



Suicide

Are you feeling Suicidal?

Major Depression is a mental health disorder characterised by persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in activities, causing significant impairment in daily life. The persistent feeling of sadness or loss of interest that characterises major depression can lead to a range of behavioural and physical symptoms. These may include changes in sleep, appetite, energy level, concentration, daily behaviour, or self-esteem. Depression can also be associated with thoughts of suicide.

How to Deal with Suicidal Thoughts and Feelings and Overcome the Pain

Feeling suicidal is not a character defect, and it doesn't mean that you are crazy, weak, or flawed. It only means that you have more pain than you can cope with right now. This pain seems overwhelming and permanent now, but with time and support, you can overcome your problems and the pain and suicidal feelings will pass. Help is available. Don't wait: reach out.

I'm having suicidal thoughts, what do I need to know?

No matter how much pain you're experiencing right now, you're not alone. Some of the finest, most admired, needed, and talented people have been where you are now. Many of us have thought about taking our own lives when we've felt overwhelmed by depression and devoid of all hope. However, the pain of depression can be treated and hope can be renewed.

No matter what your situation, there are people who need you, places where you can make a difference, and experiences that can remind you that life is worth living. It takes real courage to face death and step back from the brink. You can use that courage to face life, to learn coping skills for overcoming depression, and for finding the strength to keep going.



Why suicide can seem like the only option

If you are unable to think of solutions other than suicide, it is not that other solutions don't exist, but rather that you are currently unable to see them. The intense emotional pain that you're experiencing right now can distort your thinking so it becomes harder to see possible solutions to problems, or to connect with those who can offer support. Therapists, counselors, friends or loved ones can help you to see solutions that otherwise may not be apparent to you. Give them a chance to help.

A suicidal crisis is almost always temporary

Although it might seem as if your pain and unhappiness will never end, it is important to realise that crises are usually temporary. Solutions are often found, feelings change and unexpected positive events occur. Remember: suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Give yourself the time necessary for things to change and the pain to subside.

Take these immediate actions:

1

Promise not to do anything right now

Even though you're in a lot of pain right now, give yourself some distance between thoughts and action. Make a promise to yourself: "I will wait 24 hours and won't do anything drastic during that time." Alternatively, wait a week. Thoughts and actions are two different things—your suicidal thoughts do not have to become a reality. There is no deadline; no one's pushing you to act on these thoughts immediately. Wait and put some distance between your suicidal thoughts and suicidal action.

2

Avoid drugs and alcohol

Suicidal thoughts can become even stronger if you have taken drugs or alcohol. It is important to not use nonprescription drugs or alcohol when you feel hopeless or are thinking about suicide.

3

Make your home safe

Remove things you could use to hurt yourself, such as pills, knives, razors, or firearms. If you are unable to do so, go to a place where you can feel safe. If you are thinking of taking an overdose, give your medicines to someone who can return them to you, one day, at a time, as you need them.

4

Don't keep these suicidal feelings to yourself

Many of us have found that the first step to coping with suicidal thoughts and feelings is to share them with someone we trust. It may be a family member, friend, therapist, teacher, family doctor, coach, or an experienced counselor. Find someone you trust and let them know how bad things are. Don't let fear, shame, or embarrassment prevent you from seeking help. And if the first person you reach out to doesn't seem to understand, try someone else. Just talking about how you got to this point in your life can release a lot of the pressure that's building up and help you find a way to cope.

5

Take hope - people DO get through this

Even people who feel as badly as you are feeling now manage to survive these feelings. Take hope in this. There is a very good chance that you are going to live through these feelings, no matter how much self-loathing, hopelessness, or isolation you are currently experiencing. Just give yourself the time needed and don't try to go through it alone.

Things to do if you have suicidal thoughts and feelings:

Talk with someone every day, preferably face to face. Though you feel like withdrawing, ask trusted friends and acquaintances to spend time with you.

Make a safety plan. Develop a set of steps that you can follow during a suicidal crisis. It should include contact numbers for your doctor or therapist, as well as friends and family members who will help in an emergency.

