



Suicidal feelings

Explains what suicidal feelings are, and what you can do if you feel suicidal. Also covers the causes, treatments and support options for suicidal feelings.

If you require this information in Word document format for compatibility with screen readers, please email: publications@mind.org.uk

Contents

What are suicidal feelings?	2
Why do I feel suicidal?	3
Where can I get treatment and support for suicidal feelings?	6
How can I cope right now?	9
How can I cope in the future?.....	12
Useful contacts	16

What are suicidal feelings?

Suicide is the act of intentionally taking your own life.

Suicidal feelings can mean having abstract thoughts about ending your life or feeling that people would be better off without you. Or it can mean thinking about methods of suicide or making clear plans to take your own life.

If you are feeling suicidal, you might be scared or confused by these feelings. You may find the feelings overwhelming.

But you are not alone. Many people think about suicide at some point in their lifetime.

"I couldn't see past the pain. It was a different reality for me. I only knew I wanted the pain to stop, the anguish to go away."

What does it feel like to be suicidal?

Different people have different experiences of suicidal feelings. You might feel unable to cope with the difficult feelings you are experiencing. You may feel less like you want to die and more like you cannot go on living the life you have.

These feelings may build over time or might change from moment to moment. And it's common to not understand why you feel this way.

How you might think or feel

- hopeless, like there is no point in living
- tearful and overwhelmed by negative thoughts
- unbearable pain that you can't imagine ending
- useless, not wanted or not needed by others
- desperate, as if you have no other choice
- like everyone would be better off without you
- cut off from your body or physically numb
- fascinated by death.

What you may experience

- poor sleep, including waking up earlier than you want to
- a change in appetite, weight gain or loss
- no desire to take care of yourself, for example neglecting your physical appearance

- wanting to avoid others
- making a will or giving away possessions
- struggling to communicate
- self-loathing and low [self-esteem](#)
- urges to [self-harm](#).

"Suicidal thoughts aren't permanent – things do improve. You can find your motivation to live again."

How long will I feel suicidal?

How long suicidal feelings last is different for everyone. It is common to feel as if you'll never be happy or hopeful again.

But with [treatment and support](#), including [self-care](#), the majority of people who have felt suicidal go on to live fulfilling lives.

The earlier you let someone know how you're feeling, the quicker you'll be able to get support to overcome these feelings. But it can feel difficult to open up to people.

You may want others to understand what you're going through, but you might feel:

- unable to tell someone
- unsure of who to tell
- concerned that they won't understand
- fearful of being judged
- worried you'll upset them.

If you feel like this, you might find it helpful to show our pages on [supporting someone else with suicidal feelings](#) to someone you trust. This can be a good way of starting the conversation and can give them suggestions of how they can help you.

It's important to remember that you deserve support, you are not alone and there is support out there.

"Sharing that I felt suicidal with close friends, although scary as I worried they'd be angry, has helped me in subsequent black times. They said they'd hate to lose me having not been given the chance to help."

Why do I feel suicidal?

Suicidal feelings can affect anyone, of any age, gender or background, at any time.

If you are feeling suicidal it is likely that you have felt increasingly hopeless and worthless for some time. You may not know what has caused you to feel this way but it is often a combination of factors.

This page covers:

- [Common causes of suicidal feelings](#)
- [Can medication cause suicidal feelings?](#)
- [Why are some groups more at risk of suicide?](#)

If you feel unable to keep yourself safe, it's a mental health emergency.

[Get emergency advice](#)

"The thoughts would completely consume you sometimes, feeling like you have no control over your own body."

