



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE HAVING THOUGHTS ABOUT SUICIDE

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KONTERRA
RESILIENCE

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

If you are having thoughts of suicide, please remember that you are not alone and there are ways to find support and relief. This resource shares steps you can take to navigate these painful and overwhelming feelings. Remember, if you are having a mental health emergency, reach out to emergency services.

1. REACH OUT FOR HELP	3
Talk to someone you trust.....	3
Reach out to a therapist	3
Call a crisis hotline.....	4
2. SAFEGUARD YOUR ENVIRONMENT	4
Limit access to items you could use to hurt yourself.....	4
Create a safety plan	5
Assemble a go-to “comfort kit”	6
3. LIMIT ISOLATION	6
4. PLAN OUT YOUR DAYS	7
Getting starting with planning your days	7
Positive distractions and other helpful activities	7
5. REMEMBER THESE THINGS	9
Feelings change over time	9
Your thoughts are not facts	9
You are not alone	9
Small changes in behavior can shift your mood.....	10
Little by little, you can get through this	10
CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO DO IF YOU ARE HAVING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE	11
ABOUT KONTERRA	12

1. REACH OUT FOR HELP

Many people who are having thoughts of suicide are also experiencing other mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. This can lead people to feel hopeless, and have thoughts such as “I will always feel this bad” or “those I love most would be better off without me.”

Reaching out is not easy, but connecting with others can help you escape tunnel vision and give you a broader perspective on what you are experiencing right now. When you confide in someone safe and supportive about your suffering, this can help share the load and release some of the pressure you are feeling. Here are three ways to reach out for help:

Talk to someone you trust

Whether it's a friend, family member, faith leader, colleague, or counselor, sharing your feelings can provide immediate relief and grounding. Oftentimes, friends and family won't know how much despair you may be feeling. If they knew, many of them would be honored to support you.

Reach out to a therapist

Contact a mental health professional, counselor, or therapist. They are trained to help you through this. A therapist can help by:

- > Listening to you and helping you understand your pain
- > Giving you skills to help regulate your intense emotion
- > Helping you learn steps to keep yourself safe
- > Holding the weight of your pain with you
- > Helping you see your blind spots

Call a crisis hotline

If you are not ready to talk to someone trusted, or they are not available, consider calling a crisis hotline to talk through your pain and how to cope. Here are some websites and numbers that may be helpful.

- > The *International Suicide Hotlines*
 - https://www.suicidestop.com/call_a_hotline.html
 - <https://blog.opencounseling.com/suicide-hotlines/>
- > The *International Helplines Directory* for resources in your location
 - <https://www.helpguide.org/find-help.htm>
- > *National Suicide Prevention Helpline (in the USA)*
 - 1.800.273.8255
 - Or text LEV to 741741

2. SAFEGUARD YOUR ENVIRONMENT

If you are feeling suicidal or having thoughts of suicide, it's important to take proactive steps to keep your environment safe and reduce the risk that you may take actions to end your life. Below are several ways you can do that. If you are struggling to make these changes yourself, ask a family member, friend, or therapist to help. They can offer practical assistance and emotional support as you make your environment safer.

Limit access to items you could use to hurt yourself

If you have thoughts of how you would take your life, limit any means that you might use to harm yourself. Some common ways to ensure that your environment is safe include:

- > **Remove firearms:** Remove firearms from your environment, or make sure they are safely locked away and you do not have access to the safe code or key.
- > **Remove access to pesticides and poisons:** Ask a friend or family member to store these items for you.

- > **Secure sharp objects:** Remove items such as knives, razors, or scissors from your immediate environment. Ask a friend or family member to help you store them safely, so that you cannot access them alone.
- > **Limit access to medications:** If possible, give medications to a trusted person for safekeeping, or lock them away.
- > **Limit alcohol and drugs:** Substances can intensify suicidal thoughts and impair judgment. Avoid or (even better) remove them from your living space.

Create a safety plan

Think *now* about things you can do to cope when you are feeling overwhelmed, very anxious or depressed, and/or suicidal. Make a safety plan that you carry with you.

