

Overview

Creating a safety plan can help keep someone safe when they are at risk of suicide.

If you are supporting someone and they tell you they feel suicidal, it can be helpful to create a safety plan with them. A safety plan is designed to help manage and move past intense feelings.

These guidance notes will help you get to grips with a safety plan so you can complete it with a young person.

What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan acts as an 'emergency plan' or a 'crisis plan' to remind people there are alternatives to acting on their suicidal feelings. It offers personalised coping strategies and helps prevent someone acting on suicidal thoughts or urges.

Who is a Safety Plan for?

A safety plan is for people who have thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

If someone is at imminent risk of suicide and cannot keep themselves safe, contact emergency services immediately.

A safety plan can be used with someone of any age. Younger people may be less experienced at coping with distressing thoughts and could be more likely to engage in risky behaviour. You may need to support them through those parts of the plan in more detail.

Introducing the Safety Plan

If someone has told you they are having suicidal thoughts, check they are not at immediate risk of suicide.

If they can keep themselves safe in the immediate future and are not going to act on their suicidal urges, you can introduce a safety plan.

A safety plan is most effective when someone really trusts its contents and ability to help them. It's vital that the person struggling is open and honest when working on a safety plan and understands the ways it can help them.

Before creating a safety plan with a young person, explain clearly what it is and how it can help.

Creating a Safety Plan

A safety plan is a tool that is often used by mental health professionals in collaboration with someone who is having suicidal thoughts. Where possible, it's best to get professional support, but you can help someone create a safety plan for themselves if you're a trusted adult like a parent, friend or family member.

Create a safety plan together by talking through a young person's experiences and emotions. Before starting, try to understand what they're going through and how they feel. What have they been up against recently? And how have they been coping? Understanding this information can help you both to recognise risks and warning signs, as well as to identify coping strategies and behaviours that can help them feel better.

Talk through each step and check in regularly to make sure they are feeling okay. Encourage them to think of any things that might get in the way of them taking the safe action or choice. It's important there are as few obstacles as possible to them using their safety plan.

Sharing information with other relevant services or individuals

Creating a safety plan is a personal experience. Make sure the person who is creating the plan feels in control of who and how they share their information.

They may want to keep the plan private. If so, it's a good idea to let anyone mentioned as a contact on the plan know they are part of a support network. This will allow them to prioritise communication and ensure they are equipped to deal with any future situations.

Remember: A safety plan should only be completed if there is no urgent risk of suicide. If someone intends to harm themselves imminently, contact emergency services.

Next steps...

It may feel daunting to help someone develop a safety plan. The questions can feel challenging and very different to what you're used to speaking about. This is normal.

One way to help overcome this is to practice going through the plan ahead of time so you can get more comfortable. It's also important to take care of yourself. Remember to check in with yourself, and have a chat with someone you trust.

This guidance is based on When It Is Darkest. Why People Die by Suicide and What You Can Do To Prevent It by Professor Rory O'Connor.

Head to care.thecalmzone.net for all the info you need to be there for a young person

SAFETY PLAN

See filled in example on next page

STEP 1

Thoughts, feelings, actions or situations that might make me think of suicide?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STEP 2

Things I can do to take my mind off my problems, worries, difficulties:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STEP 3

People, places or activities that can be a safe distraction for me:

- 1.
- 2.

STEP 4

People, places or situations I should avoid:

- 1.
- 2.

STEP 5

People I can ask for help:

1. Name & number:
2. Name & number:

STEP 6

Professionals and Services that can help me in a crisis:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Name: | Phone/email: |
| Name: | Phone/email: |
| Crisis Service Phone: | |
| Crisis Service Address: | |

STEP 7

Things I can do to make my environment safe:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

SAFETY PLAN EXAMPLE

STEP 1

Thoughts, feelings, actions, situations that might make me think of suicide?

1. *When I feel everyone is having a good time without me*
2. *When I've had too much to drink for two days in a row*
3. *When I've been on my own for more than two days*

STEP 2

Things I can do to take my mind off my problems, worries, difficulties:

1. Listen to music
Try to be as specific as possible. What songs make you feel good?
2. Go for a walk with the dog
Include as much detail as you can.
3. Watching my favourite TV show
Again, try to be as specific as you can. What shows help?

STEP 3

People, places or activities that can be a safe distraction for me:

1. *Shopping in the high street*
2. *Swimming club*

STEP 4

People, places or situations I should avoid:

1. *Metro club*
2. *Ruby, Roxy and Ray*

STEP 5

People I can ask for help:

1. Name & number:

Josh - 07593 114375

2. Name & number:

Mum - 07894 332169

John - 07769 534229

STEP 6

Professionals and Services that can help me in a crisis:

Name: *Alan, Blythe House* Phone/email: **0203 991 4546**

Name: *CALM* Phone/email: **0800 585858**

Crisis Service Phone: **0203 991 4545**

Crisis Service Address: *Blythe House, 17 Anchor Lane, El*

STEP 7

Things I can do to make my environment safe:

1. *Remove all tablets, knives and alcohol*
2. *Provide mum with key and let her know when I'm not ok*
3. *Ask mum or John to stay with me overnight*
4. *Go to mum's or John's to stay*