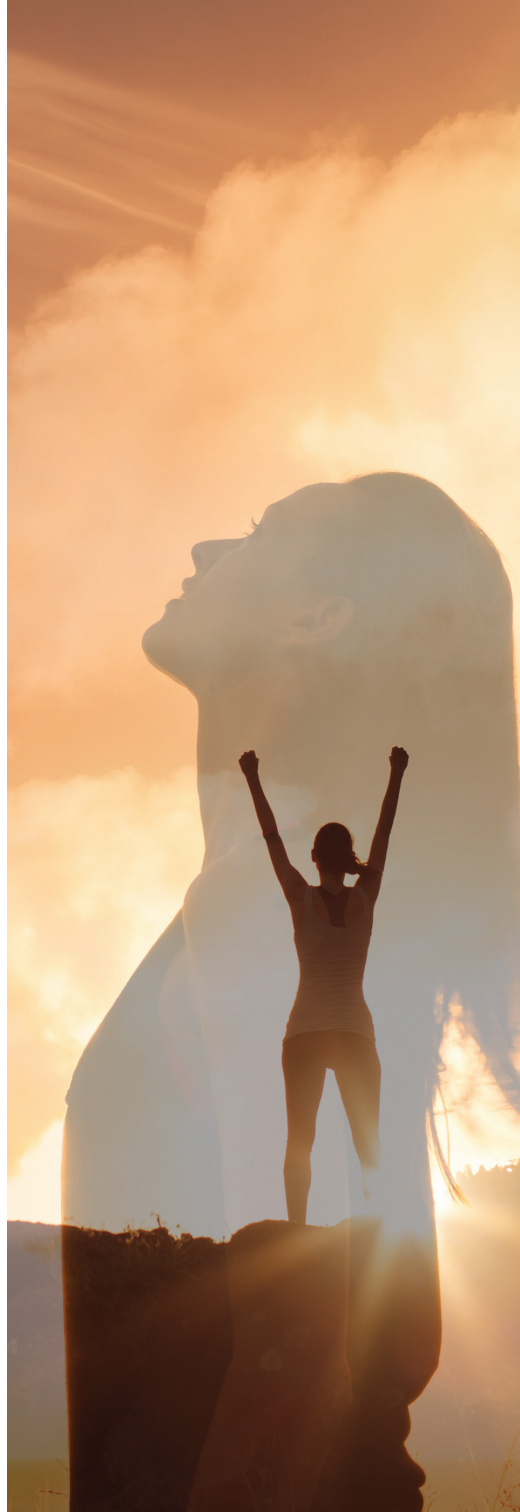
Make a written schedule for yourself every day and stick to it, no matter what. Keep a regular routine as much as possible, even when your feelings seem out of control.

Get out in the sun or into nature for at least 30 minutes a day.

Exercise as vigorously as is safe for you. To get the most benefit, aim for 30 minutes of exercise per day, but you can start small. Three 10-minute bursts of activity can have a positive effect on mood.

Make time for things that bring you joy. Even if very few things bring you pleasure at the moment, force yourself to do the things you used to enjoy.

Remember your personal goals. You may have always wanted to travel to a particular place, read a specific book, own a pet, move to another place, learn a new hobby, volunteer, go back to school, or start a family. Write your personal goals down.



Things to avoid:

Being alone.

Solitude can make suicidal thoughts even worse. Visit a friend, or family member, or pick up the phone and call someone who cares about you.

Alcohol and drugs.

Drugs and alcohol can increase depression, hamper your problem -solving ability, and can make you act impulsively.

Doing things that make you feel worse.

Listening to sad music, looking at certain photographs, reading old letters, or visiting a loved one's grave can all increase negative feelings.

Thinking about suicide and other negative thoughts.

Try not to become preoccupied with suicidal thoughts as this can make them even stronger. Don't think and rethink negative thoughts. Find a distraction. Giving yourself a break from suicidal thoughts can help, even if it's for a short time.



Recovering from suicidal thoughts

Even if your suicidal thoughts and feelings have subsided, get help for yourself. Experiencing that sort of emotional pain is itself a traumatizing experience. Finding a support group or therapist can be very helpful in decreasing the chances that you will feel suicidal again in the future.

5 Steps to recovery

- 1 Identify triggers or situations that lead to feelings of despair or generate suicidal thoughts,** such as an anniversary of a loss, alcohol, or stress from relationships. Find ways to avoid these places, people, or situations.
- 2 Take care of yourself.** Eat right, don't skip meals, and get plenty of sleep. Exercise is also key: it releases endorphins, relieves stress, and promotes emotional well-being.
- 3 Build your support network.** Surround yourself with positive influences and people who make you feel good about yourself. The more you're invested in other people and your community, the more you have to lose— which will help you stay positive and on the recovery track.
- 4 Develop new activities and interests.** Find new hobbies, volunteer activities, or work that gives you a sense of meaning and purpose. When you're doing things you find fulfilling, you'll feel better about yourself and feelings of despair are less likely to return.
- 5 Learn to deal with stress in a healthy way.** Find healthy ways to keep your stress levels in check, including exercising, meditating, using sensory strategies to relax, practicing simple breathing exercises, and challenging self-defeating thoughts.

If you require professional help, please contact Platinum Health's Mental Health Services (MHS) on 014 590 1700. EAP Counselors (010 133 0525) are also available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week to offer counseling and support.

