

Creating your personal safety plan

Kooth's support guide for young people

What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a practical tool to help keep you safe.

Having a safety plan means that in a crisis or when you feel unsafe, you have something to refer to that can help you feel more in control of your situation.

There could be many reasons why a safety plan might be a good idea for you, including urges to hurt yourself, or others, feeling unsafe at home, or feeling at risk from others around you.

The term "safety plan" might not feel right for you, so feel free to change the name if it works better. Some people use the terms "coping plan" or "crisis plan".



Creating your plan

You can write the following heading questions in bold on a piece of paper, or in the notes on your phone. Let's brainstorm as we take you through each step.



1

Why might a safety plan be important/helpful for you right now?

Think about the risk around you - things like self-harm impulses, suicidal thoughts, or feeling at risk of harm from others.

- ★ **Example:** I'm having thoughts of hurting myself more often. I haven't acted on these thoughts, so a safety plan might help me to manage these impulses.

2

What warning signs are there that make me feel out of control/at risk of harm?

Sometimes it's tricky to identify when you feel more at risk. Looking at clues in how you think, feel, and behave, or even common situations that cause you to feel more at risk, can be helpful here.

- ★ **Example:** My thoughts to hurt myself increase if I've had an argument with somebody (e.g. parents, friends, teachers). I notice I feel hot, fidgety, and tearful, and I struggle to sleep at night time.

3

What have I done in the past that has helped?

Identifying what you already know works for you can be helpful. Whatever it is you find yourself doing that makes you feel calmer, distracted, understood, or heard - those are the things you want to tap into. It can be things like reaching out to a friend, listening to music, doing something creative like art, writing, or spending time with a pet.

- ★ **Example:** My dog always makes me feel better. Telling him about my day, how I feel, or just sitting in silence stroking his fur helps me to feel calmer.

4

What could calm/soothe/distract me/lift my mood when things feel difficult or out of control?

This is a great way to reflect on the points in the section above and think about practical things you can do to keep yourself safe.

- ★ **Example:** Making a playlist to calm me down and using it when things feel tough, writing down my feelings to help soothe me, and playing my favourite video game all help to lift my mood and distract me if I'm at home. If I'm at school or somewhere else, I know that talking to my best friend and carrying around a lip balm I like the smell of is useful for me, as it takes my mind off my thoughts to hurt myself and lifts my mood, too.

5

What can others do to help me stay safe?

Think about what others around you can do to help you stay safe. Doing this might also help you think about letting someone know what they can do to help, as sometimes people don't always know what to do when things are tough.

- ★ **Example:** I like having my best friend around me without the pressure to talk or do anything. Just being with them for a walk or listening to music together in silence really helps. In this example, reaching out to that friend to tell them what is helpful for you could be a good idea, too.

6

Why might a safety plan be important/helpful for you right now?

Sometimes when things feel overwhelming, it can be useful to change your thinking by reminding yourself of things that help you feel calmer, comforted, and supported.

- ★ **Example:**
 - "Take things one day at a time."
 - Practise a positive daily mantra (an encouraging idea or thought we repeat to ourselves) - e.g. "I am doing my best."
 - "I am not alone, and there are people I can reach out to."

7

What would I tell someone else in a similar position?

This is a great way to step outside of your situation and explore what you might say to someone else who is struggling. Sometimes we have great advice for others and forget to give it to ourselves.

- ★ **Example:** I would tell someone else that things can change, and while they might feel like this today, it might not always feel this way. Press pause and see where you are tomorrow.

8

Where is a safe place I can go?

When you don't feel safe or you feel at risk of hurting yourself or others, being somewhere that feels comforting, calming, and, most of all safe from harm, can be really useful.

- Example:** The local library is a great place to be for me. The books and the smell of the place are really comforting. If I'm at home, my bedroom with familiar things, photos, and smells feels safe for me.
- If being in a safer place is not an option for you, thinking about making your situation safer might be a more helpful alternative. For example - put potentially harmful things out of reach, or avoid conflict in potentially dangerous spaces at home (e.g. kitchens and bathrooms might have more risks if home is not a safe place to be).

Who can I call or who is my support network I can reach out to? Identifying who you can turn to when things feel difficult may help you think about who to reach out to in times of need.

Example: My best friend, my Grandma, and a family friend are all people I know I can reach out to. If this isn't possible for any reason, and if I can't reach out to Kooth either, I also know I can call **ChildLine (call 0800 11 11)**, **Samaritans (call 116123)**, and **SHOUT (text 85258)**, as they are 24/7 services.