

## Choosing Safety Over Suicide: Using a Safety Plan

A safety plan is a written list of personalized coping strategies and resources that you can use to feel better when you are feeling suicidal.

Many suicide attempt survivors report that during the time right before their attempt, they were experiencing unbearable emotional pain and they saw suicide as a way to find relief from this pain.

A safety plan is a way to identify other options of relieving your pain, before you are in crisis, when it may be difficult for you to think of them. By writing them down ahead of time, you will always have the set of coping strategies available even if you are upset or not thinking clearly, to help to ease your pain, rather than feeling trapped or tempted to act on the suicidal thoughts you may experience.

You can complete your plan by yourself or with the help of a counselor, family member, or friend. This pamphlet will help you to brainstorm elements of your safety plan.

Creating a safety plan can feel intimidating at the beginning, but don't let that discourage you. Many people have felt anxious about using a safety plan, but have found it to be a very useful tool for them once they have completed it.

“Once I finished my safety plan, I respected myself so much more.”

~Suicide Attempt Survivor

## Resources

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline  
1.800.273.8255/1.888.628.9454 (Spanish)  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
  - Emergency: Dial 911
  - Community Information and Referrals: Dial 211
  - Survivors of Suicide Attempts Website:  
[www.suicidesurvivor.org](http://www.suicidesurvivor.org)
  - American Association of Suicidology Website:  
(includes a suicide attempt survivors blog)  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)
  - Trevor Line (LGBTQI)  
1.866.488.7386  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
  - Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education  
[www.save.org](http://www.save.org)
  - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
  - SAMHSA  
(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- SAMHSA publishes several After An Attempt pamphlets for suicide attempt survivors and those who support them.

## Returning to Safety

### Choosing Safety Over Suicide



Feeling Suicidal?  
Worried About Someone Who is?  
Call 1-800-273-TALK

*The Safety Plan in this brochure was developed by Shari Sinwelski Sandra Yi and Amy Baylis at the Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center and was adapted from the Safety Plan Treatment Manual to Reduce Suicide Risk: Veteran Version; Stanley and Brown, (2008).*

# Keeping Yourself Safe

## Step 1: Know the Warning Signs.

Many suicide attempt survivors indicate that their suicidal thinking became almost automatic over time. When something negative occurred, they start to have negative thoughts. These thoughts include, "Nobody cares about me," "I can't take it anymore. I wish I were dead." These warning signs can include personal situations, thoughts, images, thinking styles, moods, or behaviors and can help you know when to use your plan.

What triggers your suicidal thoughts?

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## Step 3: External Coping Strategies

Another way to take your mind off of your suicidal thoughts is through external strategies like talking to certain people or visiting places that improve your mood. Finding places that make you feel better or people who cheer you up are good ways to keep your thoughts from escalating. Where can you go to be around other people in a safe environment? Who can you be around that makes you feel positive? Examples include the coffee shop, the gym, church, friends, or family.

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## Step 5: Professional Resources

What professionals or agencies can offer assistance if the other parts of this plan don't seem to be helping you to stay safe? Ideally, you want to have resources that are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Look at the back of this pamphlet for more resources!

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Clinician's Name                      Clinician's Phone #

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Local Emergency Dept.                      Phone #

Suicide Hotline (LA/OC): 1.877.727.4747

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:  
1.800.273.8255

## Step 2: Internal Coping Strategies

One way to do take your mind off your suicidal thoughts is to do something that helps you feel better. What can you do when you're alone and you start to have thoughts of suicide? What can you do to take your mind off of your problems and help yourself feel better? Examples include reading a book, playing computer games, exercising, playing with your dog, shopping, or writing down your thoughts and feelings in a journal.

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## Step 4: Who can you ask for help?

It can be helpful to have someone with whom you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts of suicide. Ideally, this is a supportive person who already knows about your suicidal thoughts before a crisis occurs and is aware of his/ her role as a resource in your plan. Having several people listed here, if possible, is best in case your primary support person is unavailable.

Who do you feel comfortable talking to when you're in crisis?

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Name    Phone #

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Name    Phone #

## Step 6: A Safer Environment

At times, if you forget to use your plan, or it doesn't make you feel better, having items close to you that you could use to harm yourself can create a dangerous situation. It is important to remove items that you may use impulsively.

What items do you have nearby that you may use to harm yourself? How can you safely remove them for the time being? Examples include pills, guns, knives, poison, or rope. To whom can you give them?

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Things that are important to me, that give me hope include: \_\_\_\_\_