



DISABILITY SAFETY TOOLKIT: SAFETY TIPS FOR SELF ADVOCATES

UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM

You are Not Alone - Get Help for Suicidal Thoughts

If you ever have thoughts about hurting yourself, remember that you are not alone. There are ways to stay safe.

Get Professional Help

You can talk to your doctor or a therapist. They can help you talk about your feelings and find ways to feel better. It might take time to find the right therapist, but they can create a safety plan for you and provide support.



Explore Group Therapy

Consider group therapy. It can be helpful for individuals dealing with suicidal thoughts. Look for accessible and disability-friendly group therapy sessions. If one does not work for you, try searching for another.

Reach Out to Supportive Communities

Connect with religious leaders, community groups, or strong support networks. Sometimes, talking to community members can be more helpful than talking to therapists.

Lean on Friends

Reach out to friends who can offer support. They can provide a listening ear and help prevent dangerous actions. Ask a friend to come over and spend time with you if you are feeling at risk.



Engage with the Disability Community

Join a group of people who are like you. They can provide ongoing help and friendship. Look for local groups or online communities. Keep in mind that these groups might not be ready for big crises, especially if you are new.

Creating Your Safety Plan

Consider creating a safety plan for when you are struggling with suicidal thoughts. Review your plan at least once a year. Make any updates or changes as needed.

Your plan can include:

- Your therapist or a person you trust
- Positive thoughts and reasons to stay alive
- Things to remove from your surroundings when you are not safe
- Friends or family to call
- Safe places to go
- Other ways to feel better

Reaching Out for Immediate Help

If you need immediate assistance, consider:

- Calling or texting a mental health crisis hotline
- Going to a safe place, such as a friend's house or a community center
- Be careful calling the police, as they may not be trained to handle mental health crises
- If you feel that you need to go to a hospital, consider asking a friend to come drive
- If you are seriously hurt and need medical attention, call 911 so they can send an ambulance



988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline



988 is the three-digit phone number for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. It is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

When people call, text, or chat with the 988 Lifeline, they are connected to trained crisis counselors. The counselors are part of the 988 Lifeline network that is made up of over 200 local crisis centers.

These crisis counselors are trained to provide free and confidential emotional support and crisis counseling. They help people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. They also connect people to resources.

These services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across the United States.

What happens when you call 988?

When you dial 988, you are calling a national hotline. That hotline will connect you with crisis counselors in your area. Before they connect you with a counselor, you will have to choose the right prompt to make sure you get the right help.



If you “press 1” you are connected to the Veterans Crisis Line.

If you “press 2” you are connected to a Spanish Language line. More than 240 languages are supported through Tele-Interpreters service.

If you “press 3” you are connected to a crisis counselor specifically trained in supporting LGBTQI+ callers.

What happens when you chat online with 988?

You can chat online with a crisis counselor. To chat with a counselor, you can use the Lifeline chat via <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>



When you first start to chat, you will be asked to answer a few questions. This will let the crisis counselor know a little about the current situation. You will then be placed on hold until they find a crisis counselor in your area.

A trained crisis counselor will answer the chat. They will talk with you to understand what is going on and provide support. They will also share resources that may be helpful.

What happens when you text with 988?

You can use your phone to text with 988. When you text 988, you will be asked to answer a few questions letting the crisis counselor know a little about the situation.



You will then be connected with a trained crisis counselor who will text with you. They will try to understand what you are experiencing and provide support. They will also share resources that may be helpful.

To learn more about the Lifeline, please visit: www.988lifeline.org

Considering Psychiatric Hospitals

Psychiatric Hospitals are a last choice. Some people find them helpful, but others do not. Talk to your community and family before you make a decision.

Keep in mind that if you say you are suicidal, a hospital may be able to keep you in the hospital for several days. They will be able to keep you in the hospital even if you decide you want to leave.

Writing a Psychiatric Advance Directive

If you are worried about the future, you can make a plan that tells people what you want during a crisis.

It might include:

- Who can make choices for you
- Who can visit you in the hospital
- Which hospitals you prefer
- What medicines work for you or do not
- What treatments you want or do not want

Check your state's laws for ideas on creating a psychiatric advance directive. For more information, go to the National Alliance on Mental Illness website.

<https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Responding-to-Crises/Psychiatric-Advance-Directives>

No matter what you are going through, you deserve help and care. Reach out to those around you, explore various options, and create a safety plan to prioritize your well-being.



**Remember: You Deserve
Help and Support**