

COPING WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

There are times in life when we might feel totally, hopeless, helpless, overwhelmed with emotional pain. It can seem like there is no other way out of our problems, we've run out of ideas, possible solutions. Our problems seem unfixable. The pain feels like it will never end. We believe we've run out of options, and suicide is the only answer left.



Maybe the suicidal thoughts come to mind, and you might have mixed feelings about them. Suicidal thoughts are very common, but can be frightening and confusing. We tend to avoid talking about them, so we don't realise how common they are.

Suicidal thoughts are a sign to change something in your life - NOT to END your life!

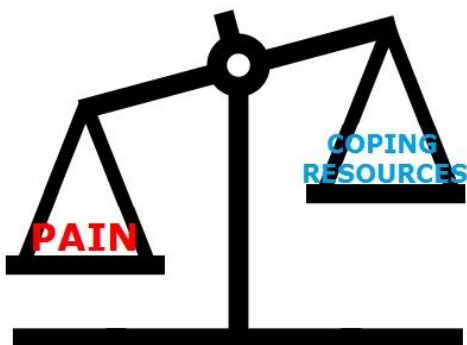
For some people, suicide may be a way of getting back at others, or showing them how much pain you're in. But after suicide, you won't be there to see that they feel guilty, or finally understand your pain.

Feelings will pass. Depression feels permanent, but it's transient. Things will change. Depression comes, and it goes.



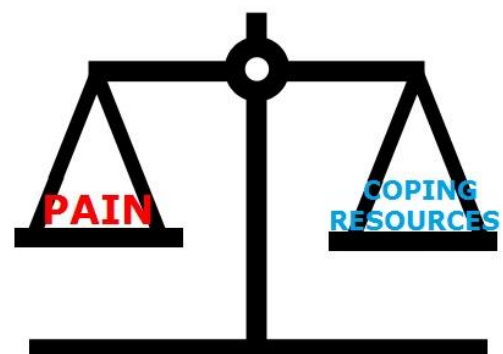
Depression and pain distort our thinking. It can seem like we're wearing very dark tinted 'gloomy specs'. Everything looks different to how it really is. **Thoughts are thoughts** - not necessarily how things are, although it certainly feels like the thoughts are true. Thoughts affect the way we feel, and thoughts and feelings affect the way we react, what we do ([see this page](#)).

Suicidal thoughts can result when we experience too much pain, without having enough resources to cope.



We therefore have two ways to get us through this horrible time:

- **Reduce the pain**
- **Increase coping resources**



REDUCE THE PAIN

Self-soothing

- Do something that will help you feel better, right now
- Perhaps collect items into an emergency bag or box that you can turn to
- Use all five senses to find things that will soothe you

Vision	Focus your attention on looking at something nice, nature, a painting, watching a favourite programme or movie
Hearing	Listen to a favourite piece of music, sounds of nature, sing
Smell	Really notice smells - favourite soap, food, essential oil
Taste	Use sensation of taste to focus your attention. Eat mindfully - savouring each moment
Touch	Wear soft comforting socks, stroke a pet, give yourself a hand massage

- A useful reminder, using the 5 senses:

5	5 things I can see
4	4 things I can hear
3	3 things I can touch
2	2 things I can smell or taste
1	1 breath. Then continue to just notice your breathing, and the sensations of breathing in your body - in your nose, throat, abdomen.

Avoid drugs and alcohol

- Whilst it seems like they help for a while, they will make your problems worse.

Ask yourself:

- Are these thoughts **facts or my opinion**?
- What has helped me feel better in the past?
- What can I do right now that will help me feel better?
- **What gives my life meaning?** What are my goals, dreams or life values? E.g. Family, friends, pets, helping others, faith, spirituality, community life, connecting with nature.

Tell yourself:

- I've coped this far, I can get through the next ... (day, hour, 10 minutes)
- Things will look better in time.
- Depression is temporary - this will pass.
- Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.
- Depression is distorting my thinking - these thoughts are the voice of depression. They are not facts. I don't have to act on them.
- The vast majority of people get better from depression. I will look back and be pleased that I chose to live.

Write things down

- **Safety Plan worksheet & Safety Plan Cards**
- **Alternative Thoughts & Actions worksheet**
- **Crisis Management Plan worksheet**

INCREASE COPING RESOURCES – IMMEDIATE STEPS

Read and put your **Safety Plan** into action! (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafetyPlan.pdf)

- Keep the Safety Plan where you can easily find it when you need it. Maybe make several copies – and keep them in several places.
 - E.g. one for your room, your car, your purse/wallet.
 - **Safety Plan Cards** (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafetyPlanCards.pdf)

Take one step at a time

- Take things a little at a time. Set out to get through the next day, the next week or month, perhaps the next hour or even less. Tell yourself: "I've got through so far, I can get through the next hour".

