

## WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?

Suicidal ideation, or thoughts of suicide, is more common than people realize. Suicidal thoughts often show up as a way to respond to deep or persistent negative feelings or thoughts. It's our brain's way of asking for help when we don't know how to cope with these thoughts or feelings, or the challenging life situations we find ourselves in. These thoughts and feelings are often short term and situation specific ([See "Suicide Facts and Statistics" in Part 1](#)). With time and/or the right support, **these thoughts and feelings can change**. Many people who have experienced suicidal thoughts live long, successful, meaning-filled lives, even if they couldn't imagine that in their darker times. If you are struggling, continue reading to consider who can help and how you can get the support you need. If you know someone who is struggling, continue reading to consider how to be a trusted, safe, and supportive person.

### *There are Many Reasons for Suicidal Thoughts – and Many Reasons for Hope*

Suicidal thoughts can be caused by many things, including a new or untreated mental health challenge, a change in medications, or sudden and/or significant stressors, such as being a victim of bullying or other abuse, the death of a loved one, medical challenges, or financial stress. It's OK if you don't know the cause of your suicidal thoughts. **The important thing is to reach out for help when you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, even if you don't believe these problems can be solved.**

A note from an 18-year-old survivor of a suicide attempt focuses on the message she would send to someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts and has lost the will to live:

"You are more important than any problems you may have. You are more important than school, work, financial challenges, etc. I know you don't actually believe that it gets better, and it's annoying when people who don't really 'get' it tell you it will. For now, just let go of expectations—whatever those are—of all of the things you're told add up to a full and meaningful life. If you're staying alive, you're succeeding enough."



## WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?

### *How to Talk to Someone When You're Having Thoughts about Suicide*

When you are thinking about telling someone about your suicidal ideation, identify the people in your life who feel safe to tell. It might be a family member, friend, doctor, mental health professional, or crisis hotline responder (such as 988). When you have made the decision to share, tell them how your suicidal thoughts are affecting you. You can share how often the thoughts are present, in what ways they are disrupting your activities and well-being, and the severity of the thoughts.

All thoughts of suicide should be taken seriously. You deserve help and support for challenges you're experiencing. **If you are having suicidal thoughts, reach out to a trusted person in your life or contact 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, via a call, text, or chat.** The Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will connect you with a trained crisis counselor and local resources.

### *Barriers to Reaching Out*

Individuals experiencing suicidal ideation often struggle to share their feelings with friends or family for fear of burdening them. Think about the people who care about you and who have helped you feel better in the past, and start by talking to one trusted person. "Even if your situation feels hopeless now, there are people in your life who care about you and want you here." ([The Jed Foundation](#)).

When you're struggling, **it's hard to imagine anything helping.** Try to focus on one day or one hour at a time rather than on the biggest picture. What would feel supportive today? A friend sitting with you, a trusted person helping you call a hotline or a medical provider, a warm meal?

HELP



## WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?

You may also feel like something that helps today won't help in the long-run, and therefore those small comforts don't matter—or in fact nothing matters. Remember that you don't have to know the way through this challenging time, and it makes sense that you can't imagine it right now. Focus on the “small wins”—on one life-nurturing activity at a time, whether that's talking with a friend, taking a walk, eating a meal, watching a video that makes you laugh, calling a help-line, or cuddling with a pet.

“Low energy leads to low-self esteem and shame, which leads to more low energy.” [This](#) article explains the connection between depression, low energy, and low motivation and offers a few steps to help break that cycle.

Think of a dear friend and how you would want them to be treated if they were in your situation, and try on that kindness for yourself.

Know you deserve help, kindness, care, and support in your dark times. Know depression and suicidal thoughts are not your fault. Know surviving doesn't mean you will live like this forever. Reach out to a trusted person, or contact 988 for help getting through this time, and know you will be able to find what makes life feel meaningful and rewarding again.