Common causes of suicidal feelings

Struggling to cope with certain difficulties in your life can cause you to feel suicidal. These difficulties may include:

- [mental health problems](#)
- bullying or discrimination
- different types of [abuse](#), including domestic, sexual or physical abuse
- [bereavement](#), including [losing a loved one to suicide](#)
- the end of a relationship
- long-term physical pain or illness
- adjusting to a big change, such as retirement or redundancy
- [money problems](#)
- [housing problems](#), including homelessness
- isolation or [loneliness](#)
- being in prison
- feeling inadequate or a failure
- [addiction](#) or [substance abuse](#)
- pregnancy, childbirth or [postnatal depression](#)
- doubts about your sexual or gender identity
- cultural pressure, such as forced marriage

- other forms of [trauma](#).

If you are unsure of why you feel suicidal, you may find it even harder to believe that there could be a solution. But whatever the reason, there is [support available](#) to help you cope and overcome these feelings.

Can medication cause suicidal feelings?

Some medications, such as [antidepressants](#), can cause some people to experience suicidal feelings. This [side effect](#) is often associated with a type of antidepressant called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). But all antidepressants have this as a possible risk.

Some research shows that young people under the age of 25 are more likely to experience suicidal feelings when taking these medications.

Some [antipsychotic medications](#) and [mood stabilisers](#) also cause some people to experience suicidal feelings.

If you experience suicidal feelings while taking psychiatric medication, you should talk to your GP as soon as possible about this.

"Whenever I feel suicidal thoughts starting to engulf me I keep reminding myself that feelings can change in an instant. Perhaps I'll wake up tomorrow and will no longer feel like I want to die – because that has happened many times before."

Why are some groups more at risk of suicide?

Research shows that men and people from [LGBTIQ+ communities](#) are more at risk of taking their own life.

Men

It's not clear why more men than women take their own lives. But if you identify as a man, you may:

- feel pressured to 'get on with things' and keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself
- choose suicide methods that have a lower chance of survival
- believe you can cope without help, or feel you have to cope without help
- worry that you will appear weak if you talk about your feelings or seek support.

The [Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) works to prevent male suicide in the UK. CALM offers support to men in crisis via a [helpline](#) and [webchat](#).

People from LGBTIQ+ communities

Studies show that people from LGBTIQ+ communities are more likely to experience suicidal feelings and take their own lives.

The reasons for this are complex, but mental health problems experienced by LGBTIQ+ people have been linked to:

- [homophobia, biphobia and transphobia](#)
- [stigma and discrimination](#)
- [difficult experiences of coming out.](#)

You might also experience rejection, negative reactions or hostility from people in your life. For example, this could be from family members, friends, employers, members of a religious community, or strangers. This can have a big impact on your [self-esteem](#). You may also feel unable to be open about your sexual or gender identity at work, at home or in other areas of your life.

Organisations which offer support for people from LGBTIQ+ communities include:

- [Switchboard](#), which provides support and information to LGBTIQ+ people via a confidential helpline, instant messaging and email service
- the [Gender Identity Research & Education Society \(GIRES\)](#), which has a [directory of groups](#) supporting or assisting trans and gender non-conforming individuals.

See our pages on [LGBTIQ+ mental health](#) for more information and ways to find support.

Where can I get treatment and support for suicidal feelings?

If you are experiencing ongoing suicidal feelings, you might feel as if there's nothing that could help. But there is support available to help you cope with the problems that may be causing you to feel suicidal.

This page covers:

- [Support through your GP](#)
- [Helplines and listening services](#)
- [Peer support](#)
- [Talking therapies](#)
- [Medication](#)
- [Crisis services](#)

If you feel unable to keep yourself safe, it's a mental health emergency.

[Get emergency advice](#)

Support through your GP

Going to your GP is a good starting point for getting support. It is common to worry about talking to your doctor about suicidal feelings. But they will be used to listening to people who are experiencing difficult feelings.

Your GP can:

- refer you to [talking therapies](#)
- prescribe you [medication](#)
- refer you to specialist services, such as a [community mental health team \(CMHT\)](#).

See the page on [talking to your GP](#) for tips on how to speak to your doctor about your mental health.

"Always ask for help. Talking is hard but people can help us through the hard times."

Helplines and listening services

Helplines and listening services can be good ways of getting information or support when you need it. Many are available across different times of the day, and provide a confidential, judgement-free service.

