



THE MAGGAS PROJECT

HOW TO COPE WITH
SUICIDAL FEELINGS

WHAT ARE SUICIDAL FEELINGS LIKE

Suicidal feelings can be terrifying.

If you can no longer see why you should go on living your distress will seem unbearable. You may hate yourself and believe that you are useless and unneeded. You may feel rage shame and guilt.

You may feel suicidal for no apparent reason. You may think that you have no reason to want to kill yourself. This can trigger feelings of deep guilt and shame and you may find it difficult to tell other what you are going through.

Whether you are aware of a cause or not it can be difficult to relate to others at this time, so you are likely to feel withdrawn or irritable. Even if you have family and friends around, you may find it impossible to tell them how bad you feel. If you have been badly hurt by someone close to you, you may be thinking of suicide as a way of getting back at them. It is understandable to be angry with people who have hurt us but suicide turns that anger in on ourselves.



60%

The percentage reported by ChildLine of referrals related to a young person being actively suicidal.

WHAT YOU MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED

- ✓ Sleeping badly and waking early
- ✓ A change in appetite
- ✓ Weight loss or gain
- ✓ Feeling cut off from your body or physically numb
- ✓ A loss of energy
- ✓ You may have stopped taking care of yourself e.g. neglecting your physical appearance

MIXED FEELINGS

You may be very clear that you want to die; you may simply not care if you live or die; you may be thinking of death as a release.

If you feel powerless to influence circumstances that are distressing you, the idea of suicide may give you a sense of being in control again. Depending on your beliefs, you could be looking forward to 'nothingness' or to being reunited with loved ones or to reincarnation. If you feel low and suicidal for no apparent reason, this can also make you feel powerless; if you can't find a cause for your difficult feelings, you may find it hard to believe that there might be a solution.

You may be harming yourself by cutting, biting or burning your body. Perhaps you are getting into fights or taking extreme risks. You may also be overdosing on drugs, binging on alcohol or have developed anorexia or bulimia. However, even when you are not sure why you are self-harming it is usually a means of trying to stay alive – trying to kill the pain you are feeling inside rather than a wish to actually kill yourself.

For most people suicidal thoughts are confusing. As much as you want to die you may also want a solution to your difficulties in life and you may want others to understand how you feel and to help. Such mixed feelings and being unsure what to do can cause great anxiety. This is why suicidal thoughts can be frightening and confusing.

WHY DO I FEEL LIKE THIS



1 in 4

people in the UK
will experience a
mental health
problem

It is common to have suicidal thoughts if you are experiencing mental health problems – especially if you have a diagnosis of depression, borderline personality disorder or psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Borderline personality disorder

If you have been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder you may find it especially hard to cope with stressful experience like losing a loved one or a job; you may feel out of control, paranoid or unreal and this can intensify thoughts of ending it all.

Psychosis

If you have symptoms of psychosis and have been diagnosed with for example schizophrenia or bipolar disorder your thoughts about wanting to die may be most related to depression, and particularly to feelings of hopelessness about the future.

If you hear voices urging you to kill yourself these delusional ideas are more likely to contribute to your suicidal thoughts; you are actually more likely to act on your suicidal thoughts during your non-psychotic, depressed phase.

If you have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and have just come out of a manic phase, you may be feeling guilt, worthlessness and despair.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP



If you are thinking about suicide then you may believe that you are beyond help. You may be so deeply hurt or afraid that you feel out of reach. If you are filled with rage it can seem difficult to allow another person to make a difference. You may be refusing help as a way of punishing a person who has hurt you. If your anger has turned inwards and you feel self-hatred or guilt you may believe you don't deserve help.

Talking to family or friends

Talking to family and friends can make a real difference. They may calm you down and offer you a breathing space while you decide what to do next. They may also be able to suggest how to manage your difficulties. It is often easier for other people to see solutions particularly if they know you well.

If you have family members and friends you feel close to you may find it helpful to keep their telephone numbers in a safe place so you can find them easily if you need urgent help.

Telephone helplines and online discussion groups

If you believe that family and friends don't understand it can be a good idea to phone a helpline talk to someone who has been trained to listen to people who have suicidal feelings. They are there to listen no matter what time of day or night.

Remove any means of killing yourself this is important while you learn how to cope with suicidal feelings.

Learn distress tolerance skills these can help you survive when in crisis and support your ongoing mental health. Dialectical behaviour therapy gives lots of suggestions for accepting distress, soothing yourself and beginning to think more clearly.

Give yourself a break – and take a break from yourself.

If your attention is focused mainly on your distress, try instead to notice the world around you. Like any new habit, it may take effort at first, especially if you feel cut off and disconnected. Set yourself goals for engaging with other people and beginning new activities.



Get healthier Regular exercise like walking, running and swimming will lift your spirits and make it easier for you to sleep better. Yoga and meditation can energise you and help reduce tension. Food also influences your mood directly. When you are less anxious your appetite may return and you could begin to eat healthier foods. If you have been misusing alcohol and drugs, cutting down on these will make your mind clearer and better able to focus on how to help yourself.



Express yourself you might like to write down your thoughts feelings and achievements (however small) in a daily diary. Over time this can give you fresh insight and increase your ability to respond to your difficulties differently. Alternatively, creating artworks based on your feelings can also be a powerful tool.



Learn from others Reading about how other people have managed difficult times is usually inspiring. Self-help books can suggest ways to improve your self-esteem and take you through practical problem solving exercises.

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF

USEFUL CONTACTS FOR YOU

PAPYRUS HOPELINE

TEL: 0800 058 41 41

EMAIL: pat@papyrus-uk.org

TEXT: 07786 209697

WEB: www.papyrus-uk.org

SAMARITANS

TEL: 08457 90 90 90

EMAIL: jo@samaritans.org

WEB: www.samaritans.org

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