

Creating a Safety Plan

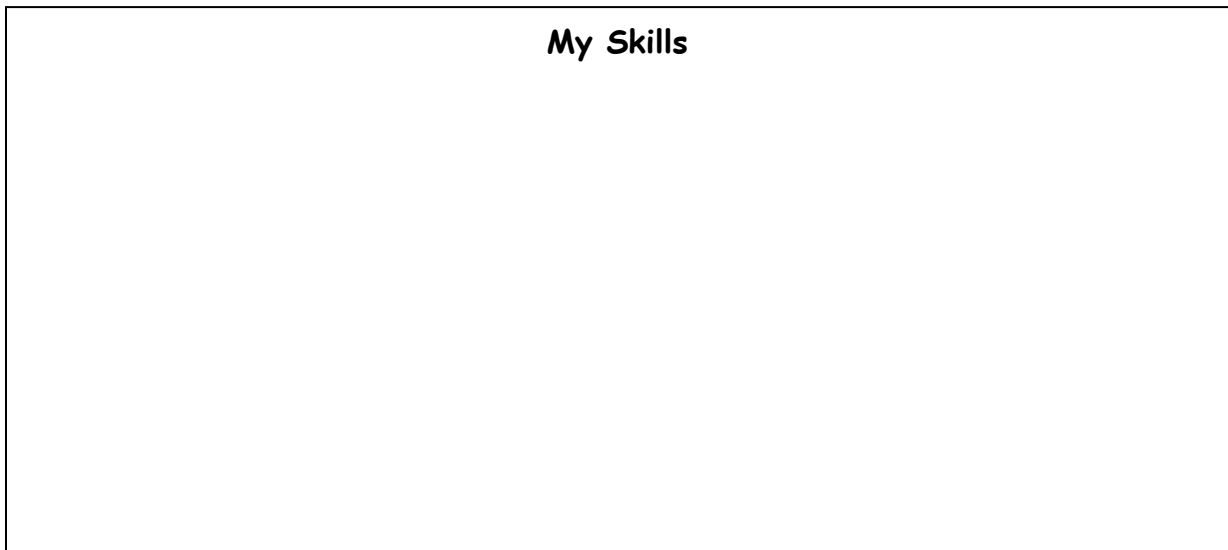
What to Know

It's important to have a plan for coping with thoughts of suicide. This worksheet will help you build your own plan, which will focus on your strengths. You'll start with managing your thoughts on your own. But sometimes coping on your own isn't enough, so your plan will include other activities, like spending time with others or asking for help.

Follow these steps.

1. Rely on your coping skills. Do something you really enjoy that will improve your mood. Identify your skills and then circle the healthiest and most useful ones.

My Skills



The goal of this step is to do something that's interesting, active, and distracting.

2. Create a menu. Imagine you're trying a restaurant for the first time. When you open the menu, you discover the restaurant serves just one dish. There are no other options! A good menu should have many options. Your plan should also have several different activities, so you have many options to choose from. Write down fun things to do, activities that make you feel good, or things that make you smile.

Next, write down ways to relax or unwind when you've had a bad day. What makes you feel calm?

Now list anything that you do to feel better when you are down, sad, or disappointed. What do you do to cope with difficult times in your life?

If it's hard to come up with ideas, review the following and add any that sound fun or interesting to your lists:

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| Take your dog for a walk. | Complete a puzzle. | Play with your pet. |
| Write a story. | Go for a run or jog. | Paint or draw a picture. |
| Exercise. | Wash the car. | Run some errands. |
| Clean your room. | Sketch in your notebook. | Play video games. |
| Make a YouTube video. | Play a game. | Start an art project. |
| Read a good book. | Bake cookies. | Learn a language. |
| Take a shower or bath. | Learn to play an instrument. | Take a walk. |
| Build something. | Play your favorite sport. | Dance. |
| Watch funny videos. | Ride your bicycle. | Create a comic book. |
| Take a bubble bath. | Meditate. | Practice free throws. |
| Learn something new. | Listen to music. | Spend time outdoors. |

Now that you have a list, select 4-5 for your safety plan. Choose things you can do at home, at school, or wherever else you spend a lot of time.

3. Review and revise. Ask yourself:

- Are all the activities on your list things you can do for at least 15-20 minutes? If not, add more activities.
- Did you list things you can do at home? At school? Try to add at least one thing for every place you spend a lot of time.
- Do any of your activities need supplies? If you don't have the supplies, can you get them? Would it be better to choose a different activity?
- Do you need permission to do any of the activities? If you do, ask your caregiver, or list another activity.
- Is there anything on your list that may harm you or someone else? Cross off any harmful activities.

Try your activities over the next week. Were they distracting? Did you have fun? If an activity helped you to stay busy and kept you engaged, then it's good to keep it on your list.

4. Be Social! If you think about hurting yourself, look at your list of activities and try one. Hopefully it will distract you enough that your suicidal thoughts pass. But sometimes thoughts are persistent. If doing something on your own isn't enough, involve others. Spend time with at least one other person.

When you have thoughts about suicide, you might want to be alone. If you need time and space to focus, being alone is helpful. If you're upset or angry, being alone can help you calm down, think things through, and avoid annoying people. But when you have thoughts of suicide, being alone with your thoughts can be harmful.

Seek out other people, like a friend, family member, neighbor, coach, or anyone you like to talk to and spend time with. Visit this person, call them, or video chat—anything that offers connection. You could also go to a public place, like a local park, café, or school sports event, where you can be around other people.

Who can you talk to or spend some time with? Make a list of 3 people.

Where can you go to be around people?

5. Ask for Help. When problems seem overwhelming or just too big to handle on your own, rely on others to help you. Identify and connect with some safe adults that can help you—people who can listen, help you find solutions, and provide some hope. Choose someone who will sit and listen to you, offer advice, or try to help. What are you looking for in a good helper?

Who are the adults in your life who might be able to help? Choose people you feel comfortable talking to—people you think will be a good support when you need them.

Consider these people as you make your list:

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| Caregivers/Parents | Coach or team leader | Stepparents |
| Faith leaders | Grandparents | Neighbors |
| Aunts or Uncles | Teachers | School counselor |
| Older siblings | Parents of your friends | Adult cousins |
| Friends of your parents | | |

Select three adults you are most comfortable talking to.

My Helpful Adults:

Have a short conversation with each of the adults you selected. It can help to have an idea of what you want to say and practice it by yourself.

6. Professional Helpers. If you're worried you will act on your thoughts and harm yourself, seek help from a professional. There are three ways to seek professional help:

1. If you have a therapist or counselor, call them. Ask your therapist if they are available for calls or can offer an alternative.

2. Contact a crisis hotline. Suicide prevention hotlines are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and they are staffed by trained professionals.

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call 988
- Crisis Text Line: text the message "home" to the number 741741
- The Trevor Project: call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678

3. In any emergency, call 911 or go to your local hospital emergency room.

Now that you have all the elements to your safety plan, it's time to put them together in a step-by-step guide.

Note: Make sure you have access to your plan whenever and wherever you need it.

How will you make sure your safety plan is available? Take a photo and store it in your phone, or put a copy in your wallet, purse, or backpack. You could use an app. You could tape a copy to your bedroom mirror. Do whatever it takes to make sure your safety plan is always available when you need it.

My Safety Plan

1. Ways I can cope on my own:

2. People I can talk to:

3. Places I can go:

4. My helpful adults:

5. Call a professional:

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988
- Text "home" to the Crisis Text Line: 741741
- Call 911 or go to an emergency room.