telephone counsellor, contact Lifeline:

- 13 11 14

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

+61 2 8627 8433
caps.admin@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/counselling

Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building
Opening hours: 9am to 4.30pm,
Monday to Friday

Crisis contacts

Ambulance/Fire/Police: 000
Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14
Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511