

Thinking about suicide

Thinking about suicide does not mean you are a bad person, or weak, or flawed. It doesn't even mean that you really want to die - it only means that you have more pain than you can cope with right now.

Remember, no problem lasts forever. Don't solve a temporary problem with a permanent solution. You are feeling this way for a reason, and there is help available, now and in the long term.

Steps to take if you are feeling suicidal

1 If you feel immediately suicidal and feel you can't hold on:

- Tell someone how you feel (e.g. partner, parent, adult son or daughter, friend, school counselor).
- Ask them to stay with you until you get help. Being with someone, even over the phone increases your safety.
- Contact a medical professional and tell them it is an emergency:
 - Call your local hospital and ask to speak to the Mental Health Team.
 - Go to your GP or hospital emergency. Wait there until you see a doctor.
 - Call 000 - the police or ambulance may be able to take you to hospital.
 - Call your doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor or case worker.
 - Call an appropriate crisis Helpline – see front of the phone book.

2 With help you should start to feel better and be able to keep yourself safe. Until then, there are things you can do to relieve some of the pain and reduce the desire to end your life:

- Try to distance your thoughts and actions. Say to yourself, "I will wait 24 hours before I do anything." Even if it's just 24 hours.
- Put any items you may think about using to hurt yourself out of reach or ask a trusted friend to look after them.
- Do something that has brought you even a small amount of pleasure before, such as taking a walk, listening to music, taking a hot bath, watching a funny movie, reading or some slow deep breathing.
- Get together with others, even if you don't feel like it, to prevent isolation.
- Reduce drug or alcohol use. These can make it more likely that you may harm yourself, by making you more impulsive and increasing feelings of depression.
- Write about your thoughts and feelings. Remember to also write about the things in your life that you value and appreciate, no matter how small they may seem to you.

3 Most suicidal thoughts have an underlying cause such as mental illness (e.g. depression), a trauma or life issues. These can be very treatable with medications, counseling, and support or a combination of these. Remember people do get through this -- even people who feel as badly as you feel now. So get help now, you can survive. Call the SANE Freecall Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263), Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm for information on mental illness and for referrals to support agencies in your community.

How do I find out more?

SANE Australia also produces a range of easy-to-read publications and multimedia resources on mental illness. For more information about this topic see:

- *The SANE Guide to Staying Alive* - Provides practical step-by-step hints and advice for dealing with suicidal thoughts and behaviour when there is mental illness.
- *The SANE Guide to Depression* - Helps people diagnosed with depression and their family and friends by explaining what it means to have depression, the treatments available and what a person can do to help themselves.
- *SANE Guide for Consumers* - Provides practical suggestions on ways you can look after yourself, explains what words like 'diagnosis' and 'treatment' actually mean and describes how treatment and medication can help you.

Use the Order Form which came with this Factsheet or visit the SANE Bookshop at www.sane.org

Where to call for help

- 24-hour crisis telephone counseling
Lifeline: 13 11 14
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- Immediate assistance
Police or ambulance: 000
Local hospital: Triage Nurse or
Psychiatric Emergency Team
- Referrals to crisis counseling or suicide helplines
Check the front section of White or Yellow Pages
SANE Helpline: 1800 18 SANE (7263),
Advisors available office hours EST