Distraction

- **Do something else**, and focus your attention fully on what you're doing, e.g.
 - Gardening
 - Household chores
 - Physical exercise - walk, run, cycle, dance
 - **Tapping** (Emotional Freedom Technique)
 - Reading - magazine, self help book
 - Television
 - Seek out a supportive discussion forum on the internet
 - Learn something new on the internet
 - **Imagery**
 - Help someone else
 - Go to the park, the beach - pay attention to nature
 - Visit someone
 - **Music**
 - Stroke a pet
 - DIY
 - Feed the birds
 - Sudoku or crossword
 - Do something creative: painting, writing, knitting, play a musical instrument, make a collage, bake a cake, cook a meal, arrange some flowers, make a website or blog



STOPP (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/stopp)

Talk to someone - now!

- A friend or family member
- A telephone helpline (E.g. Samaritans 116 123)
- A health professional
- Go somewhere you'll feel safe - be with other people
- Go to the local Accident & Emergency department
- Call the local emergency number (E.g. 999, 112, 911)



INCREASE COPING RESOURCES - LONGER TERM STEPS

Take action!

- We can only change our situations by changing something about the way we think, or what we do
- Complete a [Multimodal Treatment Plan](#)



Plan activity and routine

- [Increase your activity](#)
- Get into a daily routine and stick with it - get up at the same time each day, go to bed at the same time, plan an activity each morning, afternoon and evening
- Schedule in activities which help you: Work, rest and play
- Do things you enjoy, or used to enjoy, or you think you might enjoy: [Nourishing vs Depleting Activities](#)
- [Set realistic goals](#)
- Write it down: [Weekly Planner](#), [Activity Diary](#) or [ACE Log](#)

Look after yourself

- Eat healthily, balance [sleep](#), treat physical or mental health problems, avoid drugs and alcohol, [get regular exercise](#)

Systematically work through a problem

- Use the [Problem Solving Worksheet](#)
- Get help from an appropriate person or agency (E.g. [Citizens Advice Bureau](#))

Maintain or improve relationships

- Connect and be with others
- Call, text, email - friends or family
- Create new contacts - join a local support group or an online discussion forum
- Repair relationship: [Relationship worksheet](#)

Lower your expectations

- Sometimes life can feel like we're struggling to drive or cycle up a long and steep hill, in top gear. The motor just can't get us there. It works really hard, but it's impossible to get up that steep hill in top gear. We need to change down a gear or two. Changing down gives the motor more torque, and is much better able to drive those wheels up that hill, albeit a bit slower.
- We often try to struggle on in top gear, expecting so much of ourselves, of others, of life itself. Sometimes we need to change down a gear. Slow it down, reduce the struggle. Carry on, but in a lower gear.
- [Pace & Plan](#)



Write a daily diary or journal

- Consider writing a letter to yourself when you're feeling safe and calm, to be read when you're feeling suicidal
- Or use:
 - [Depression Thought Record Sheet](#)
 - [Weekly Planner](#), [Activity Diary](#) or [ACE Log](#)
 - [Worksheets and information leaflets](#) (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/downloads)
 - [Safety Plan worksheet](#) (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafetyPlan.pdf)
 - [Alternative Thoughts & Actions worksheet](#) (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/AlternativeThoughtsActions.pdf)

Other Getselfhelp resources:

- [Self Help Course](#)
- [Depression Self Help Guide](#) (and [Quick Reference Guide](#)) or webpage version
- [Depression Thought Record Sheet](#)

All worksheets and information leaflets available at:

- www.getselfhelp.co.uk/self-help/

Website addresses for important documents:

- **Safety Plan worksheet**
 - www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafetyPlan.pdf
- **Safety Plan Cards**
 - www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafetyPlanCards.pdf
- **Alternative Thoughts & Actions worksheet**
 - www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/AlternativeThoughtsActions.pdf
- **Crisis Management Plan worksheet**
 - www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/CrisisManagementPlan.pdf

Further online or telephone resources:

- Support groups ([Guernsey](#)) ([UK support groups](#))
 - www.patient.co.uk/selfhelp.asp
- LivingLifetotheFull.com offers free online computerised CBT and discussion forums
 - www.livinglifetothefull.com
- [The Samaritans](#) (with links to worldwide Befriending organisations)
 - 116 123 (UK)
 - www.samaritans.org
 - jo@samaritans.org