

2. Feeling suicidal often leads to isolation

It's vital that you find someone to talk with confidentially on a deep level, someone who is not going to judge or reject what you say. There is no need to feel ashamed of whatever you are feeling. Admitting our vulnerabilities can be terrifying, but once we open up it can bring a huge sense of relief. Sharing any plans with just one person can help to keep you safe.

Tips to keep yourself safe:

- Remember that your thoughts do not have to take charge; you can have them without acting on them.
- If you are feeling like hurting yourself; wait, even if it's for 5 mins, but just wait, and breathe... this may be hard but it's likely the intensity will subside.
- Call a person or group you can trust to open up to about how you feel.
- Find a safe way to express any emotions that are surfacing.
- Call a helpline - you can find numbers on the back page.



Empower yourself; create an 'Advance Statement'

If you know your crises get bad enough to get you into a hospital, there is a tool you could use called a Psychiatric Advance Statement.

If you want to make an Advance Statement you need to find out if your local Mental Health Trust has an Advance Statement scheme. You can check this with your Care Coordinator, Psychiatrist or GP.

- You do not have to use a template for an advance statement. You can just tell someone your advance statement instead of writing it down. However, it is better if it is in writing. This is what we recommend you include:

- My full name and Address.
- The details of someone I would like to be contacted when I'm unwell such as a friend or relative.
- Whom I would like to make decisions for me when I am unable to make them for myself.
- A statement of what treatment I would like.
- What treatments I would not like.
- What kind of help I would like from my supporters.
- What helps me during these times, eg. doing art, going for walks, being in nature, being left alone / listened to.
- What is important to me during this time, eg. that my pets are cared for, I am fed a healthy / special diet.
- My GP details.
- My signature.
- Date of signing, and a signature from a witness.
- If any of this information changes, make sure you update your Advance Statement and let people know.
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Where to keep your statement:

- It is important that whoever is close to you knows about your advance statement and where it is.
- You should think about giving a copy of the statement to:
- Your GP, Your mental health team, and a friend or relative.



UK specific helpful resources

Spiritual Crisis Network (SCN) - SCN offers support services for those who feel that their distress relates to a spiritual emergence. You can contact them here: spiritualcrisis@gmail.com www.spiritualcrisisnetwork.uk

Samaritans - Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to listen to anything that is upsetting you. Their national number is **08457 90 90 90**, their freephone number is **116 123**, or you can email jo@samaritans.org. www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us Samaritans also offer a Welsh Language Line on **0300 123 3011** (from 7pm-11pm only, seven days a week).

SANEline - www.sane.org.uk SANEline offers emotional support and information from 6pm-11pm, 365 days a year. Their national number is **0300 304 7000**.

CALM The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is there to support you. They're open from 5pm -midnight, 365 days a year. www.thecalmzone.net. Their national number is **0800 58 58 58**, and they also have a webchat service if you're not comfortable talking on the phone.

Hearing Voices Network - You can contact them here: Email: nhvn@hotmail.co.uk Website: www.hearing-voices.org

www.elefriends.org.uk - is a peer support community - also available as an app for Android and Apple managed by the charity Mind. A safe place to listen, share and be heard.

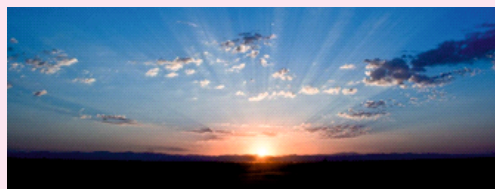
Mind Infoline - **0300 123 3393 / Text 86463**
Email: info@mind.org.uk
Web: mind.org.uk

Papyrus Hopeline - www.papyrus-uk.org/help-advice
For confidential advice and support for young people under 35 experiencing suicidal feelings or self-harm. **0800 068 4141**, text **07786 209 697** or email pat@papyrus-uk.org.

For non - UK based support you can contact **ISEN**: www.spiritualemergencenetwork.org.

This crisis guide was produced by ISEN in collaboration with the Spiritual Emergence Networks and we are grateful to the Icarus Project for the inspiration.

