

What else can I look at?

Go to www.connectingwithpeople.org/StayingSafe

This website talks through different options, as well as giving additional details of other support organisations and resources for people who are distressed, are experiencing suicidal thoughts or who self-harm

Download the Stay Alive app

Search for *Stay Alive* at the Apple app store or Google Play



Thank you for reading this leaflet

This leaflet has been compiled using the Oxford Health NHS Trust Emergency Department Psychiatric Service (EDPS) 'Discharge and Safety plan' and the Royal College of Psychiatrists 'Feeling Overwhelmed' leaflet.



19 Beaumont Street Surgery

SAFETY PLAN

Helping you to stay safe when you feel overwhelmed

We've put this leaflet together to help you through times of distress. We want to make sure that you know what help you can get to stay safe and how you can get it, and how you can help yourself to stay safe.

It can be hard to talk about things when they go wrong, and you may find yourself overwhelmed by your feelings, or cut off from them. It can feel really lonely when you're distressed. We hope that this leaflet can help you to feel less alone, in spite of in your troubles.

A life worth living

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when bad things happen. Suicidal thoughts are quite common but we tend not to talk about them. It can be embarrassing or frightening to tell someone else about such private thoughts. And most people with suicidal thoughts manage to keep themselves safe.

Being honest with yourself is the first step in keeping yourself safe. If you are reading this leaflet, it could be helpful for you to share your worries and distress with someone else. It is never too late to take action, even if the situation seems hopeless.

Can anyone understand me?

It can be hard to share private thoughts and feelings. But if you do, it can help, and can be a real way of getting through a bad time. However you feel, and however personal it seems, other people will have gone through similar things and so really can understand something of what you are going through.

Finding help

Finding someone you can trust is the first step. You may have someone in mind already. Talking and being listened to can help you to get things clearer in your mind and feel more hopeful. Sometimes it can be easier to talk things over with someone who does not know you. It might be hard to believe that someone you haven't met before cares about you and your situation, but there are people who do care and want to listen. If you are having thoughts of harming yourself in any way, we would encourage you to:

- Tell a trusted friend or relative
- Make an appointment to see your GP (see contact details at back of leaflet—please say that it is a mental health problem and you would like to speak to the duty doctor) or contact one of the organisations listed on the leaflet. If you feel seriously unable to keep yourself safe, you can call 999 or go to the Emergency Department.

MY SAFETY PLAN

My network—people to call when I feel unsafe

Write here the names and numbers of supportive people you can call when you feel unsafe

Contact with services

GP: 19 Beaumont street surgery (telephone lines open 8am-6.30pm Monday to Friday) — 01865 240501 We also have self-help resources available to borrow.

If you can, please tell the receptionist you are calling about a mental health problem and that you would like to speak to the duty doctor, as it will help us to best help you.

NHS 111 (to access a GP out of hours) — 111

Mental health crisis team number —

You may have been given a number you can contact if you have been referred to a Mental Health Team

Samaritans — 08457 909090, e-mail jo@samaritans.org, www.samaritans.org

24/7 helpline service where you can talk about how you are feeling

Emergency Department—If you feel seriously unable to keep yourself safe, you can call 999 or go to the Emergency Department.

If you are a student:

Nightline (8pm-8am in termtime) — 01865 270270 and oxfordnightline.org (instant message / in person). Listening, support and information for all students in Oxford

College support services Most colleges have a welfare network with people available to help students in distress. This includes your college nurse (see www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/health/doctors for details)

University counselling service (9-5pm in termtime) — 01865 270300 and www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling (not suitable for help in an emergency but some useful links on website)

MY SAFETY PLAN

My triggers / early warning signs

Things I can do

Write here a plan for things you can do when you're feeling unsafe, such as looking at your crisis kit, or distraction (see 'Self-soothing and harm minimisation' above for ideas)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Helping yourself

Making a 'safety plan'

You can help yourself in many ways. You can start by making a 'safety plan' for yourself. This is a plan to help you keep safe—it will work best if you put it together yourself and choose the kind of support that you think will be helpful.

A safety plan can help organise your thoughts, so you get the right support at the times you need. Make a simple list of the things you can do for yourself and the people who you would like to support you. It's easier if we know who we can talk to before we need them. You may want to ask someone else to help you put it together. You may find it helpful to include reminders of the good things in your life and things to look forward to in the future.

What could my 'safety plan' include?

A safety plan could include:

- Ideas for self soothing and harm minimisation (see next page for ideas)
- Names of supportive family and friends
- Keep a reminder of the people and things that you love on your mobile or in your pocket, wallet or purse; some people like to carry photos of people or animals they care about
- Professional support (see inside back page)
- Voluntary support organisations (see inside back page)
- Things to do if your suicidal thoughts are getting stronger or you can't ignore them
- Keep this leaflet in a safe place. You never know when you, or someone you care about, might need it

Stay Alive app

As well as using the template safety plan in this leaflet, you can also download the **Stay Alive app** which can help you to make a safety plan on your phone—see the back page for details.

Self Soothing and Harm Minimisation

Be a friend to yourself Imagine a supportive figure who has your best interests at heart. What advice would you give a friend?

Make yourself a crisis kit Fill a box with items to look at when you are upset that use all your senses (smell, touch, taste, sight and hearing). Put things in the box that can comfort you or remind you of good times, such as photos or people or places that are important to you, a favourite perfume, or music that can soothe you.

Activities

- Take part in sports or go for a walk
- Listen to music that makes you feel happy
- Play an instrument, 'air drums'
- Talk to someone, not on the internet, about anything
- Write your feelings down
- Look after a pet, walk a friend's dog
- Do something to help someone else
- Change your environment—try going to a café, a library or a friend's house
- Make your bed, have a shower, and change your clothes

Use imagery Think of images that help you to get a sense of perspective on a problem such as floating through space or an image that might help to protect you from strong emotions

Be mindful Focus on now, accept the emotion and observe it. There is no need to act on the emotion or avoid it, take an observer position and allow it to pass. It will then have less power over you. Whatever you are doing, be in the here and now and make yourself aware of and focus on what you are doing.

Alternatives to self-harm If you have a desire to hurt yourself, try holding ice instead of pinching an elastic band on your wrist.

Helpful suggestions to think about

- Thousands of people are overwhelmed every day... but find ways to get through these intense feelings—like them, you can get through it
- You just have to cope with one day at a time—try focusing on getting through to a point close in the future, as smaller periods of time are easier to cope with
- Set yourself small goals that you can easily achieve—it will feel better to accomplish something, even if it's tiny—make a 'done' list instead of a 'to do' list
- Your distress could be a sign that you need to change something in your life
- Give yourself permission to feel down and hopeless—you're allowed to have a bad day, and you don't have to fix it all right now. If you try to fix it and it doesn't work, that doesn't mean it's hopeless. Give yourself the time and space you need to feel what you're feeling.

Advice for young people

If you are a young person under 18, it is important to find support from an adult you can talk to and trust. Please don't feel that you have to cope with all your problems alone. If you don't feel you can turn to your parents or carers for support, please think about speaking to another relative, your teacher, school counsellor, school nurse, youth worker or social worker if you have one.