



# Suicide Guide

Suicide is one of the biggest killers on the planet.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 20-34 years in the UK and it is considerably higher in men, with around three times as many men dying as a result of suicide compared to women. It is the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. Looking at a slightly younger age group, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.

Suicidal thoughts, or suicidal ideation, means thinking about or planning suicide. Thoughts can range from a detailed plan to a fleeting consideration, but each should be taken just as seriously as the other and requires immediate support.

Their thoughts or ideation can be a response to a situation that might be influencing someone, or it could be a symptom of a long-term condition that needs to be managed.

## How can we support someone if we think they are suicidal, or they say they are?

Key approach:

- Listen, support and keep them safe – DON'T leave them alone
- Be non-judgemental – there's already stigma and discrimination about self-harm and suicidal thoughts - 'its attention seeking' is one of the main stigmas
- If someone is talking to you about self-harm/suicidal thinking – take them seriously and don't over-react like 'OMG!', be mindful of your reaction as it may shut them off and stop them talking, your reaction could be the difference in them opening up or shutting down
- Focus on facts – don't offer opinions
- Don't be afraid to ask the difficult question – are you feeling or thinking about suicide? Have you self-harmed? What are you doing – cutting etc.? Have you made a plan?
- Don't promise keeping it confidential – you will probably need to share the information – this may be with significant others (family, friends or anyone in their support network) or professionals
- Keep the individual fully involved in the process and decision making – be person centered – keep it about what they want/need

Some individuals may already have a safety plan and we can add to that or work collaboratively to develop one. A safety plan would guide both them and their support network through what to do and what actions to take if the thoughts are present or get worse; the aim is to reduce risk.

Part of that plan could be to help individuals apply their coping strategies, develop new strategies, and even prepare for visiting their GP and/or specialist services – helping them to speak with confidence about their self-harming/suicidal thinking.





Focus on working with the person to understand what their self-harming and suicidal thoughts are about:

- Managing intense emotions like sadness, guilt or hopelessness – feeling overwhelmed with emotions can leave people unable to express and communicate their feelings, so we develop emotional intelligence to find alternative ways to express these thoughts, drawing, pictorial or numbered cards express whether it's a good or bad day (if this extends to more than just good or bad, you could have a colour or number scale).
- Gaining self-control or having a lack of control can have a huge impact on mental health conditions and other issues. People can use self-harm to gain control of their emotions or feelings, like anger. We can use strategies to identify triggers, manage physiological reactions to anger and find deescalating strategies – counting, 54321, breathing or grounding techniques.
- Self-harm can be used for the self-punishment of feelings and behaviours that people may think/feel are wrong regardless of whether they are. Such punishments are a way of displacing the anger. At this stage, we can focus on helping the individual increase their awareness of themselves and any triggers, spot the signs and implement your plan.

## Helpful Strategies and Tips

If there is a plan in place, the emergency services need to be contacted immediately. Do not leave the person alone until they are able to be handed over to a professional. This could be in A&E, a GP or even the Police or Ambulance services.

Try and find out what helps, prevent and stops the self-harming behaviour:

- Their own personal skills like positive self-talk which they can use to talk through their thoughts and feelings - understand what self-talk would work for the individual
- Their own personal strengths/assets like resilience and perseverance – their own ability to problem solve and deal with life, what do they typically turn to that helps? Sometimes, people don't realise how well they can cope until it's pointed out to them on how they have coped in the past
- Medication can be helpful if it's consistent. How can you ensure this consistency remains? There could also be an opportunity to suggest a GP visit if they aren't currently on medication as this may help
- Try to produce protective factors – these are factors that encourage positive mental health like hobbies, physical exercise, support networks, employment, coping strategies, etc.

It's important to take some time to get to know their triggers, don't be afraid to ask directly what they are! These could be social, psychological or emotional like dealing with loss of family member, redundancy, on-going depression/anxiety - what makes or could make them vulnerable?

Also, be familiar with local and national resources, websites etc. which we have detailed at the bottom of this guide...



## Tips for Managing Self-Harm

There are ways to guide yourself away from self-harm that you can do and focus on by yourself, but it would be best to seek professional help and work through these strategies with someone you trust.

- Talk regularly to someone you feel comfortable with – discuss with them that you’re trying to delay your self-harm.
- Give yourself an aim – ‘I am going to wait 10 minutes before I self-harm’ – increase this delay over a period of time to challenge yourself.

## Tips for Safe Self-Harm

It can take some time to get to a point where you are no longer self-harming or experiencing the urge to. It’s important not to stop immediately, it may bring in different, more unhealthy or unhelpful coping strategies. If you are going to self-harm while you’re beginning to manage the feelings and implement your strategies, you must make sure you’re keeping as safe as possible.