Identify:

- > **Designated safe spaces:** Identify places where you feel comfortable and safe where you can go to clear your mind. This might be somewhere in your community, a loved ones house, or a park.
- > **Emergency contacts:** Store the names and contact information of people who can help you during moments of crisis in your phone. Write down these names on a list, and include their contact information in case you are without your phone. Also include the number of crisis hotlines and emergency services in case you are feeling unsafe.
- > **Coping strategies:** Create an action plan of clear and achievable things you can do when you are in crisis. These coping strategies and activities can include:
 - Hobbies or distractions that can shift your focus, such as books, puzzles, or music. Engaging in these activities can help interrupt harmful thoughts.
 - Strategies that help you when you feel low—like listening to music, calling a friend, going for a walk, or using apps that offer real-time support (such as mental health chat services or guided mindfulness exercises.)
- > **List reasons to stay alive:** Create a list of reasons you want to stay alive. This might include loved ones, pets, faith, or anything at all that is meaningful to you. Use this list in times when you are at risk to remind you.

Keep this safety plan visible in your environment and carry a copy with you when you leave the house. You may also wish to share your safety plan with those who are in your support network so they have concrete examples of what helps you and how you like to receive support.

Assemble a go-to “comfort kit”

Create a coping kit by gathering items that can help soothe and ground you, such as stress balls, calming teas, photos of loved ones, or favorite books. Having this kit available can provide comfort during moments of distress. You may wish to have a kit with you at home, and a smaller one that you can carry in your backpack, purse, or tote when you are out of the home.

3. LIMIT ISOLATION

Often when we are feeling distressed we may not have the energy to connect with others, or fear that they will not understand what we are going through. Isolation can intensify negative thoughts and feelings. When you are feeling anxious, depressed, or suicidal, it can be hugely supportive to connect with safe and supportive people in your life (even if it’s just a text or a brief conversation). Here are some things you can do to limit your isolation:

- > **Spend time with supportive friends or family:** If you feel like isolating yourself, invite someone to stay with you, or make plans to be in a communal space.
- > **Engage in activities that are meaningful to you:** Think of a time when you were feeling well, and you were involved in activities that you found enjoyable. Even if you feel as if you do not have the energy, try to engage in one of these activities, even for a few minutes. We often feel better when active.
- > **Share your safety plan with your support network:** Share your safety plan with trusted friends, family members, or a therapist who can help monitor your environment and check in with you regularly.
- > **See a therapist regularly:** Regular therapy sessions can provide continuous emotional support. If you’re not in therapy, consider starting. If you are already seeing a therapist, increase your contact during difficult times.

4. PLAN OUT YOUR DAYS

It can be very helpful for someone who is feeling suicidal to plan their days in advance. Structure and routine can provide a sense of purpose, control, and stability. It can help prevent feelings of aimlessness and chaos that often accompany suicidal thoughts, and prevent you from dwelling on negative thoughts. It can also promote self-care and helpful connections, and create positive distractions.

Getting starting with planning your days

Here's how to get started with planning your days:

- > **Start small and simple:** Keep your plans manageable and achievable. Begin by scheduling just a few small tasks each day. These could be as simple as getting out of bed, taking a shower, and eating breakfast.
- > **Include basic self-care:** Plan time for self-care activities such as:
 - **Eating regular meals:** Aim for nutritious meals to help stabilize energy and mood.
 - **Physical activity:** Include gentle exercises like walking or stretching.
 - **Rest and sleep:** Prioritize sleep by scheduling a consistent bedtime routine.
 - **Personal hygiene:** Plan time for showering and grooming.
- > **Incorporate positive distractions:** Schedule activities that bring you comfort or joy, such as reading, watching a favorite show, engaging in a hobby, or listening to music. These can provide much-needed breaks from negative thoughts.
- > **Plan social interaction:** Build connection into your day. This could include scheduling time to meet a friend, text or call a loved one, or attend an online support group.
- > **Remember to have compassion for yourself:** It is OK if you do not achieve everything on your list! Remember to be kind to yourself. Know that even small steps are important.

