

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

WHEN YOU NEED ONE AND
HOW TO CREATE IT



WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?



A Safety Plan is a brief written list of coping strategies and sources of support.

No doubt you can drive from your home to your school without even thinking twice. But what if you have to make that same trip in heavy fog or through a blizzard? Even though it's a route you are very familiar with, it's harder to navigate your way if your vision is impaired. When that happens, you might use GPS, read street signs, look for landmarks and watch lane markings on the road.

A Safety Plan is like a roadmap for your life. Just like a map can help you find your way when you are going somewhere, a Safety Plan can point you in the right direction when you get lost or become overwhelmed by problems or emotions.

When might you need a Safety Plan? The reasons for creating a Safety Plan cover many different situations:

- If you are having thoughts of hurting yourself.
- If you are worried about someone hurting you.
- If you are experiencing emotional pain.

Although a Safety Plan is typically meant to keep you physically safe, it also can help with your emotional wellness. Addressing each of the items listed below can help you, through a Safety Plan, be emotionally healthy throughout your life.

1. **Triggers/Warning Signs:** What causes you to feel emotional pain?
How can you tell when those feelings are starting to become a problem?
2. **Coping Skills/Distractions:** How can you work through your problems?
What can you do to take your mind off of the things that are bothering you?
3. **Social Settings:** Where can you go to avoid being alone?
What social settings can provide you with an outlet or means of temporary escape?
4. **Supportive People:** What friends, family or others do you trust to ask for help?
5. **Professionals:** Who would you contact during a real crisis or an emergency?
6. **Safe Environments:** Where is your safe space?
What do you need to avoid or remove to keep it a safe space for you?
7. **Reasons for Living:** What motivates you to keep going? Who or what do you care about most?

To create a workable Safety Plan, be sure to complete it *before* a problem or crisis occurs. You may also find that your answers to the questions above change over time, so review and update it regularly.

Take some time today to think about what will work best to keep *you* safe and emotionally healthy in the future.

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?



Creating a Safety Plan

A Safety Plan is a brief written list of strategies that can help you cope with life's challenges. It outlines steps you can use to deal with any negative thoughts and emotions you might experience.

1. Triggers/Warning Signs <i>What causes these feelings? How can you recognize when you start to feel bad?</i>	5. Professionals <i>Who could you contact during an emergency/crisis?</i>
2. Coping Skills/Distractions <i>What helps you to take your mind off your problems?</i>	6. Safe Environment <i>What might you need to avoid or remove (e.g., harmful objects)?</i>
3. Social Settings & People <i>What social settings could provide you with an outlet or means of temporary escape?</i>	7. Reasons for Living <i>What motivates you to keep going? Who or what do you care about most?</i>
4. Supportive People <i>What friends, family or others do you trust to ask for help?</i>	

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?



What You Need to Know About Coping Skills

- **It takes time to develop really good coping skills.** For instance, your first list of coping skills might include walking, listening to music, watching a movie, talking to a friend and writing. Over time, you might find that listening to music and writing are the best coping skills, and you hate the idea of talking to a friend. Keep revising your list until you get it just right.
- **Be patient!** The first time you decide to go for a walk might not feel right. You might come back from the walk and think, “That was supposed to help?” If you’re not used to using coping skills, give each one a chance. Try them a few times. Some of them will grow on you and really help in the end.
- **Sometimes you have to jump from one coping skill to another.** For example, your most effective coping skill might be playing video games, but you don’t want to grow roots in front of the screen. Get up after a while and go for a jog or clean your room – get your blood flowing.
- **Are coping skills effective 100% of the time?** No, nothing is. There are going to be days when it feels like nothing works. Keep trying those coping skills anyway, though, and reach out to a supportive person for extra help if you feel like all your coping skills are letting you down.
- **Do coping skills make everything better?** Occasionally your coping skills will lift your spirits and help you get back on track. Sometimes, though, you may only feel 50% better or even just 25% better. But that’s still better! If you wallow, you tend to prolong your emotional pain and feel worse. Don’t give up and don’t wallow!

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?



99 Coping Skills

1. Exercise
2. Put on fake tattoos
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal)
4. Scribble/doodle on paper
5. Be with other people
6. Watch a favorite TV show
7. Hydrate
8. Go see a movie
9. Do a word-search or crossword
10. Do schoolwork
11. Play a musical instrument
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair
13. Sing
14. Study the sky
15. Punch a pillow
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut
17. Let yourself cry
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired)
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath
20. Play with a pet
21. Go shopping
22. Clean something
23. Knit or sew
24. Read a good book
25. Listen to music
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray)
27. Meditate
28. Go somewhere very public
29. Bake cookies
30. Create a vision board
31. Paint or draw
32. Rip paper into itty bitty pieces
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball
34. Make a card
35. Plan your dream room (colors/furniture)
36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal
37. Hyper-focus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance
39. Make hot chocolate, a milkshake or a smoothie
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Doh
41. Build a pillow fort
42. Go for a nice long drive
43. Complete something you've been putting off
44. Draw on yourself with a marker
45. Take up a new hobby
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal
47. Go outside for 15 minutes
48. Create or build something
49. Pray
50. Make a list of blessings in your life
51. Read something faith-affirming
52. Go to a friend's house
53. Jump on a trampoline
54. Watch an old, happy movie
55. Contact your therapist or a hotline (Boys Town National Hotline: 800-448-3000)
56. Talk to someone close to you
57. Ride a bicycle
58. Feed the ducks, birds or squirrels
59. Color
60. Memorize a poem, play or song
61. Stretch
62. Search for ridiculous things on the internet
63. "Shop" online (without buying anything)
64. Color coordinate your wardrobe
65. Watch fish
66. Make a playlist of your favorite songs
67. Play the "15 Minute Game" (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again)
68. Plan your wedding/prom/other event
69. Plant some seeds
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car online
71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible
72. Sort through/edit your pictures
73. Play with a balloon
74. Give yourself a facial
75. Play with a favorite childhood toy
76. Start collecting something
77. Play a video/computer game
78. Clean up trash at your local park
79. Look at yourlifeyourvoice.org
80. Text or call a friend
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter
82. Look up new words and use them
83. Rearrange furniture
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send
85. Smile at five people
86. Play with your little brother/sister/niece/nephew
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend)
88. Put a puzzle together
89. Clean your room/closet
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels or backbends
91. Practice yoga
92. Teach your pet a new trick
93. Learn a new language
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot
95. Get together with friends to play frisbee, soccer or basketball
96. Hug a friend or family member
97. Search online for new songs/artists
98. Make a list of goals for the week/month/year/5 years
99. Perform a random act of kindness