

USE S.A.V.E.

SIGNS of suicidal thoughts

- Look for hopelessness, disturbances in sleep, social withdrawal, mood swings, or increased use of alcohol or other substances

ASK the questions

- Have you had any more thoughts of killing yourself?
- If yes, have you done anything to acquire the means to kill yourself?

VALIDATE their experience

- Talk openly about the crisis, the seriousness of the crisis, and continuing risk post-crisis

ENCOURAGE ongoing help seeking and treatment

- Affirm that you and others care about the individual and that you are willing to assist in getting support or maintaining ongoing treatment

Adapted from the Veterans Administration S.A.V.E. Training Program



Additional Resources

Each resource is hyperlinked for easier access.

- [A Guide for Taking Care of Yourself After Your Treatment in the Emergency Department](https://www.samhsa.gov/yourself-after-treatment)
[store.samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)
- [A Journey Toward Health and Hope: Your Handbook for Recovery After a Suicide Attempt](https://www.samhsa.gov/recovery)
[store.samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)
- [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis: A NAMI Resource Guide for those Experiencing a Mental Health Emergency](https://www.nami.org)
www.nami.org
- [Suicide: Taking Care of Yourself & Your Family After a Suicide Attempt](https://www.nami.org)
www.nami.org

This information is for educational purposes only. This information does not take the place of advice or help from qualified behavioral health or mental health professionals.



Helping After a Suicide Crisis



**Montgomery County
Emergency Service**

50 Beech Drive
Norristown, PA 19403
610-279-6100
www.mces.org

What is a **suicide crisis**?

A suicide crisis is an episode in which someone experiences any of the following:

- Having **uncontrollable, persistent thoughts** of suicide
- Voicing **explicit threats** of suicide
- Describing a **clear plan** to attempt suicide
- Possessing or actively **seeking means** of suicide
- **Attempting or trying to attempt** suicide

Why should I be **concerned**?

Each of these conditions indicates **high suicide risk** and **possible imminent danger for causing harm**. The underlying stressors that bring about thoughts of suicide often remain even if the outward signs abate on their own or with professional help. Those close to a person who has had a suicide crisis must stay prepared for possible crisis in the future.

Suicidality may arise again.

A suicide attempt is the strongest risk factor for another attempt. Multiple attempts and injurious attempts raise the risk.

What do I do **after a suicide crisis**?

- A suicide crisis is **traumatic for all who are affected**. Be prepared to deal with a lot of **mixed feelings** include **fear** and **anxiety**
- Assure that those close to the person accept that the **danger remains**, the must be **alert to any signs**, and be **ready to help**
- Help the individual to develop a **personal suicide prevention safety plan** outlining the **stressors** and **triggers** that precipitate a suicide crisis and **steps to take** should a crisis arise again
- Assure that any **means of suicide** (guns, medications, poisons, etc.,) **are removed** from the person's residence and any places they may be hidden
- Strongly **encourage** the person to **engage with any ongoing behavioral health services** and **support resources** that they have been referred to
- **Remember** if the person has been **admitted to a psychiatric hospital**, the **risk of suicide is high** for **several weeks after discharge** and possibly longer.



What is a **safety plan** and **how do I make one**?

A safety plan is a **prioritized list of coping strategies and sources of support**. It can help an individual to identify what leads to their thoughts of suicide, and how to feel better when they are having these thoughts. As a result, they can help themselves to stay safe.

It is helpful for individuals to have **several copies** of their safety plans in **easily accessible and visible places**. Keep in mind that safety plans are **malleable** and **do not have to be followed step-by-step**.

A safety plan should include the following:

- **Warning signs** - thoughts, feelings, moods, behaviors, etc. that someone may have before or upon having suicidal thoughts
- **Coping strategies** - self-help steps to deter or divert from suicidal thinking
- **Social and environmental supports** - friends, places, or activities that can distract from suicidal thoughts
- **Familial supports** - relatives who would be willing to help by being present, caring, and listening
- **Providers** - peer specialists, recovery coaches, therapists, hotlines, or warmlines that can be contacted for help
- **Harmful things** - items to dispose of (i.e. old medications, guns) places to avoid (i.e. bridges) and other triggers that are harmful

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline can assist with creating a safety plan. **Call, text, or chat 24/7.**