Positive distractions and other helpful activities

There are many outlets for painful feelings other than talking to and confiding in someone. If you want to create a daily plan but you're not sure what to do, try some of the following:

- > **Exercise:** Exercise can help to release chemicals in our brain that dull pain and improve our mood. Physical activity increases our heart rate and keeps the feel-good neurotransmitters active in our brain for longer. This is very helpful during times of low mood and distress.
- > **Make social plans:** Isolating yourself when you are feeling down can make you feel worse. Even if you think you are not good company, spend time with friends and people you feel comfortable with. If you don't feel like you have the energy for talking, plan to see a movie or play a game with them.
- > **Take a new class:** Sign up for a class on something that interests you. Learning new things is a great way to keep yourself engaged and connect with others. Free classes may be available at community centers or online.
- > **Read fiction:** Immerse yourself in a fun and engaging story rather than turning on the news or scrolling social media. Avoid reading anything too depressing. You may want to try reading fantasy series—they can transport you to an entirely different world and give you a break from the pressures and worries of your own life.
- > **Write about what you're thinking and feeling:** Research has shown that translating thoughts and feelings into written words has a therapeutic effect. To get started, try sitting down and writing continuously for 5 minutes or longer. Try to be as honest as possible in writing. Sometimes, when we feel overwhelmed or unsure about our feelings and why we even feel the way we feel, it can take a while before we can reach the things that are impacting us right now. So be patient, write exactly what's on your mind in that moment, and don't rush it. Also, don't immediately re-read what you wrote after you finish. This may further distress you. The point of this activity is the *process* of writing. Try it and see if you find it helpful.
- > **Make a music play list:** Music can be very supportive for some people. Browse songs online and create a playlist of music that empowers, calms, or soothes you. Certain songs may remind you of happy memories, or make you want to move your body. When you are feeling low you may gravitate to songs that evoke additional sad feelings and further trigger and feed your low mood, but this playlist should focus on what makes you feel good. Keep this playlist in mind and remember that if you are feeling hopeless or suicidal it may help you to shift into a more positive mood.
- > **Cook or bake:** Nourishing yourself and eating well is so important when you are not feeling good, and trying out new recipes is a good way to spend your time. Cooking can bring the pleasure of creation *and* consumption, and help provide you with the nutrients you need to feel and function better.
- > **Try meditation or mindfulness exercises:** Meditation and mindfulness can help us to feel connected to ourselves, and outside of ourselves. It can also support us to practice breath awareness, balance, and self-regulation.
- > **Pray or participate in your faith community:** If you are religious or spiritual, pray ask for help and guidance. Go to your religious or spiritual place of worship and attend services, or join with some close friends or family to do so.

5. REMEMBER THESE THINGS

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, understanding more about your emotions and behavior can be life-saving. Here are some key insights to keep in mind:

Feelings change over time

- > **Emotions are not permanent:** No matter how intense or overwhelming emotions feel in the moment, they will always change. Just like waves, emotions rise and fall. While it can sometimes feel like difficult emotions and pain will last forever, remember that they *will* lessen in intensity and change over time.
- > **You don't have to act on emotions:** Feeling a certain way doesn't mean we need to act on those feelings. Suicidal thoughts usually come from intense emotional pain, but they are not instructions we must follow. We always have choices, no matter how much pain we are in, including the choice not to act on certain thoughts.

Your thoughts are not facts

When we feel really down, hopeless, or overwhelmed, we can develop inaccurate beliefs about situation and ourselves, such as:

- > Believing that we have *always* felt this way and that we *always will*
- > Believing that we are worthless and/or a burden to others

When we have thoughts that may make us feel like taking our own life, such as, "I am worthless," "I am a burden to others," and "People would be better off if I was no longer around," **it is important to remember that these thoughts are not facts.** When we recognize thoughts like these, we can remind ourselves to pause and question whether or not those thoughts are facts.