Talking to someone on the telephone can also be helpful if you are finding it difficult to open up to people you know, or don't want to speak to someone face-to-face.

You can call Mind's [Infoline](#) for information and signposting to other sources of help.

Or see our page on [helplines and listening services](#) for more information, including a list of organisations you can speak to.

"I've saved the Samaritans number so I know there is always a place to talk."

Peer support

Peer support brings together people who've had similar experiences to support each other. You may find it a helpful way to share your thoughts, feelings and tips for coping with others who understand what you are going through.

Peer support can happen face-to-face, in groups or one-on-one. It can also happen over the telephone or via text messages. Or it could take place online, for example over email, within online support communities or on social media. You might prefer online support if you aren't comfortable talking face-to-face about how you feel.

There are a few different places that you can find online peer support, including:

- [Big White Wall](#), which offers support from trained professionals as well as peer support from other people experiencing mental health problems. The website is free to access for many areas of the UK, although in some cases you might need a referral from your GP to use the service.
- [Side by Side](#), Mind's supportive online community.

See our pages on [peer support](#) or contact your [local Mind](#) for more information about peer support options in your area.

Or see our page on [online mental health tools](#) to find out more about accessing peer support online.

Talking therapies

[Talking therapies](#) are treatments which involve talking to a trained professional about your thoughts, feelings and behaviour. For example, this could be speaking with a counsellor or a psychotherapist.

Talking therapies can help you understand why you're experiencing suicidal feelings. They can also help you think about ways to help yourself cope with and resolve these feelings.

There may be a long waiting list in your area to access talking therapies on the NHS. But you may be able to access them through charities, your workplace or university. Or you might be able to access them privately at a reduced rate.

See our pages on [talking therapies](#) for more information about different types of treatment and how you can access them.

Medication

There isn't a specific drug licensed to treat suicidal feelings. But your doctor might prescribe you [psychiatric medication](#) to help you cope with your symptoms. Or they might prescribe medication to treat a mental health problem which may be causing your suicidal feelings.

These medications may include:

- [antidepressants](#)
- [antipsychotics](#)
- [mood stabilisers](#).

Can medication make me feel worse?

Psychiatric medication may be prescribed to help treat a mental health problem that is causing suicidal feelings. But some people find these medications actually make them feel worse. See our page on [coping with the side effects of psychiatric medication](#) for more information.

If you experience suicidal feelings while taking psychiatric medication, you should talk to your GP as soon as possible about this.

Crisis services

A [crisis service](#) is any service that is available at short notice to help and support you during a [mental health crisis](#). These services include the following:

- **Crisis resolution and home treatment (CRHT) teams** can support you if you have a mental health crisis outside of hospital. They're often called 'crisis teams' for short, although your local service may have a different name. See our page on [crisis teams](#) for more information.
- **Crisis houses** offer intensive, short-term support to help you manage a mental health crisis in a residential setting, rather than in a hospital. See our page on [crisis houses](#) for more information, including how to find out what is available near you.
- **Local support services** may offer day services, drop-in sessions, counselling or issue-specific support. Many [local branches of the Samaritans](#) offer walk-in, face-to-face support. See our page on [day services](#) for more information about how to find and access local support services.

How can I cope right now?

If you feel unable to keep yourself safe, it's a mental health emergency.

[Get emergency advice](#)

You might be feeling so upset, angry and in pain that you believe these feelings will never end. But it's important to remember that they cannot and will not last. Like all feelings, these ones will pass.

There are steps you can take right now to stop yourself from acting on your suicidal thoughts. Everyone is different, so it's about finding what works best for you.

These are some practical tips that other people have found helpful when they've felt suicidal.

Get safe right now

Get through the next five minutes

Taking things minute by minute can help make things more bearable. Reward yourself each time five minutes have passed.

Use our ['I need urgent help'](#) tool for practical ideas to help you through the next few minutes.

