

A Guide to understanding and coping with common mental health issues.

Issues covered in this guide include:

- Warning Signs of a Mental Health Crisis
- Coping With Anxiety
- Coping With Depression
- Coping With Stress
- Coping With Bullying & Cyber-bullying
- Active Listening and how it can help

Help And Assistance

If you are concerned about yourself, friends or family get immediate support and information 24/7 by FreeTexting **HELP** to **50015**. Texting 50015 is free of charge from any network and you can text this number even if you have no credit.

For information on Emergency Contacts, National Helplines, Local Support Groups and your nearest Places of Safety visit www.ineedhelp.ie

Always call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured, and their life is at risk.

Gardaí / Ambulance / Fire call 999 or 112

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Coping *with*

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS



WARNING SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
Short guides to coping with common mental health issues

Coping *with*

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Suicidal thoughts, or having thoughts about ending your life, are very distressing. If you are going through a time when everything feels hopeless or overwhelming, it can seem like there is nothing you can do to make your life better. You may feel like you have run out of options or solutions, and thoughts of suicide might start to occur more frequently. Often, people who feel very low have mixed thoughts about ending their life, and it is a very confusing, upsetting and painful time.

In this article, we will look in more detail at what suicidal thoughts are, why they occur, and offer practical tips to help you manage your thoughts and start to see that the right support is available to you if you are feeling this way.

What are Suicidal Thoughts?

Suicide is the act of ending your life, and suicidal thoughts or feelings occur when you have the idea or desire to end your life. Suicidal thoughts can vary greatly. You might have vague ideas or fantasies about no longer being alive, or thoughts that others would be better off if you were no longer around. Alternatively, you might have clear plans of exactly how you would end your life, or have started to put a plan into place.

Many of us will think about suicide at some point in our lifetime. We all go through very difficult or dark periods in life, which may occur for many reasons including bereavement, relationship breakdowns, job losses or money worries. Dark periods can also form part of diagnosed mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety. If you have thoughts of suicide, you are not alone. However, help is available to you, and it is vital that you reach out to your parents, siblings, parents, friends or a healthcare professional for support.



What Causes Suicidal Thoughts?

Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone, from children to the elderly. If you are experiencing thoughts about ending your life, you may have had the thoughts for some time, or they may be new. It is likely that you might have been feeling low or upset, or felt that life is hopeless, for some time before the suicidal thoughts began.

Suicidal thoughts can occur if you are going through a traumatic or difficult time in your life, or if you have certain mental health conditions. Managing a long term physical illness or disease can also make you feel very low, which may lead to suicidal thoughts.

There are many reasons that someone might experience suicidal thoughts. Traumas or experiences that may leave you with suicidal thoughts include:

- Being bullied
- Facing racism, homophobia, sexism or discrimination of any kind
- Being abused, including physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse
- Worrying about your sexuality
- Having a mental or physical health condition
- Suffering with long term or chronic pain
- The death of a family member, friend, or pet
- Money worries
- Housing problems
- Stress of exams or another part of your education
- Feeling inadequate compared to others
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Using recreational or illegal drugs
- Some prescribed medications.



This list does not cover every reason for suicidal thoughts. There are many other causes, and you may not be sure exactly why you are having the thoughts. Regardless of whether or not there is a clear cause for how you feel, speaking to a professional will help you to see that there are other options available, and that you won't always feel this way.

What Can I Do to Cope with Suicidal Thoughts?

If you are having suicidal thoughts, it is vital that you ask for help. When you feel so low that you are considering ending your life, it feels like a very lonely place. However, support is available for anyone who is feeling suicidal or having thoughts about suicide.



Seek Medical Advice

The first step is to seek an emergency appointment with your doctor. If you need advice or to be seen outside of normal working hours, you can instead go to the emergency department of a hospital. If you are already under the care of a mental health crisis team, you should call them. In a mental health emergency or crisis, you must call 999 or 112 for assistance.

Sadly, doctors see lots of patients who are having thoughts about suicide. However, this means that they are experienced in providing support to those who need it. When you visit your doctor, they will listen to how you are feeling, and then offer the support you require. This support may include:

- Starting a medication that will prevent you from feeling so sad or low, and should therefore help to lessen any thoughts of suicide
- Referring you to see a counsellor or therapist who will listen to your thoughts, and give you a safe place to express how you are feeling. A counsellor can also recommend constructive guidance and exercises to support your mental health
- Referral to a specialist mental health team in the community.



Call a Helpline

There are times when suicidal thoughts might feel overwhelming. Even if you already have medical or mental health support, you may still have ups and downs. If you are feeling low, being able to call a helpline can give you the support you need exactly when you need it.

If you are worried about yourself, a friend, or a family member, you can FreeText HELP to 50015. Other helplines include:

- The Samaritans 116 123
- Pieta House 1800 247 247
- Aware1890 30 33 02
- ISPCC Childline 1800 66 66 66
- Teen-Line Ireland 1800 83 36 34.



Speak to Friends or Family

When you are feeling low or distressed, talking to someone you trust can be very helpful. If you feel able to, confide in a friend, parent or teacher about how you are feeling. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can make them seem like less of a burden. The process of talking may also help to lessen the power of any suicidal thoughts you might be having.

How Can I Manage a Crisis?

If you are in crisis, you need to make sure you act to ensure your safety. There are some things that you can do to prevent yourself from acting on any thoughts of suicide. This includes:

- Telling someone how you are feeling, for example a friend, relative, teacher or by calling 999 or 112
- Call a helpline to talk to someone who can help you manage the crisis
- Tell yourself that you just need to get through the next few minutes, and repeat this until you feel calmer
- Move away from anything that you could use to hurt yourself, or get rid of anything that could harm you
- Try to make yourself feel safe by having a warm bath, getting into bed, writing down how you feel, or eating or drinking something you enjoy

- Go outside for a walk
- Practice breathing exercises or mindfulness to try to feel calmer
- Text a friend and see if this helps you to feel more distracted.

