

MIMIND TOOLS

If You're Thinking About Suicide Read This First

If you are feeling suicidal now, please stop long enough to read this. It will only take about five minutes. I do not want to talk you out of your bad feelings. I am not a therapist or other mental health professional – only someone who knows what it is like to be in pain.

I don't know who you are, or why you are reading this page. I only know that for the moment, you're reading it, and that is good. I can assume you are here because you are troubled and considering ending your life. If it were possible, I would prefer to be there with you at this moment, to sit with you and talk, face to face and heart to heart. But since that is not possible, we will have to make do with this.

I have known a lot of people who have wanted to kill themselves, so I have some small idea of what you might be feeling. I know you might not be up to reading a long book, so I am going to keep this short. While we are together here for the next five minutes, I have five simple, practical things I would like to share with you. I won't argue with you about whether you should kill yourself. But I assume if you are thinking about it, you feel pretty bad.

Well, you're still reading, and that's very good. I'd like to ask you to stay with me for the rest of this page. I hope it means that you're at least a tiny bit unsure, somewhere deep inside, about whether or not you really will end your life. Often people feel that, even in the deepest darkness of despair. Being unsure about dying is okay and normal. The fact that you are still alive at this minute means you are still a little bit unsure. It means that even while you want to die, at the same time some part of you still wants to live. So let's hang on to that, and keep going for a few more minutes.

Start by considering this statement:

Suicide is not chosen; it happens when pain exceeds resources for coping with pain

That's all it's about. You are not a bad person, or crazy, or weak, or flawed, because you feel suicidal. 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.

If I start piling weights on your shoulders, you will eventually collapse if I add enough weights...no matter how much you want to remain standing. Willpower has nothing to do with it. Of course, you would cheer yourself up if you could.

Don't accept it if someone tells you, "That's not enough to be suicidal about." There are many kinds of pain that may lead to suicide. Whether or not the pain is bearable may differ from person to person. What might be bearable to someone else, may not be bearable to you. The point at which the pain becomes unbearable

depends on what kinds of coping resources you have. Individuals vary greatly in their capacity to withstand pain.

When pain exceeds pain-coping resources, suicidal feelings are the result. Suicide is neither wrong nor right; it is not a defect of character; it is morally neutral. It is simply an imbalance of pain versus coping resources.

You can survive suicidal feelings if you do either of two things: (1) find a way to reduce your pain, or (2) find a way to increase your coping resources. Both are possible.

Here are five things to think about:

1. You need to hear that people do get through this -- even people who feel as badly as you are feeling now. Statistically, there is a very good chance that you are going to live. I hope that this information gives you some sense of hope.
2. Give yourself some distance. Say to yourself, "I will wait 24 hours before I do anything." Or a week. Remember that feelings and actions are two different things -- just because you feel like killing yourself, doesn't mean that you have to actually do it right this minute. Put some distance between your suicidal feelings and suicidal action. Even if it's just 24 hours. You have already done it for 5 minutes, just by reading this page. You can do it for another 5 minutes by continuing to read this page. Keep going, and realize that while you still feel suicidal, you are not, at this moment, acting on it. That is very encouraging to me, and I hope it is to you.
3. People often turn to suicide because they are seeking relief from pain. Remember that relief is a feeling. And you have to be alive to feel it. You will not feel the relief you so desperately seek, if you are dead.
4. Some people will react badly to your suicidal feelings, either because they are frightened, or angry; they may actually increase your pain instead of helping you, despite their intentions, by saying or doing thoughtless things. You have to understand that their bad reactions are about their fears, not about you. But there are people out there who can be with you in this horrible time, and will not judge you, or argue with you, or send you to a hospital, or try to talk you out of how badly you feel. They will simply care for you. Find one of them. Now. Use your 24 hours, or your week, and tell someone what's going on with you. It is okay to ask for help. Try:
 - Call 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (it is free, confidential and available 24/7).
 - Text HOME to 741741.
 - Call or text The Samaritans: 1-877-870-4673. This 24/7 Helpline is confidential and free. Learn more at <https://samaritanshope.org/>
 - Look in the front of your phone book for a crisis line.
 - Call a psychotherapist.
 - Carefully choose a friend or a minister, rabbi or imam, someone who is likely to listen. But don't give yourself the additional burden of trying to deal with this alone. Just talking about how you got to where you are releases an awful lot of the pressure and it might be just the additional coping resource you need to regain your balance.
5. Suicidal feelings are, in and of themselves, traumatic. After they subside, you need to continue caring for yourself. Therapy is a really good idea. So are the various self-help groups available both in your community and on the Internet.

Well, it's been a few minutes and you're still with me. I'm really glad. Since you have made it this far, you deserve a reward. I think you should reward yourself by giving yourself a gift. The gift you will give yourself is a coping resource. Remember, back up near the top of the page, I said that the idea is to make sure you have more coping resources than you have pain. So, let's give you another coping resource, or two, or ten...! until they outnumber your sources of pain.

Now, while this page may have given you some small relief, the best coping resource we can give you is another human being to talk with. If you find someone who wants to listen and tell them how you are feeling and how you got to this point, you will have increased your coping resources by one. Hopefully the first person you choose won't be the last. There are a lot of people out there who really want to hear from you. It's time to start looking around for one of them.

Now I'd like you to call someone:

- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call 988 or [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline - Call. Text. Chat. \(988lifeline.org\)](https://988lifeline.org)
- The Samaritans <https://samaritanshope.org/> Call or text 24/7 at 1-877-870-4673 (HOPE)

© Copyright 1995-2002 Martha Ainsworth. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission. Suicide: Read This First (<https://www.metanoia.org/suicide>) was written by Martha Ainsworth based on work by David Conroy, Ph.D.