More comprehensive and detailed resources can be found at www.spiritualemergencenetwork.org/wiki which provides a forum for interactive information sharing.



Crisis Guide; Emerge Out of your Crisis

A crisis is different for everyone, but one thing is the same for all of us; when we are in crisis we can feel as though everything is falling apart.

To see your crisis as part of a 'breakdown to breakthrough' process can help to give a sense of hope.

This guide aims to give you some simple but vital tools that can help you to stay safe and manage your process to 'emerge' out of your crisis.

Having our experiences validated as 'normal', real, natural and meaningful can be one of the most important aspects of being able to heal and grow.

It's vital that we are kind to ourselves during this time, and allow any emotions to surface and be expressed in a safe environment.

Having peer support from someone who has gone through similar experiences, and can listen without judgement, is really helpful. Go to the back page to find the resources that will be most helpful for you in your local area.

You are not alone! What you are going through is a normal part of a healing process. Don't give up - there is light at the end of the tunnel even when you feel in complete darkness.

You are not crazy, you are becoming well and growing into wholeness, and that is a painful process.



Quick Tips

1. Allow your vulnerability – it's a strength allow your tears to fall and your heart to shine – it's the best way we can connect as humans and feel less alone.
2. Allow yourself to 'turn up whole' and trust that it's all part of the process. This also means acknowledging that it's okay to have 'dark' thoughts and uncomfortable emotions.
3. Breathe - It's normal to feel that you have no stability when you are going through such a process of immense change, but it will settle down and get easier to manage.
4. Find a safe environment e.g. with a therapist or in a group, to help you work through trauma when it arises to be healed. Releasing your emotions; verbally, physically and in any other way necessary is vital.
5. Focus on your self care - Getting physical exercise / being in nature / eating wholesome food and getting plenty of sleep is important. Initially, some prescribed medications may be necessary to help you manage your life.
6. Avoid stimulants (alcohol / drugs / caffeine / processed foods, especially sugar).
7. Join a support group – this can be an online forum / it helps not to isolate yourself. Try to find at least one person you trust where you can openly talk about your experiences without fear of being judged.
8. Reduce stress wherever possible; both at home and work.
9. Reduce spiritual practices, as this can make your experience more intense.
10. Listen to calming or uplifting music, and also listening to the sounds of nature can be helpful.
11. Relationships - spend time with supportive people, and distance yourself from ones that feel stressful.
12. Creative self expression is helpful when you find talking difficult, e.g. drawing, painting, poetry, music, drumming, sculpture, singing.
13. If you are already taking prescribed medication, it is not advisable to reduce or stop this without clinical guidance.



Food

Remembering to eat really helps. You may find that at different stages of your process you might be drawn to, and need, different types of food.

The general consensus seems to be that heavier foods are useful for grounding, these include grains, root vegetables, pulses, dairy products and meat. Protein should be an important element in your diet although, at times, animal products may become difficult to digest; in this case, to switch to plant-related protein sources e.g. pulses or grain can be a better choice for your well-being.

Be aware that sweet foods and sugar can affect blood sugar levels, which can in turn destabilise your mood. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, which is found in coffee, but also tea, fizzy drinks and in chocolate. Alcohol and fat-laden processed foods, with no nutritional content, can make you feel sluggish.

It's important to eat fresh food any time you can, drink a lot, mainly water. Eat less, more often, is the healthiest way to manage your diet. However, fasting can intensify your experience.

Vitamins and minerals are vital for your balance, e.g. vitamins C, vitamin B, Iron and Calcium. You may be able to tune into your physical well being and listen to what your body is calling for rather than what your mind is saying you 'should' be eating. Our bodies have a wisdom of their own if we can learn to listen to it.



Sleep

Normal sleep patterns can be interrupted, which may be OK for a short time, especially if it's possible to rest as and when it's needed. However, prolonged loss of sleep can make your experience more difficult to cope with, so you could try some simple relaxation methods such as - taking a bubble bath, doing some relaxation breathing techniques, listening to guided meditations, using Lavender oil and drinking chamomile tea.