Remove anything you could use to harm yourself

Remove any items or things you could use to harm yourself, or ask someone else to remove these for you. If you're in an unsafe location, move away to somewhere safer.

Follow your safety plan or crisis plan

If you have a [safety plan](#) or [crisis plan](#) in place, follow it.

These plans are a good way to save ideas for helping yourself when you feel unwell.

Tell someone how you're feeling

Whether it's a friend, family member or even a pet, telling someone else how you're feeling can help you feel less alone and more in control.

"When it got really bad and the temptation to harm myself was really bad I would get my family to hide dangerous things away and go to bed."

Distract yourself

Try self-harm coping techniques

If you're thinking of harming yourself, you could try using self-harm coping techniques.

For example, you could:

- hold an ice cube in your hand until it melts and focus on how cold it feels
- tear something up into hundreds of pieces
- take a very cold shower or bath.

See our page of [tips for coping with self-harm](#) for more ideas.

Focus on your senses

Taking time to think about what you can smell, taste, touch, hear and see can help to ground your thoughts.

Steady your breathing

Take long, deep breaths. Breathing out for longer than you breathe in can help you feel calmer.

Look after your needs

If you can, try doing the following:

- get a glass of water
- eat something if you're hungry
- sit somewhere comfortable

- write down how you're feeling.

Try to avoid drinking alcohol or taking recreational drugs, as this can make you feel worse.

Go outside

If you're feeling numb, go outside and feel the rain, sun or wind against your skin. This can help you to feel more connected to your body.

Contact a helpline or listening service

If you can't talk to someone you know, call a [helpline or listening service](#).

For example, you could call [Samaritans](#) on [116 123](#) if you want to talk to somebody about how you're feeling at any time.

Or if you'd prefer not to talk over the phone, you could try a text service such as [Shout's](#) crisis text service – text SHOUT to [85258](#).

Use online peer support

You could try using online peer support to talk about how you're feeling. For example, you could try [Elefriends](#), Mind's supportive online community.

"Sometimes it's just about survival and focusing on something that's real until the feelings can become easier to deal with."

Challenge your thoughts

Make a deal with yourself that you won't act today

Plan to get support if you're not getting support already. See our page on [treatment and support](#) for information about different ways to find help.

Find your reasons to live

You may feel like the world will be better off without you or there's no point in living, but this is never the case. You could try the following:

- Write down what you're looking forward to. This could be eating your favourite meal, seeing a loved one or catching up on the next episode of a TV show.
- Make plans to do something you enjoy tomorrow or in the near future. Plans don't have to be big or expensive.
- Think about the people you love. No matter how bad you're feeling, it's important to remember that these people would miss you.

Be kind to yourself

Talk to yourself as if you were talking to a good friend. And try doing something nice for yourself.

This could be something small like having a bath, wrapping yourself in a blanket and watching your favourite film.

These ideas may seem silly but it can be easy to forget to do something nice for yourself.

Tell yourself you can get through this

At times, we can concentrate on the negative things we tell ourselves and lose hope.

Repeating to yourself that you can get past these feelings can help you regain hope and focus on getting through it.

"Rather than focus on all the desperate negative thoughts about being a burden and of no use, bring your focus into trying to believe it will not last forever and working out how you can safely get through."

How can I cope in the future?

If you have experienced suicidal feelings in the past, you may be worried that these feelings might return.

Or if you are feeling low now, you might worry that these feelings will get worse.

But there are steps you can take to look after and improve your [general wellbeing](#) when you're feeling low. You can also do things to prepare in case you feel suicidal again:

Make a safety plan

A safety plan is a plan to support you at times when you may be thinking about suicide.

This plan is personal to you, and may include:

- how to recognise your warning signs
- details of your own coping strategies, such as what has helped you cope in the past and what you can do to help yourself now
- the names and contact details of anyone you know who may be able to help
- the names and contact details of professionals or agencies you can contact if you are in crisis
- any [helplines and listening services](#) who can help you in a crisis
- steps you can take to make your immediate environment safe
- details of a safe place you can go, if you need to.

