

SUBJECT OF SUICIDE



Sensitive subject: dealing with distress

A BIT ABOUT THIS BOOK

Sometimes people don't want to die but don't necessarily want to live in that moment.

One young person taking their own life is one too many and this booklet has been created with young people to try to break down barriers to people talking about suicide, provide ideas to help, and to stop young people taking their lives.

Hopefully you'll find it useful to support yourselves and anyone you think would benefit from it.

There is also a wellbeing plan that you can complete and keep for when you need it.

ARE YOU IN CRISIS RIGHT NOW?

There are details of organisations that can support you on page 20, including Hopeline (Papryus) and First Response.

HOPELINE247
0800 068 41 41

First Response crisis line: call **111** and select the mental health option (option 2).

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BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

THE SCIENCE BIT!

Our brains are made of neural connections. Neurons send signals through the body. They control what you do and what you think. Neurons also influence how we control our feelings and how we see the world.

Your brain is still under construction. It's like a project that's not been completed yet, it is still growing and changing. This means you don't always act like an adult because you don't think like one.

The emotional part of your brain is in charge at this age, and behaviours that are common place amongst young people include decisions that may seem irrational to others - being impulsive, frequent mood changes and not having control over your emotions. All of this can make it difficult for you to see the end of a problem.

Remember, this is all completely normal and things can get better as you get older and your brain develops more.



WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES

Suicide is complex and often there isn't one reason why someone might have thoughts of suicide. There are some situations that might make someone more likely to find it difficult to manage their emotions. Examples of these might be trauma, abuse, physical or mental health issues, neurodivergence, drug and alcohol use, bullying, exam or school stress, bereavement, and relationship issues. There are many other factors, but these are some examples that may cause an increase in risk.

These risk factors, along with some of the signs and indicators on the next page may be a sign that you need to seek some support or check in with your friend. Remember, sometimes there may not be any signs at all or they may be difficult to spot.



WARNING SIGNS – HOW TO RECOGNISE IF YOU OR A FRIEND MIGHT BE STRUGGLING

PHYSICAL

- Panic attacks
- Having trouble sleeping
- Sleeping too much
- Body language
- Decline in self-care or personal hygiene
- Heart palpitations
- Stomach aches

BEHAVIOURAL

- Acting 'off'
- Lack of motivation
- Avoidance or pushing away friends
- Craving substances
- Increase in use of drink or drugs
- Clearing out or deleting social media accounts
- Eating less or more often
- Taking more risks
- Unsafe sex
- Planning a future without you / them in it
- Giving things away

SPEECH

- Saying goodbye in a way that seems final
- Talking about being trapped
- Talking about suicide or dying
- Expressing feeling worthless or saying that there is no hope or no point anymore
- Talking about being a burden and that no one would notice if they were gone

EMOTIONAL

- Changes in mood
- Appearing more sad
- Gut feeling
- Taking things more personally
- Feeling tired or disconnected
- Getting angry or upset more easily

MYTH VS FACT

MYTH

Talking to someone about suicide makes them think about it.

FACT

Evidence shows asking someone if they're suicidal could protect them. Asking someone if they're having suicidal thoughts can give them permission to tell you how they feel.

MYTH

People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it.

FACT

Talking openly about suicide can help someone work through their thoughts and help them find a way to cope. People who say they want to end their lives should always be taken seriously. It may well be that they want attention in the sense of calling out for help and helping them get support may save their life.

MYTH

Only 'crazy' people have suicidal thoughts.

FACT

Thinking about suicide is much more common than suicide. 1 in 4 people have thought about suicide at some time in their life. And not all people who die by suicide have mental health problems at the time they die.



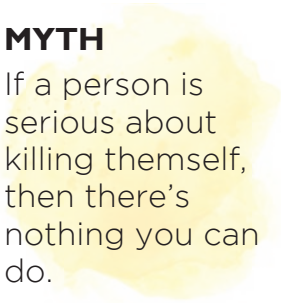
MYTH

Self-harm always leads to suicide.

FACT

Not all self-harm is suicidal, but all suicide is self-harm.

Self-harm can lead to death though and there is help available for anyone who needs it.



MYTH

If a person is serious about killing themselves, then there's nothing you can do.