If you still feel that you are in crisis or are struggling with thoughts of suicide, you must get medical help to ensure you remain safe.

Final Thoughts

Thoughts of suicide can occur to anyone, especially during stressful or upsetting times in our lives. Although it might feel like suicide is the only option, there is always a way that things can start to improve and feel easier. Seeking help from professionals, friends and family is the first step to starting to feel better. In a crisis, you must always seek emergency assistance.

I have a friend who is having suicidal thoughts. What can I do to help them?

It is very distressing to hear that a friend is having thoughts of suicide. It is not your job to 'fix' them, but there are things that you can do that may be helpful. This might include:

- Listening without being judgmental or critical of how they feel
- Acknowledging how they feel and showing them that you care
- Stay calm and be patient when your friend tries to explain how they feel
- Don't try to resolve their issues, just listen and show that you care
- Get help from an adult, including a teacher, parent, or another responsible adult such as a sports coach or religious leader.



Sometimes you might worry that you won't know what to say to a friend who is struggling. You are not expected to help them in the same way that a professional would, and as their friend you just need to be supportive and show that you are trying to understand how they are feeling. Simply sitting with them while they are upset may be all that you need to do to show them that they have friends and support around them.

You may feel very upset or even distressed yourself after listening to your friend, and you may therefore require some support to manage your own feelings. Talking to someone else in confidence about how you have been left feeling is very important. Remember that you do not have to manage your own feelings alone.

I think my child is having suicidal thoughts. What are the signs?

It can be very distressing to learn that your child is having suicidal thoughts. If you are unsure how your child is feeling, the following can be signs that someone is thinking about suicide:

- Low mood that appears to be worsening
- Increase in risk-taking behaviours
- Becoming socially withdrawn, and alienating themselves from friends and family
- Poor concentration
- Changes in sleeping patterns, and feeling tired all the time
- Weight gain or loss, and change in eating patterns
- Neglect of personal hygiene or appearance
- Becoming pessimistic about the future
- Worsening academic performance or truancy
- Episodes of self-harm
- Giving away possessions that they previously loved or valued
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Lack of interest in hobbies that were previously enjoyed
- Talking about suicide or death.



If you are concerned that your child may be having suicidal thoughts, you must seek help from your doctor or mental health crisis team.

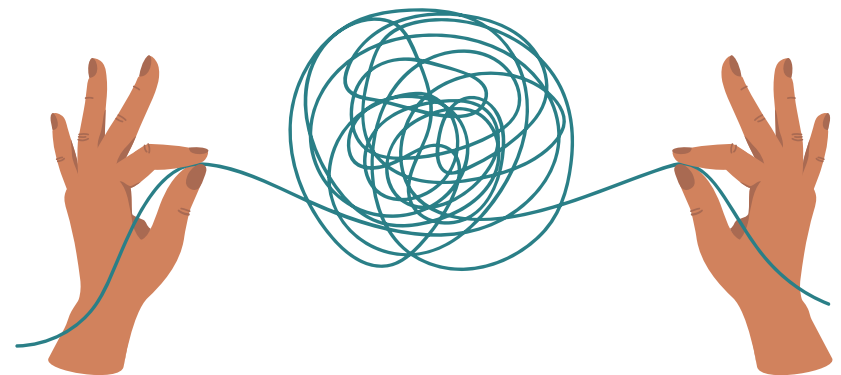
What should I do if my child is having suicidal thoughts?

If your child will confide in you about how they are feeling, the most important thing for you to do is to listen without judgement. When listening to your child, you should:

- Be tolerant and accepting of how they feel
- Avoid criticising them or making belittling or disparaging comments, even if you do not fully understand how they feel
- Be respectful of their thoughts and feelings
- Remain non-judgmental
- Stay calm
- Let them talk without interrupting them
- Tell them that you may need to ask someone else, such as a doctor, for advice on how to help them manage the way they are feeling.



You must seek advice from a doctor if your child is expressing suicidal thoughts, or if you have concerns about their mental health. You may also wish to discuss your concerns with their school or college, so that other professionals are aware of how your child is feeling. Your child will likely benefit from counselling via your doctor, community mental health team, or by private arrangement. In an emergency, you should call 999 or 112.



Help and Assistance

If you are concerned about yourself, friends or family you should contact your GP or Out of Hours Service immediately.

You can also get immediate support and information 24/7 by

FreeText HELP to 50015

Texting 50015 is free of charge from any network and you can text this number even if you have no credit. This service is fully confidential and YSPI has no information on mobile numbers that use the FreeText service



For information on:

- Emergency Contacts
- National Helplines
- Local Support Groups
- Directions to your nearest GP or out of hours clinic
- Directions to your nearest safe place or refuge

 www.ineedhelp.ie

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About Youth Suicide Prevention Ireland

Youth Suicide Prevention Ireland was founded in 2007 as there were no national charities focusing specifically on the problems and issues of youth suicide and self-harm in Ireland. We now provide a range of services aimed at mental health awareness and suicide prevention amongst teenagers.



We run our “Four Steps to Help” Programme for schools and colleges around Ireland which provides Zoom workshops. We also have a video workshop presented by John Sharpson that any organisation can book through our website at schools.yspi.ie/video.php We provide a wide range of free information including our “Let’s Talk About Mental Health” magazine delivered to schools and organisations as well as the “Coping With” series of mental health guides.

We also operate a **24/7 FreeText Crisis Information Service** and fund a Youth Crisis Counselling Service.

Full details are available at www.yspi.ie

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