



Finding Hope

Guidance for Supporting Those at Risk

Supporting Someone at Risk for Suicide

Safety Planning

A Safety Plan is a personal blueprint that provides steps for reducing distress and managing a suicidal crisis. This educational resource outlines key points that should be included in a Safety Plan.

Keep in Mind That a Safety Plan Should Be

- Created with the help of a mental health professional
- Created outside of the crisis moment, when the individual is clear-headed and able to think through what helps them
- Portable, so they can always be available for easy access
- Can be adjusted over time based on changing needs

If your loved one does not use their Safety Plan in a time of high emotional stress, approach them with supportive concern and remind them why they created their plan. Remind them that if there's something that they don't like about their Safety Plan, it can always be changed, that they "own" their plan, and you are there to support them.

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Warning Signs

There are often specific warning signs an individual may experience before (or as) a crisis is emerging. Warning signs may include changes in talk, behavior, and mood. Any thoughts, people, events, or places that activate suicidal thoughts should be included in a Safety Plan. You can help your loved one reflect on their unique warning signs by asking them how they feel in the days or moments leading up to a crisis – these feelings may be warning signs and can be incorporated into a Safety Plan, with a mental health professional's help.

Activities, People and Places that Provide Comfort/Distraction

Safety Plans should include healthy activities to “distract” an individual from extremely negative or suicidal thoughts, in an effort to divert a potential time of crisis. Common distractions include specific friends or family members, hobbies, going for a walk, eating a type of food, or playing an instrument. It's important to avoid people or activities that make them feel worse. Distractions that account for options available in different locations, such as school or work, should also be included in a Safety Plan. Individuals might also create a list which identifies specific people, pets, or events that keep them engaged and connected to life.

People to Contact for Help

When distraction doesn't work or feel like an option, it's important that a Safety Plan outlines specific friends, family members, and mental health professionals to contact. You can support your loved one by helping them discuss this with everyone they identify to be included.

Information in the Safety Plan should also include direct contact information for an individual's counselor or therapist, as well as an Urgent Care location. The individual should work with a mental health professional to map out the best contacts for them to have in a crisis.

Making the Environment Safe

Safety Plans should always include a plan to make the environment around a person in crisis as safe as possible. This often means creating a plan to secure lethal means – whether those be firearms, medication, or anything else that could put an individual in danger. Family and friends play an important role in helping make the environment as safe and clear of lethal means as possible.

Crisis Lines

If an individual is in a crisis, they may need to call an emergency line. It's important to have crisis lines included in a Safety Plan, so an individual in crisis has easy access to emergency resources. Your loved one should talk with their mental health care professional about local emergency options, but these national resources should always be included:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Text TALK to 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line
- CrisisChat.org
- Call 911 for emergencies