- Do not share self-harming implements with others because of the risk of infection and illness like hepatitis B, C and HIV and AIDS
- Don’t self-harm in areas where there are already scars, as scar tissue isn’t as strong as your skin
- Avoid drugs and alcohol as this affects your thinking and decision making, potentially leads to unsafe self-harm
- Keep first aid supplies such as antiseptic wipes and bandages to hand, in date and enough of them
- Have an emergency plan – like keeping a phone nearby so that you can contact others if you need help, or only do it with others around or in the house
- Set limits and try to stick to them – such as deciding how many cuts you will make, how big etc.
- Think of alternatives to breaking the skin, swallowing medication or any other substances

## Tips to Manage your Feelings

- Talk!
- Write down how you feel – then rip it up
- Maybe keep a journal
- Punch something soft that won’t feel anything...like a pillow
- Physical exercise – this could range from a huge gym workout to a walk
- Squeeze an ice cube – make sure you always have some in your freezer!
- Snap elastic bands on your wrist
- Draw lines using a red pen on your wrists
- Wash your face
- Choose a random object and think of 10 different uses for it



## How to Get Better

According to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines about half the people who present at emergency department after an incident of self-harm are assessed by a mental health professional. This could be for a variety of reasons, such as it isn't appropriate to have an assessment or other reasons.

Also, half of those who present at the emergency department after an incident of self-harm will have visited their GP in the month prior, and will visit their GP within 2 months after the incident too, so if you know someone has visited the GP, begin helping them with their plans.

Be mindful of co-existing mental health conditions like alcohol use disorder, drug misuse, depression, anxiety, Borderline Personality, bipolar, psychosis/schizophrenia etc.

### NICE Recommends

At least 3 to 12 sessions of psychological intervention specifically structured for self-harm reduction which would be focused on;

- CBT
- Psychodynamic
- Problem Solving

The key is therapeutic alliance which is a strong relationship that builds between the person and their Mentor/Therapist. This is built over time with consistent sessions.

Self-harmers with mild learning disabilities - can access the same age-appropriate services this will be jointly managed by utilising mental health, learning disability and a Care Programme Approach. A care plan will have identified goals, key support individuals, risk management and will be shared with the individuals GP.

Self-harmers with moderate or severe learning difficulties should be referred as a priority for assessment and treatment by specialist services in learning disabilities. A specialist Service would include CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and would follow local safeguarding procedures, possibly a Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

Arthur Ellis: Mental Health Support operate a 1:1 Mentoring Service to provide support to children (from 8 years old), young people and adults. We work with individuals to help them develop strategies for their exact needs to help you recover and move forward from any mental health related issues.

To find out more, visit <https://www.arthurellismhs.com/mentoring/>



## Support in Milton Keynes

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**Mind BLMK** - <https://www.mind-blmk.org.uk/>

**Talk for Change** - <https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/service/milton-keynes-talk-change/>

**Milton Keynes Hospital** - Standing Way, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK6 5LD

## National Support

### Samaritans – 24/7

<https://www.samaritans.org>

116 123

### Mind Infoline

Our lines are open 9am to 7pm\*, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

0300 123 3393

[info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

Text: 86463

### Sane Line

They work with anyone affected by mental illness, including families, friends and carers. Their helpline is open between 4:40pm and 10pm every day of the year. They also provide a free text-based support service called Textcare. And an online supportive forum community, where anyone can share their experiences of mental health issues.

Telephone: 0300 304 7000 (4:30pm – 10:30pm every evening)

Textcare: [www.sane.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/support/textcare](http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/textcare)

Support Forum: [www.sane.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/support/supportforum](http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/supportforum)

Website: [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)



### **Support Line**

Support Line provide a confidential telephone helpline offering emotional support to any individual on any issue. Their opening hours vary so you need to ring them for details.

Telephone: 01708 765200

E-mail: [info@supportline.org.uk](mailto:info@supportline.org.uk)

Website: [www.supportline.org.uk](http://www.supportline.org.uk)

### **Papyrus UK**

Work with people under 35 who are having suicidal feelings. And with people who are worried about someone under 35. Their helpline is open 10am – 10pm in the week. And between 2pm and 10pm at weekends and bank holidays.

Telephone: 0800 068 41 41

Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

Text: 07786 209697

Website: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

### **C.A.L.M. (Campaign Against Living Miserably)**

Aimed specifically at men. Their helpline is open between 5pm and midnight every day of the year.

Telephone (outside London): 0800 58 58 58

Telephone (London): 0808 802 58 58

Webchat: [www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/](http://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/) (5pm – Midnight every day)

Website: [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

### **Silverline**

Aimed at people over 55. Their helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Telephone: 0800 4 70 80 90

Website: [www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)

### **The Mix**

Aimed at people under 25. Their helpline is open between 4pm and 11pm, 7 days a week. They also run a crisis text service which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telephone: 0808 808 4994

E-mail: through the website.

Crisis text message service: Text THEMIX to 85258

Webchat: through the website. (4pm - 11pm, 7 days a week)

Website: [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

### **Mood Swings**

Aimed at anyone affected by a mood disorder, including friends, families and carers. Their helpline is open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

Telephone: 0161 832 37 36

E-mail: [info@moodswings.org.uk](mailto:info@moodswings.org.uk)

Website: [www.moodswings.org.uk](http://www.moodswings.org.uk)