You are not alone

When we are feeling suicidal, it can seem like no one will understand, that they may judge us, or that no one cares. But many people (including professionals, friends, and family) are willing to listen and help us through our pain. Remember:

- > **You are not alone in your thoughts:** Many people have thoughts of suicide, and have even made attempts to take their own life. Many have been in similar situations and found a way through. Feeling better is possible.
- > **Isolation can create a dangerous cycle:** If you feel suicidal, you may feel like you don't have the energy to spend time with others and/or that you don't want to burden others with your distress. These thoughts can cause you to isolate yourself. However, isolating yourself can lead to additional negative thoughts (such as "No one cares about me") and feelings (sadness, hopelessness, loneliness). These thoughts can then lead to further isolation and inactivity, which will intensify your feelings of distress and depression.
- > **Connection with safe and supportive people helps:** Opening up to someone about your feelings, whether a trusted friend, faith leader, or therapist, can be a powerful way to feel understood and less isolated. Simply being heard can help relieve some of the emotional burden, and you may find that people understand and want to support you more than you could have imagined.

Small changes in behavior can shift your mood

Our behaviors, our thoughts, and our feelings are all connected. This means that if we change one, we can often shift the others. In other words, if we choose to do something differently it is likely that our thoughts and feelings will also shift to more closely match our new behavior. Remember:

- > **Behavior affects mood:** Sometimes emotions won't change on their own but you can shift your mood by changing your behavior. Small actions like getting out of bed, taking a shower, going for a walk, or talking to someone usually leads to a gradual improvement in mood.
- > **Break the cycle of inactivity:** "Faking it" can help you "make it" by breaking you out of cycles of inactivity (feeling bad so you don't engage in activities, which leads you to be less active, which makes you feel even worse). Engaging in activities and socializing, even when you don't feel like it, can create small positive shifts in your mood and energy levels.

Little by little, you can get through this

When we find ourselves stuck in a hopeless place, it can feel very difficult, if not impossible, to break out of it without help and support.

If you are suicidal, know that you are not alone, and that there are people who would like to support you. The first step is to reach out to someone and talk to them about

your feelings and thoughts. If you are feeling at risk of taking your own life, talk to your doctor, therapist, or go to the nearest hospital. **Remember, suicide is preventable.**

CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO DO IF YOU ARE HAVING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

If you are feeling suicidal or having thoughts of suicide, use the following checklist to help you as you reach out for help, safeguard your environment, and take other actions to help keep yourself safe.

THINGS TO DO	PAGE #	DONE?
1. REACH OUT FOR HELP	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
> Talk to someone you trust	3	
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2. SAFEGUARD YOUR ENVIRONMENT	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. LIMIT ISOLATION	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. PLAN OUT YOUR DAYS	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. REVIEW THE “REMEMBER THESE THINGS” SECTION	9	<input type="checkbox"/>

ABOUT KONTERRA

At KonTerra, we specialize in supporting clients that operate in complex and high-stress environments where organizations and their staff face difficult challenges.

When staff work in high-pressure roles or locations with elevated exposure to threat, suffering, graphic content, or conflict, they are at risk of experiencing overload, attrition, and stress reactions such as burnout. The KonTerra Group works directly with individuals, leaders, and teams to equip them with tools to better understand and manage the challenges they face.

Providing support in a meaningful way is only possible with the right people. The experience and sensitivity of our counselors, trainers, and coaches allows us to work with clients in a way that is unique. Our specialists all share two attributes which equip them to deliver excellent support: all are veteran mental health clinicians (master's or doctoral-level); and experienced supporting staff in high-stress and high-stakes environments and roles.



Services delivered by our uniquely positioned professionals include:

- Individual Counseling and Coaching
- Virtual and Onsite Training and Educational Events
- Staff Wellbeing Assessments
- Manager Support and Consultations for Organizations and Leaders
- Critical Incident Response Services

If you are interested in learning more about any of the above services, please contact your KonTerra Account Manager or email: info@konterragroup.net.