Try to make a plan when you can think clearly about what you would find helpful. You might want to complete the plan with someone you trust, such as a friend or therapist. You could also give them a copy of the plan to keep.

"I tried to plan for feeling really bad, knowing that I could become incapable of controlling my feelings for a while. It hurts to not trust yourself but it does pass and I am so glad to be here still."

You can find templates for making a safety plan online. For example, this [Students Against Depression safety plan template](#).

Is a safety plan the same as a crisis plan?

A safety plan focuses on what you can do now to keep yourself safe.

A [crisis plan](#) also focuses on what has helped to keep you safe in the past, but is more detailed. It covers what treatment you would like to receive if necessary, and whether you've made an [advance statement or decision](#).

Learn to manage difficult feelings

Take each day at a time

There might be good days and bad days. Try to focus on each day at a time and set yourself small, achievable goals.

Develop coping strategies that work for you

Self-help resources can help you work through difficult feelings and learn coping skills. The NHS has information about [self-help for mental health problems](#).

Allow yourself to feel your feelings

Suppressing your feelings when they happen can cause them to build up over time and make them even harder to cope with.

Think about what caused you to feel suicidal and share this with those supporting you.

Make a happy box

Fill a box with memories and items that can provide comfort and help lift your mood when you feel down.

The box can contain anything that is meaningful and helpful to you. For example:

- a favourite book
- positive quotes

- photos
- letters
- poems
- notes to yourself
- a cuddly toy
- a perfume or smell that's important to you.

Learn your triggers

Keeping a diary can help you find patterns in your mood over time. It can also help you think about what might be causing you to feel suicidal.

You can track your feelings by using an online mood diary. See our page of [useful contacts](#) for links to some mood diaries you could try.

Don't blame yourself

If you have tried to take your own life, or thought about taking your life, you may feel guilty afterwards. This can especially happen if the people close to you feel worried about you.

Try to accept that it was just how you were feeling at the time, and focus your energy now on looking after yourself.

Value yourself

Write a letter to yourself

Try to include happy memories and mention people who care about you. This may be helpful to read when you are experiencing suicidal feelings to remind yourself that things can get better.

Make plans to look forward to

Planning time to spend with others or doing things you enjoy can help you feel more positive about the future. It doesn't have to be something big like a holiday. You could book tickets to a music or art event, or try joining a club.

Build your self-esteem

See our pages on [self-esteem](#) for tips to help improve how you feel about yourself.

Celebrate yourself

Write down your achievements and the things you like about yourself, however small. If someone compliments you, make a note of it.

Do things just for yourself

Try to regularly make time for things you like to do. You could spend half an hour reading a book, or doing a hobby you enjoy. Or you could take the chance to try out something new.

Connect with other people

Seek support

See our page on [treatment and support](#) for ways to find help and support for suicidal feelings. These support options may help if you don't currently receive any support and want to start. But they also help if the support you currently receive doesn't feel right for you and you want to try something different.

Let others know how you're feeling

Tell people what you find helpful and let them know when you're finding things difficult. It's okay to ask others to be with you if you need them.

Volunteer

Giving your time to help others can be rewarding. It can build your confidence and make you feel appreciated and needed by others.

Try peer support

You may find it helpful to talk to other people who have experienced suicidal feelings. Peer support brings together people with similar experiences, so they can share those experiences and tips to help each other cope.

Contact your [local Mind](#) to find what peer support services are available locally.

You can also access peer support online, for example through Mind's supportive online community, [Side by Side](#).

"Sharing that I felt suicidal with close friends, although scary as I worried they'd be angry, has helped me in subsequent black times. They said they'd hate to lose me having not been given the chance to help."

