

Suicidal Ideation

What are suicidal feelings?

Suicidal feelings or thoughts occur when someone thinks about ending their life or doesn't want to be alive anymore. You might also hear this be called suicidal ideation.

It's normal to feel low or that things are a bit much sometimes. But if those feelings start taking over and you don't know what to do, you might think the only way out is to end your life. It's okay to share that worry and there are lots of people who understand and can help.

If you're having suicidal thoughts, there is always a reason to live, even when things feel too much.



How common are suicidal feelings?

Lots of people feel suicidal at some time in their life and one in four young people experience suicidal thoughts at some point, so you're not alone. There are many ways of dealing with these feelings and overcoming them so that you feel safe again.

What causes suicidal feelings?

Anyone can feel suicidal for any reason. What causes one person to have suicidal feelings might not be the same for someone else. Suicidal thoughts can build up slowly, or they can come out of nowhere. There's not always a clear reason and it can happen even when life feels okay.

Suicidal thoughts can be linked to feeling depressed or managing mental illnesses. They can appear when you're stressed, feeling pressure or have gone through trauma.

Suicidal feelings can get in the way of everything else – it might feel impossible to believe that you can feel better. But you can, no matter how difficult things feel right now. Whatever's making you feel this way, it's valid and you deserve help.

Warning signs of suicidal feelings

Sometimes it's hard to spot when you're dealing with suicidal feelings, especially if they've been building up for a while.

Here are some signs of suicidal feelings to watch out for:

- always talking or thinking about death
- deep depression and sadness
- losing interest in daily life
- struggling to sleep or eat

- feeling helpless or worthless
- self-harming
- feeling angry and that things can't change

If any of these sound familiar, don't keep it to yourself. Seek help.

Speak to your GP or a health professional

Talking to a professional might feel scary, but they've heard it all before. They'll know about local support services and can help you decide if medication is an option.

Make a safety plan

This can cover what helps you when things feel too much and who can help you. Read more about [creating your own](#). If it feels hard to create it by yourself, work with a friend, family member or your GP.

Put together a self-soothe box

Some people find it helpful to use a self-soothe box when difficult thoughts or feelings come up. Learn how you can make one and how it can really help.

Make a self-soothe box

A self-soothe box contains a range of sensory things that may bring you comfort. You could include something to smell, something to touch, something to look at and maybe even something to taste.

Touch

Include something that you can touch. This is a good distraction for your hands. Playdough, fidget cubes or spinners, and stress balls are great for this. They're satisfying to touch, and easy to put force into and relieve stress. They can encourage your muscles to relax, which can reduce anxiety.

Memories

Photos of people or places that have only positive memories attached to them. These act as a reminder that life is made up of different elements and will remind you that there are people who you can turn to.

Smell

This can be personalised depending on what scents you prefer. A few of the typical ones include:

- Peppermint for grounding.
- Lavender for relaxation.
- Rose for tranquillity.

A bottle of essential oil as it is a strong, concentrated scent; you can put a few drops on your clothing, stress ball or playdough. Another great item is a candle. The scent of a candle is perfect to focus your senses on and has the ability to make you feel much more present.

If you can't have candles in your home, room sprays or essential oils work in a similar way. If you try to keep the scent fairly simple and consistent, you can end up associating this scent with relaxing, which increases its effectiveness.

Music

Music alone can have a really positive affect on emotional wellbeing. A little wind-up music box is a really simple way to play music that doesn't require access to a phone or laptop.

Pick music that is calming and has a solid beat to help you breathe slowly and steadily. Slowing your breathing to a steady pace can help you relax if you are feeling stressed.

Alternatively keeping some earphones and making an easy-to-access, calming playlist on your phone is a nice, easy way of finding music to listen to.

Water

Drinking water can be such a vital way of reducing symptoms of panic. Not only is it important to stay hydrated, but the regular sipping is a good way to keep a steady rhythm to your breathing.

The coolness of water can often give you something to focus on and have a grounding effect. Keep a cup or water-bottle in my self-soothe box, which acts as a gentle reminder to keep drinking.

Steady your breathing

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

Activity

Having an activity to complete can really help you self-soothe. Reading and colouring are good options. You can find plenty of inexpensive beautiful colouring books, pretty much anywhere nowadays - The Works, Amazon and Waterstones all have a good variety to choose from. You can also find a lot of printable colouring sheets online. Keep some colouring pencils and a pad in your self-smooth box.

Colouring is a very simple task and having something beautiful that you made can feel very rewarding. You might like to write about how you are feeling, or try some creative writing or poetry; for that you can include a pen and notepad.

Reading is another good option. Avoid books that could be potentially triggering, particularly if you are in a vulnerable mindset. However, this can vary from person to person. For some people, emotionally dense poetry or literature can help reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation. Other activities can include:

- word searches
- word games
- sudoku
- knitting
- crocheting
- collaging
- games on your phone

Help for suicidal thoughts

If you're feeling like you want to end your life, it's important to tell someone.

Help and support is available right now if you need it. You do not have to struggle with difficult feelings alone.

Phone a helpline

These free helplines are there to help when you're feeling down or desperate.

Unless it says otherwise, they're open 24 hours a day, every day.

You can also call these helplines for advice if you're worried about someone else.

NHS 111

Call 111 – 24 hours every day

[Samaritans](#) – for everyone

Call 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

[Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#)

Call 0800 58 58 58 – 5pm to midnight every day

Visit the [webchat page](#)

[Papyrus – prevention of young suicide HOPELINE247](#)

Call 0800 068 41 41

Text 07860 039967

Email pat@papyrus-uk.org

[SOS Silence of Suicide](#) – for everyone

Call 0808 115 1505 – 8pm to midnight Monday to Friday, 4pm to midnight Saturday and Sunday

Email contact@sosilenceofsuicide.org

Message a text line

If you do not want to talk to someone over the phone, this text line is open 24 hours a day, every day.

Text "SHOUT" to 85258

Talk to someone you trust

Let family or friends know what's going on for you. They may be able to offer support and help keep you safe. There's no right or wrong way to talk about suicidal feelings – starting the conversation is what's important.