

A Guide for Patients and Families

Coping with Suicidal Thoughts



Suicide is a real concern. If you are feeling suicidal, please know that you are not alone in your struggle, much as it may feel so. Even though you may be feeling suicidal, you do not have to be controlled by it and you never have to struggle through all this alone.

Telling yourself “it is okay not to feel okay” is an important step in self-compassion. Embracing your emotions, even the difficult ones, allows you to validate your experience and opens the door to understanding and addressing what you are going through. Remember, It is okay to seek support and take the time you need to manage your emotions.



Causes

People feel suicidal when their coping resources are overwhelmed by psychological pain. Psychological pain can be caused by unbearable feelings of sadness, anger, stress, loneliness, etc. When these feelings become too much to handle, people feel hopeless and turn to suicide to express or to try to escape from their pain.

Signs of suicide:

If you feel suicidal, you may experience specific thoughts, imagery, and an impulse to act on your feelings.

These suicidal thoughts are usually related to:

- Thinking that no one cares.
- Feelings of worthlessness or uselessness.
- Feelings of you or other people deserve the suicidal act.
- Possible associated imageries of picturing the suicidal act and after-death states.
- An urge to harm yourself with the intent to die.



The combination of these feelings may be extremely distressing.

With help, you will be able to increase your capacity to cope with the pain. Sometimes, the pain may reduce over time as well. You can end your pain without having to end your life. But to be able to experience that relief and improvement, you will need to ride out your intense feelings of suicidality.

Tips and resources to cope with suicidal thoughts include:

Removing Access To Lethal Means

While you are riding out your suicidal urges, it is important that you create an environment that will help you stay safe. To do so, you will need to remove potentially dangerous items and drugs in your vicinity. Making these less accessible will help you to resist the urge to act on your suicidal impulses.

Seek Professional Help

Not all persons with suicidal thoughts have a mental health condition. However, a large proportion of people who attempt suicide may have a mental health condition.

Mental health conditions are highly treatable with the help of a psychiatrist and/ or psychologist. You may be given medications and/or offered psychotherapy for treatment, which are proven effective for treating mental health issues.



Find Reasons To Live And Hope

Amidst the storm that you are going through now, you need an anchor to secure you. This anchor is the reason you have for living. Think through and write down a list of people, things, memories, and future goals that give meaning to your life. By doing so, you may find that the feelings of hopelessness that often plague people with suicidal urges begin to lift.

Calling Suicide Hotlines

In times of severe distress where you need to speak with someone immediately, there are suicide hotline services available for you. The calls are free and you will be speaking with volunteers or professionals who are trained to deal with suicide crisis.



Medications



Antidepressant medications are commonly prescribed for depression. While they are effective, they may have side effects. It is crucial to discuss potential side effects with your healthcare provider, as they vary among individuals. Adjustments to medication type or dosage can be made to manage side effects and improve effectiveness. Regular communication with a healthcare professional is a key throughout the treatment process.

Sometimes, in your clearer moments, you do not want to die and are in fact quite resourceful in helping yourself cope with distress.

However, those resources are difficult to access when the suicidal urges become very intense. As such, you can create coping cards to remind yourself of what you can do to soothe yourself when you are feeling very overwhelmed.

Suicide hotline numbers:

Samaritans of
Singapore
(SOS; 24 hours):
1800 221 4444

Mental Health
Helpline (24 hours):
6389 2222

Singapore Association
for Mental Health
(SAMH) Helpline:
1800 283 7019

Seek support from your healthcare provider, or if you have a case manager in IMH, please contact your case manager directly or via IMH operator: 63892000