If you are feeling anxious or frightened, herbal remedies can help. If possible, ask a practitioner for advice on something to suit your needs. If herbs don't help, consider seeking medical advice; taking a sleeping tablet for a few nights may help reestablish a normal sleep pattern.

Nature

Try to spend lots of time in nature. It may sound simple or obvious but spending time in the natural environment can really help a great deal. For people experiencing psychological distress, focusing on the calmness of nature can give a sense of grounding and relief from the confusion happening in the mind.

Perhaps there is something in the following list that you can do –

- Do some gardening (or even offer to help in a neighbour's garden) – plant some flowers in a window box or indoors; grow some veggies.
- Go for a walk in the woods.
- Get involved with a group that works out in nature or helps clean up the local environment. This can be a great way to meet other people and make friends too.
- Allow yourself to get dirty - Having fun and getting in touch with the earth can be healing.

Exercise

Some people find vigorous exercise like running, very helpful because of the increased amount of energy they are experiencing in their bodies. Others find gentle walking or yoga to be more what they need. Creative exercise e.g. Dancing, Drumming or even Hula-hooping can help to release some energy from your body. Let your body move in whatever ways feel natural to you.



Spiritual Practices

At the beginning of a crisis it's advisable to stop or at least reduce any spiritual practices, e.g. meditation, to slow down your process; these can then be gradually reintroduced over time.

Stress

It's very common to experience high levels of anxiety during these times. This can present as shallow breathing, palpitations, sweating, confusion or even panic attacks. There are some simple and effective self-help tools that can help you manage these, like a guided body scan, eg the Autogenic Technique. Remember also the basic tips on relaxation included in the sleep section, and the benefits gained from releasing emotions and talking openly to someone you trust.

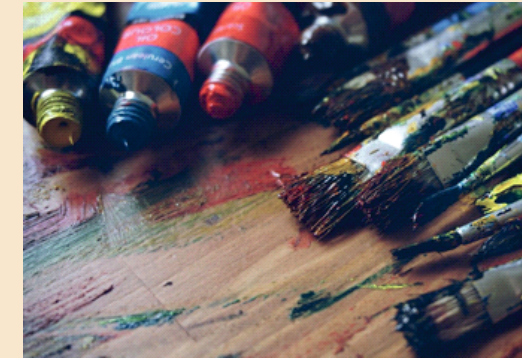
Creativity and Self Expression

Many people find times of crisis to also be a time when their creative energies are active. Painting, drawing, craftwork; these can be used as a way of expressing experiences, releasing emotions and bringing a sense of focus. Enjoy the creation of whatever comes, rather than focusing on the final outcome; messy is good!

Dancing, movement, singing and playing music, can create an enormous release of energy. Even when having a bad day, listening to your favourite music and dancing around has an enormous power of positive refocusing. Turn the music up loud and let out those pent-up screams too; it can be very cathartic to release repressed emotions.

Simple things like writing stories, poetry, upcycling old furniture or clothing, changing your bedroom around, all help with creative expression.

Go slow - Small steps can have a big impact, especially when they lead to a growing sense of satisfaction and confidence.



Suicidal thoughts and Self Harm

Even though a crisis can be growth towards healing, there may be times when it is extremely dark, terrifying, and dangerous; it is common to experience having suicidal thoughts and thoughts of self harm.

There are, however, a lot of things that can help manage this distress, more of which can be found on this link: <https://www.metanoia.org/suicide/>.

The fact is **you are not alone** – other people have felt deep and terrible pain and come through it - you can too!

1. Feeling suicidal does not have to mean giving up on life.

If you are feeling suicidal it may be that you are desperate for things to be different. Wanting this life to end doesn't rule out the possibility of a new, better life beginning, but you may feel like that is beyond reach right now. Imagine what a better life might look like, and see how it is possible to realise it if you stick around to find out what could happen. Turn some of that suicidal energy towards risking change in your life. Consider that it may be a behaviour pattern or life condition that you want to end. Ask yourself, "What inside me needs to die?"