FACT

Often, feeling actively suicidal is temporary, even if someone has been feeling low, anxious or struggling to cope for a long period of time. Getting the right kind of support at the right time is so important.

If you think it's an emergency or someone has tried to harm themselves - call 999.



MYTH

Suicide is selfish.

FACT

Sometimes the person thinking of suicide believes if they weren't there, others' lives would be better, and they feel there is no other option.

LANGUAGE

When it comes to talking about suicide, we don't always get it right, but here are some of the phrases or words that are unhelpful.

Committed – Did you know that until 1961, suicide was illegal in England and Wales? That's where the term 'committed' comes from. It's not a crime anymore, so people no longer 'commit' suicide.

Completed – The word completed implies that something you were working for has been achieved. Suicide is not something to aim for.

Go and kill yourself – Stop and think about why you would say that to someone and what those words really mean.

I'm gonna kill myself or I'm going to end it – Suicide isn't funny. It's tough to hear someone laughing about it.

Here comes the suicide squad – Don't judge people's appearances. The way you dress doesn't dictate your mood.

There are lots of phrases that are used that suggest that boys who show emotions are weak such as 'boys don't cry' or 'man up'. These are damaging to men's mental health and invalidates their emotions.

There are also different phrases associated with self-harm such as 'wrist reveal' or 'I did an oopsie'. Self-harm isn't a competition, and some people may not want to see scars or show you theirs but hopefully they will still want to help.



Words
matter...
think before
you speak

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Many young people speak to chat bots such as My AI, Siri, or ChatGPT.

For some, it does provide level of support, but it's important to remember that AI can give misinformation, doesn't always give support numbers and is not always fact checked.



It would be more helpful to use it for ideas of distraction techniques for a wellbeing plan rather than in a moment of crisis. Check out page 20 for information on different organisations you can find online that can support you.

Thoughts and Doodles

DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

Distractions can help you take your mind off stuff that's happening. They're often a quick fix, and can help if you need to direct your attention away from something that's taking up a lot of space in your head. Below are some ideas of things you could try to see if they work for you. Keep busy, do things you enjoy and stay safe.

- Take a few deep breaths. Breathe in, count to three, breathe out, count to three.
- Close your eyes, hold one hand in the other, squeeze gently and repeat 'I can do this' or 'I will be okay'.
- Pick up a special photo or object that evokes happy memories and focus on what it means to you.
- Phone a loved one or friend for a quick chat. If they don't answer, leave a message.
- Make a hot drink in a mug and sip it slowly, feeling the warmth of the mug in both hands.
- Listen to a favourite piece of music, something soothing or uplifting depending on how you feel.
- Brush your teeth and brush or comb your hair (even if you don't really need it). Have a shower or use a face mask.
- Write a worry list. Getting things down on paper can help stop them going around in your head. Now tackle them one by one.
- Sing. At the top of your voice sing all the songs you know, or just your favourites several times.
- Go out for some fresh air if it's safe and allowed. If not, are there any indoor exercises, yoga or stretches you can do?



- Do something 'mindful'. This means just focusing on the one things you are doing: such as a bit of gardening, spending time on an indoor hobby, doing a puzzle or listening to an audio book.
- Enjoy a TV or radio programme, either an old favourite or something new.
- Prepare a nutritious meal or snack.
- Call or text a helpline.



BRILLIANT THINGS THAT MAKE LIFE JOYFUL

Purple hair dye, staying up late, the crunch of crisps; what are the brilliant things that bring you joy? Start your list today and add to it whenever you revisit this booklet.

Things that make life joyful...