[Read Steven's blog about asking for help when he was feeling suicidal.](#)

Look after your physical health

Try to get good sleep

Learn to relax before bed, making sure your bedroom is a calm place clear of distractions. If you are having trouble sleeping, see our pages on [sleep problems](#) for tips to help you cope.

Try to avoid recreational drugs and alcohol

You might find that you want to use recreational drugs or alcohol to cope with difficult feelings about yourself.

But in the long run they can make you feel worse and can prevent you from dealing with any underlying problems.

See our pages on [recreational drugs and alcohol](#) for more information about how these can affect your mental health.

Think about your diet

Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels. See our pages on [food and mood](#) for more tips.

Try to do some physical activity

Many people find exercise a challenge but activities like yoga, swimming or walking can be a big boost to your mood.

If you don't feel confident doing exercise, you could start off with smaller activities and build from there. For example, [the NHS has a list of gentle chair-based exercises](#) to try in your own home, which may be a good starting point.

See our pages on [physical activity and your mental health](#) for more information.

Useful contacts

Mind's services

- [Helplines](#) – our Infolines provide information and support by phone, email and text.
- [Local Minds](#) – provide face-to-face services across England and Wales. These might be talking therapies, peer support and advocacy.
- [Elefriends](#) – our supportive online community for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Other organisations

Big White Wall

bigwhitewall.com

Online mental health community. Free in some areas through your GP, employer or university.

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

[0800 58 58 58](tel:0800585858) (UK helpline)

[0808 802 58 58](tel:08088025858) (London helpline)

thecalmzone.net

Provides listening services, information and support for men at risk of suicide, including a web chat.

Gender Identity Research & Education Society (GIRES)

gires.org.uk

Works to improve the lives of trans and gender non-conforming people of all ages, including those who are non-binary and non-gender.

Maytree Suicide Respite Centre

[020 7263 7070](tel:02072637070)

maytree.org.uk

Offers free respite stays for people in suicidal crisis.

The Mix

[0808 808 4994](tel:08088084994)

[85258](tel:85258) (crisis messenger service, text THEMIX)

themix.org.uk

Support and advice for under 25s, including a helpline, crisis messenger service and webchat.

Mood Diaries

medhelp.org/land/mood-tracker

moodscope.com

moodchart.org

moodpanda.com

Some examples of mood diaries – many more are available. Mind doesn't endorse any particular one.

NHS 111 (England)

[111](#)

111.nhs.uk

Non-emergency medical help and advice for people in England.

NHS 111 Wales

[111](#) (Hywel Dda, Powys, Aneurin Bevan and Swansea Bay Health Boards (including Brigend))

[0845 46 47](#) (all other areas of Wales)

111.wales.nhs.uk

Non-emergency medical help and advice for people living in Wales. The contact number for this service differs depending on which area of Wales you live in.

Papyrus HOPELINEUK

[0800 068 41 41](tel:08000684141)

[07786 209697](tel:07786209697) (text)

papyrus-uk.org

Confidential support for under-35s at risk of suicide and others who are concerned about them.

Sane

sane.org.uk

Offers emotional support and information for anyone affected by mental health problems.

Samaritans

[116 123](tel:116123) (freephone)

jo@samaritans.org

Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK

PO Box 90 90

Stirling FK8 2SA

samaritans.org

Open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk. You can [visit some branches in person](#). They also have a Welsh Language Line on 0300 123 3011 (7pm–11pm every day).

Shout

[85258](tel:85258) (text SHOUT)

giveusashout.org

Confidential 24/7 text service offering support if you are in crisis and need immediate help.

Stay Alive

prevent-suicide.org.uk

App with help and resources for people who feel suicidal or are supporting someone else.

Students Against Depression

studentsagainstdepression.org

Information and support for students experiencing suicidal feelings, including a helpful safety plan template.

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

[0300 111 5065](https://03001115065)

uk-sobs.org.uk

Emotional and practical support and local groups for anyone bereaved or affected by suicide.

Switchboard

[0300 330 0630](https://03003300630)

switchboard.lgbt

Listening services, information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.