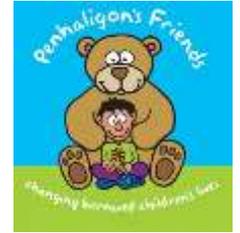


# Penhaligon's Friends



## What to Do When Someone is feeling Suicidal

**If someone has attempted suicide, call 999 and stay with them until the ambulance arrives.**

If you're worried that someone is at immediate risk of ending their own life, it's best to stay with them and take one of these steps:

- Take them to any hospital **A&E department**
- **call 999** and ask for an ambulance if you can't get to A&E
- ask someone else to contact 999 for you

It can be very distressing if you are worried about someone who feels suicidal. They may have talked about wanting to end their life, or you may be concerned that they are thinking about it.

The essential thing when supporting someone through this is compassion, listening and most importantly not over-reacting or becoming upset. Remaining calm and talking the situation through is extremely important.

You might feel unsure of what to do, but there are lots of things that might help. You could:

- Be alert. Not everyone who thinks about suicide will tell someone, but there may be warning signs.
- Be honest. Tell the person why you're worried about them, and ask about suicide. Tell them you want to know how they are, and that it's OK to talk about suicide.
- Ask them what they intend to do to end their life (this is unlikely to make the situation any worse).
- Listen. Just listening is one of the most helpful things you can do. Try not to judge or give advice.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Get them some help.
- It may also be helpful to remove things that someone could use to harm themselves, particularly if they have mentioned specific things they might use.
- Encourage them to seek treatment and support.
- Offer practical support.
- Help them think of ideas for self-help.
- Help them to make a safety plan.
- Encourage them to ring their GP or out of hours service for an emergency appointment.
- Take care of yourself. Discuss your feelings with a friend or a support service.

### Websites & Helplines which may be useful

Download the app '**Stay Alive**' from the App Store or Google Play.

Contact the **Samaritans** on freephone 116 123, they're open 24 hours and are there to listen.

**Papyrus Hopeline** (for under 35s) 08000684141 text 07786209697 [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) .

**SANE** 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm to 10.30pm everyday) [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk) .

**Give us a shout** Text SHOUT to 85258 24/7 [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org) .

**Switchboard** for LGBT+ people 0300 330 0630 (10am to 10pm everyday) [www.switchboard.lgbt](http://www.switchboard.lgbt) .

**Mind** 0300 123 3393 text 86463 [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) .

**Childline** 0800 11 11 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) .

# Supporting Children Who Say They Want to Die

## **Stay calm**

It is distressing to hear anyone say they want to die or harm themselves in any way. Try to stay calm - a child may feel better able to talk to you or explain how they feel if you appear calm and able to listen. You may be panicking on the inside or feeling overwhelming emotions and fears yourself however try your best to stay as calm as possible – you may find it helpful to access support yourself later on.

## **Check their understanding of death**

If a younger child says that they want to die, then it is important to check out what this means to them.

Some children may say this without understanding what death really means. It is important to ask them what they think happens when you die.

Some children believe they may see someone else who has died, and in grief, they may feel a longing to be with them or see them again. It is important to empathise with the child and acknowledge just how much they miss that person. It may help to sensitively make them aware that there is no guarantee they would see the person again if they died.

## **Check they know how serious death is**

It is important for children to understand the seriousness of death. Let them know that there is no coming back again after you die.

## **Talk about those who care about them**

Talk about how other people would feel if they were to die. Let them know how much they are loved and cared about and how it would mean they would never see each other again.

## **Create a support / safety plan**

A support plan/safety plan, as described below, may be useful to create with the child so they have a visual reminder of the things they can do when they are having a bad day. This may be a good way for the child to see how much people care about them and what support they have.

## **Comfort them**

It is very important for children to know that emotions are normal and survivable, that they come and go - as do many of life's problems and ups and downs.

Let the child know that you are there to support them. Listen to them and comfort them whilst they show their distress, let them cry and help them express their anger in a safe way.

If you are supporting someone else's child, then inform their parents/carers of your concerns. If you are a professional supporting a child, then report your concerns to your manager or supervisor. If you are a parent/carer or sibling worried about a child, then speak to any of the listed support helplines above along with your child's GP. Youngminds also have a parents Helpline on **0808 802 5544** (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm, free for mobiles and landlines).

Children may say things like 'I want to die' as a way of communicating just how emotionally distressed they are. Whilst most of the time they probably don't really want to die, it is still very important to take what they say seriously. Acknowledge how hard things are feeling for them at the moment and seek further support and advice.

## Creating a Safety Plan

### What is a safety plan?

Making a safety plan is a way of working out what might be helpful and recording those ideas in one place, which some people find useful.

A safety plan is to set out how someone would like to be supported and what they can do to help themselves in a particular situation. It can encourage them to tell you or someone else what might help. It's also a useful way of keeping important information and contacts together in one place.

As well as asking someone what they might find helpful, it's also important to think about what help you feel able to give. If someone wants help you don't feel you can offer, it's okay not to agree and to find other options.

You could encourage them to explore other ways of finding support.

You could encourage the person you are concerned about to make a safety plan. The safety plan is for them to fill in, although you might help them do this.

It can be helpful to:

- talk together about what to include
- ask them what has or hasn't helped before
- write or print more than one copy
- keep it somewhere easy to find
- save important numbers in their phone

### Safety plan

See an example of a Suicide Safety Plan provided by Papyrus below. This would need to be simplified for a younger child however the idea of a safety/support plan may still be useful at any age.

CALL HOPELINEUK 0800 068 4141

# SUICIDE SAFETY PLAN



**PAPYRUS**

PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE

## Suicide Safety Plan

When thoughts of suicide are overwhelming, staying safe for even 5-10 minutes takes a great deal of strength. This plan is to use during those times. It isn't a plan for how to rid yourself of thoughts of suicide, it looks at staying safe **right now** so that you still have the chance to fight another day and access support for whatever is impacting on those thoughts of overall. These thoughts and feelings can change, it doesn't mean you will feel like this forever. Let's concentrate on what you can do **right now**.

### Why do I want to stay safe?

What are the reasons I don't want to die today? Are there people or animals that make me want to stay safe? Do I have hope that things might change? Am I afraid of dying? Do I want to stay alive just for now?

### Making my environment safer:

Whilst I am focusing on safety, how can I make it harder to act on any plans I might have for suicide? Where can I put things I could use to harm myself so they are harder to get to if I feel overwhelmed?

This doesn't mean having to get rid of them forever. It is because I am looking at staying safe right now. If these things make it harder for me to do this, I want to make it harder to use them. This will give me time to connect to that part of me that doesn't want to die.

**What might make it harder for me to stay safe right now and what can I do about this?**

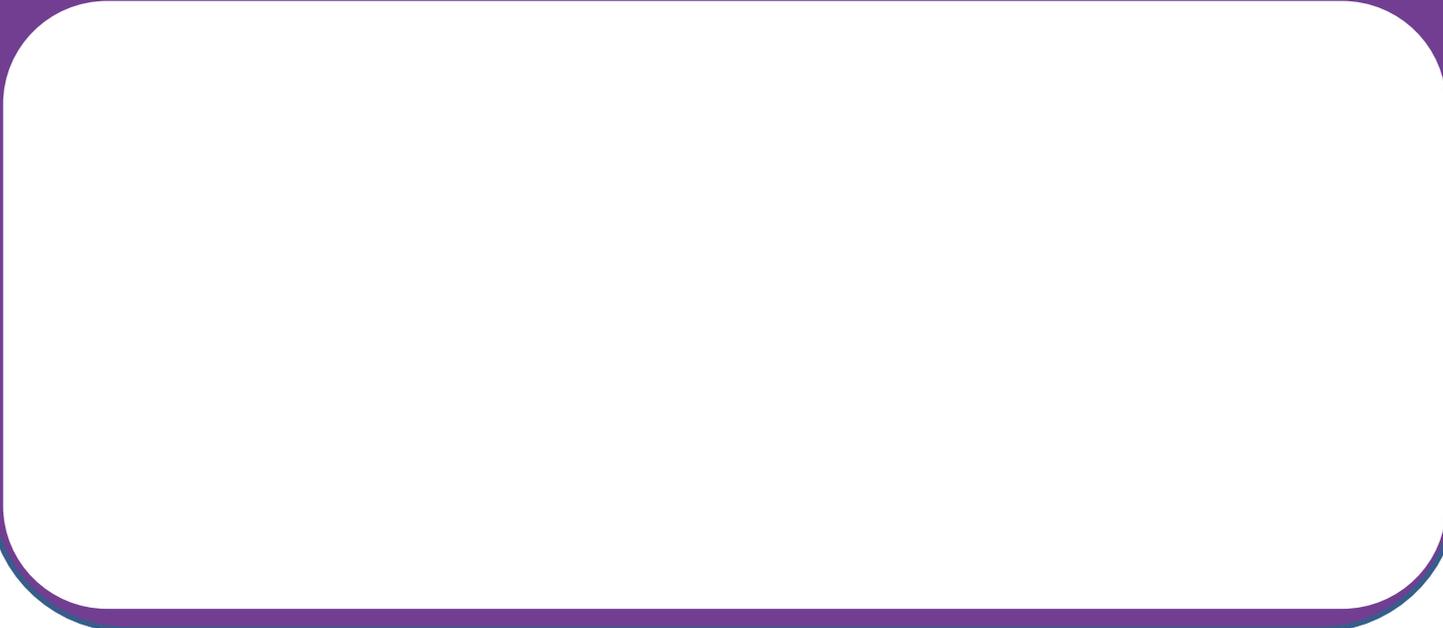
Do I use any drugs, alcohol or medication to cope? These can make it harder to stay safe if they make me more impulsive or lower my mood. What can I do to make these safe?

If I have acted on thoughts of suicide before, what makes it harder to stay safe that I might need to consider while staying safe today?

Do I have any mental health concerns or symptoms that make it harder to stay safe?  
How can I help with these?

**What can I do right now to keep me safe?**

What coping strategies can I use? What has worked in the past? Is there anywhere I can go that will feel safe?



**What strengths do I have that I can use to keep myself safe?**

What strengths do I have as a person and how might this keep me safe? What do people who are about me say about this? Am I creative? Determined? Caring? Do I have faith or any positive statement I use for inspiration? How can I use this in my plan to stay safe right now?



### Who can I reach out to for help?

If I can't stay safe, who is available to help me? Who has helped me in the past? What helplines or emergency contacts can I use?

-  101 or 999 for emergency support
-  NHS 111 for medical advice
-  HOPELINEUK 0800 068 4141 for confidential support and advice
-  ChildLine 0800 11 11

### Long-term support plan:

After staying safe-for-now from suicide, what longer term support do I want? How might I access this? What do I need to change for my thoughts of suicide

-  Talk to my GP