MY CIRCLE

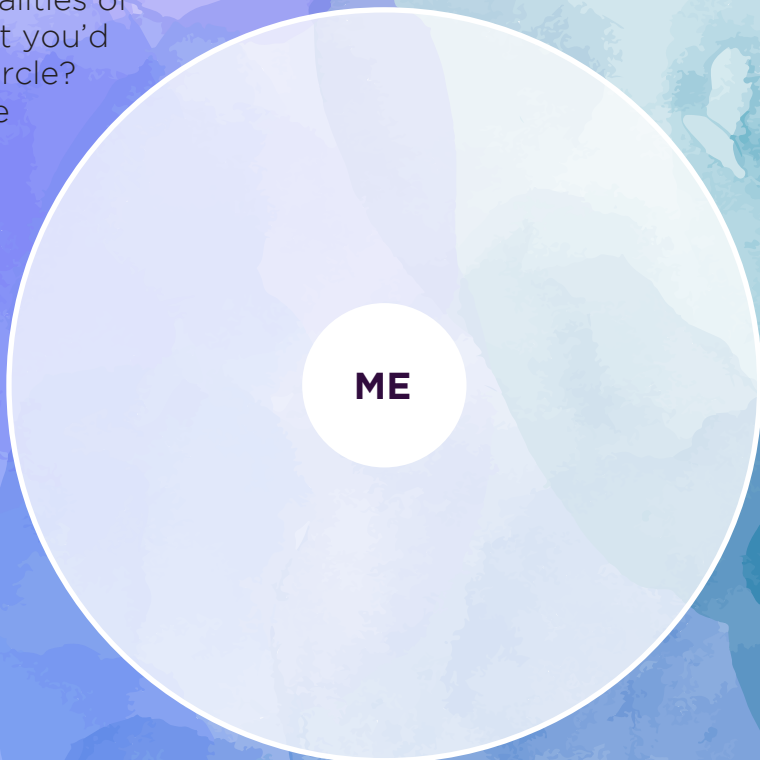
It helps to have a circle of support – people you trust and feel safe talking to. These are the people who will listen without judgement, support you through tough moments and help you make sense of your thoughts.

Write the names of people you trust in the circle below. They can be friends, family members, teachers, professionals or anyone who makes you feel safe.

You may feel that the amount of people in your circle goes up and down at different times and that's okay. If you don't feel like you have anyone you could talk to, maybe think about people that you find are a positive influence or who you look up to.

If you can't think of anyone, what about the qualities of someone that you'd like in your circle?

This might be a celebrity or famous person that you look up to.



SUPPORTING A FRIEND

It can be hard to support others when you have your own stuff going on.

All of the young people involved in writing this booklet said that the best support they got was through talking.

At times you need to ask your friends difficult questions about how they are feeling and actions they might be thinking of taking. Remember talking about suicide doesn't lead to suicide.

At other times you may find it easier to be subtle and mask the 'talk' with an activity like walking the dog.

Either way, try not to jump in with your own stuff straight away.



Do you want
to talk to me or
someone else?



Would you
like to
talk?

Acknowledging or validating how someone is feeling can really help.

To do this, make it clear to the person that you are fully engaged with them and listening to what they are saying. You can do this by keeping eye contact and nodding as they are speaking.

Then respond sympathetically when they have finished opening up to you. Let them know that it is okay that they feel that way. By simply making it known that you care, you have shown them that their feelings are valued.

Finally, let them know you are there for them and reassure them that you are someone they can confide in without fear of judgement. Remember - you don't have to try and fix anything. By simply being a support system for them, you will help them feel more comfortable opening up and confronting their emotions.

If someone does speak out to you, make sure you also get support for yourself if you need it. Organisations that offer support can be found on page 20.

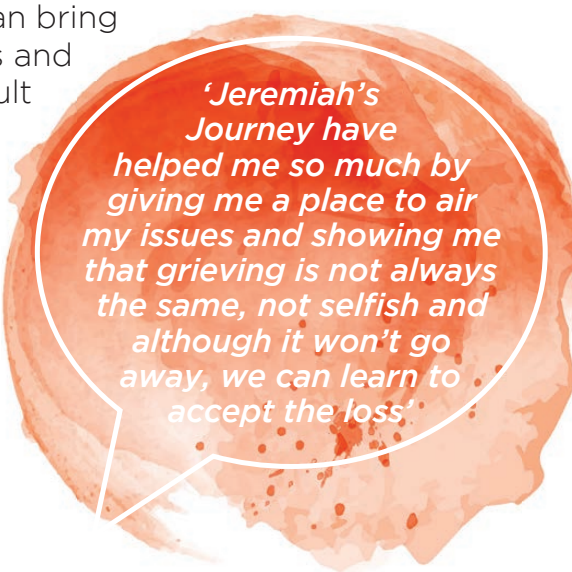


**It's okay
to not
be okay**

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'VE LOST SOMEONE OR ARE IMPACTED BY SOMEONE'S SUICIDE?

Losing someone to suicide can bring up lots of confusing thoughts and emotions which can be difficult to make sense of. There are two key organisations you can reach out to should you need support.

Jeremiah's Journey is a safe place to tell the story of your grief, your way. They are a bereavement support charity that aims to ensure that children, young people, and their families/carers in Plymouth and the immediate surrounding area have support at a sad and difficult time. To reach out, please call 01752 424348 or email their bereavement services team via hello@jeremiahsjourney.org.uk



'Jeremiah's Journey have helped me so much by giving me a place to air my issues and showing me that grieving is not always the same, not selfish and although it won't go away, we can learn to accept the loss'

Pete's Dragons have a team of specialists dedicated to working with people bereaved by suicide in Devon. They know that losing a loved one is deeply upsetting and shocking for young people and the grieving process can be especially complex when the death was by suicide. They offer one-to-one support to help people navigate and make sense of their grief. This support offer is for anyone who has been impacted by suicide, regardless of how well you knew the person who died. Call 01395 277780 or email support@petesdragons.org.uk



'Pete's dragons have been amazing, they have really helped me'

There can be different ways to remember someone. You may like to talk about them or do some journalling. Creating a **memory box** can also be a good tool.

This doesn't have to be a physical thing, it could be a folder on your phone with pictures and notes you have written.

Try using the box below to think about what you loved about them and add in some words to describe them.



A large, empty rectangular box with a white border, intended for writing or drawing, set against a background of soft, pink, cloud-like shapes.

ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN SUPPORT YOU

You're not alone, there's always someone to talk to.
Discover some of the national and local services that are available to support you.

Childline: Free, confidential service with trained counsellors, either online or on the phone, anytime.
Call 0800 1111. Visit www.childline.org.uk

First Response: Crisis line open 24/7 365 days a year providing advice, support and signposting for people experiencing mental health difficulties.
Call them free on 111 and select the mental health option.

Grassroots: The Stay Alive app is a suicide prevention resource for the UK, packed full of useful information and tools to help you stay safe in crisis.
Download the app by searching for 'Stay Alive' or visit www.stayalive.app

Kooth: Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people. Kooth provides web based information and advice along with online chat based conversation and forums. Online chat is available Monday to Friday 12noon to midnight and Saturday and Sunday 6pm to 10pm. They can also deliver whole school or class assemblies about mental health. Visit www.kooth.com

My Way: Improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in Devon. The service provides preventative care, tailored support, and more choice for young people. Visit www.youngdevon.org

Papyrus HOPELINE247: Free confidential support and advice service for anyone under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that someone could be thinking about suicide. Open 24/7. Contact HOPELINE247 for confidential support and practical advice.

Call 0800 068 4141. Text 88247. Email pat@papyrus-uk.org

Samaritans: Free, confidential helpline if you are in crisis or feeling suicidal. Open 24/7, 365 days a year.

Call 116 123. Visit www.samaritans.org

Email jo@samaritans.org (response time 24hours)

Shout: Free confidential and anonymous text service open 24/7. Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

The Mix: Free, confidential support for young people under 25. Visit www.themix.org.uk

The Zone: Free face to face, confidential information and support to all young people aged 13 -25.

Visit www.thezoneplymouth.co.uk for opening times.



ABOUT 'SUBJECT OF SUICIDE'

This project was created by a group of young people in Plymouth, working in collaboration with Plymouth City Council's Youth Participation Team, Community Youth Team and Public Health.

This booklet has been created to help young people understand more about what emotional distress might look like, for young people to feel better informed about how to support their friends and where to signpost them, and for young people to feel better equipped at recognising when they are struggling with their own mental health.

Throughout this project, we have reviewed lots of resources and websites and pulled together the things that we thought were really good. We would therefore like to say thank you to the following organisations:

- Be Happy Resources
- Samaritans
- NSPCC
- Childline
- BBC Bitesize
- Young Minds

Thoughts and Doodles





Thrive
PLYMOUTH



PLYMOUTH
SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP

