

BEING THERE FOR SOMEONE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

**A GUIDE TO TAKING CARE OF
YOURSELF AND OTHERS**



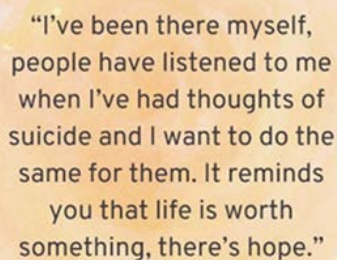
WHO IS THIS FOR?

If someone you care about has tried to take their own life, or you're worried they might, this guide and the accompanying videos are for you.

They were co-produced with people who have lived experience of supporting someone who is having thoughts of suicide. The guide and videos share the experiences and voices of the people we spoke to and information about where to get support for you, as well as the person you are supporting.

Carers

Although many of us don't think about ourselves as carers - we are neighbours, friends, family members, partners - but being that point of contact and supporting someone who is having thoughts of suicide is a caring role. We have therefore included information about carers centres.



"I've been there myself, people have listened to me when I've had thoughts of suicide and I want to do the same for them. It reminds you that life is worth something, there's hope."

SUPPORTING SOMEONE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

There is a lot of helpful information available about how to support someone who is having thoughts of suicide. You can find the information using the links below. You may also be having thoughts of suicide yourself. **If you or someone else is in immediate danger, e.g. has a plan for suicide and the means to carry out this plan – call 999**

[What to do if someone is in immediate danger](#)

[Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts](#)

[Making a safety plan for a crisis](#)

[I'm concerned about a young person](#)

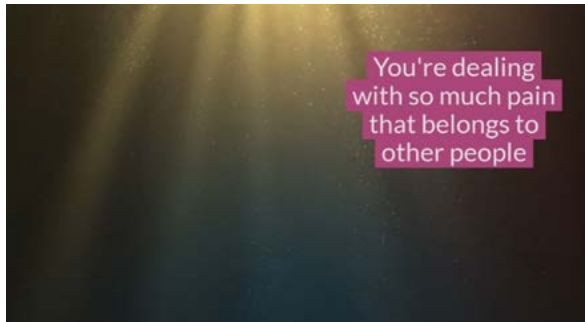
[A guide for parents: suicidal thoughts](#)

[I'm having thoughts of ending my own life](#)

[Samaritans - how-we-can-help-if-you're-having-difficult-time](#)

[NHS Inform Getting help with suicidal thoughts](#)

YOU ARE NOT ALONE - HOW IT CAN FEEL

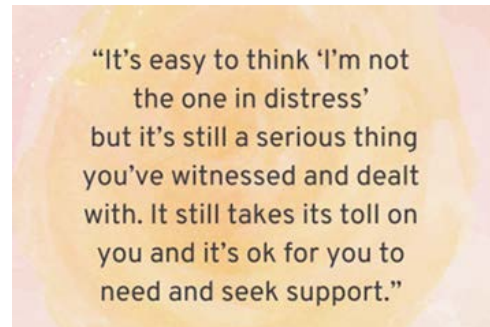


In this video people talk honestly about the impact of supporting someone who is at risk of suicide
[How it can feel](#)

Whether it's a one-off event, or an ongoing challenge, supporting someone can be an overwhelming, even traumatic experience and can bring with it a lot of complicated emotions. Being worried about someone's safety can also have a big impact on your personal, work and family life.

People we talked to said it was important to know that others have felt like this, it is okay to feel like this and that you are not alone in experiencing these things.

It can be easy to think your feelings are less important. That's not true. You can support and love someone and still place value on your own feelings. To support others it's really important that you don't burn yourself out. Your wellbeing matters. Below are suggestions for supporting your own wellbeing.



TALK TO SOMEONE



In this video people with lived experience talk about the importance of opening up about their experiences and asking for help [Talk to someone](#)

“Sometimes you just don’t know where to go. You worry about going somewhere... am I betraying her trust?”

If someone confides in you that they are having suicidal thoughts, it may be that they don’t want you to tell anyone else. This is understandable and people do have the right to privacy. The stigma around suicide may also make it uncomfortable for us to talk about what has happened, but it can be important that we don’t experience this on our own. Can you:

- Find someone you trust to talk to, who isn’t a mutual friend?
- Talk about what's going on and how you are feeling without saying who the person is?
- Speak to a confidential, compassionate support line such as Samaritans to share your feelings?

Ongoing or immediate danger

If it’s an ongoing or immediate danger, it may be that you need to involve someone else such as the person’s GP, even if the person you are supporting doesn’t want you to.

If someone is in immediate danger call 999

There is more information here - [Samaritans - what to do](#)

Hospital

If someone is unable to keep themselves safe emergency services may be involved and the person may need to be admitted to hospital. You can find out what to expect from this process in this SAMH booklet - [Are you worried about someone?](#)

YOUR RELATIONSHIP

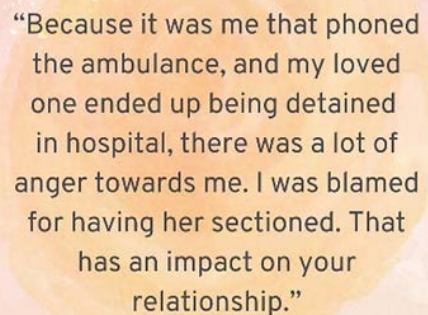
Supporting someone through a mental health crisis can be difficult, and sometimes the person may feel that the actions and events during this time have damaged their relationship with you and those who supported them. These feelings are understandable, especially if someone feels that a confidence or trust has been broken.

It's important to understand that most people are trying to help and support the person they care for during very challenging circumstances. Given time and the chance to reflect many people come to accept why those who supported them acted in the way that they did.

However if the person stops communicating with you, you can contact their GP or another professional involved in their care to pass on your concerns.

It may also be important to let the professionals involved know that at this time you cannot speak on behalf of the person. In some situations the person may be entitled to an advocacy service [The Advocacy Project](#) [Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance](#)

Mediation may also be something you would like information about and you can contact [Relate](#)



“Because it was me that phoned the ambulance, and my loved one ended up being detained in hospital, there was a lot of anger towards me. I was blamed for having her sectioned. That has an impact on your relationship.”

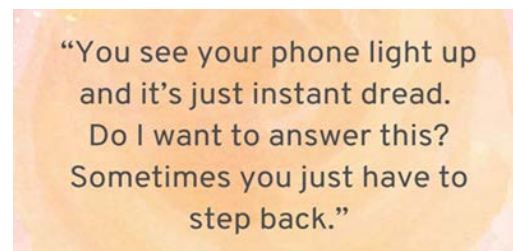
SETTING BOUNDARIES



In this video people with lived experience talk about the importance of [setting boundaries](#) and [creating a network of support](#)

No one person can be the only source of support for someone in a crisis. It is much more effective **for them** and **for you** to have a network of support and an alternative contact if you're unavailable for any reason.

It is also ok to decide that you are unable to be there for someone, we all have our own challenges and sometimes taking on other peoples can be too much for us even if we love them. Although it may feel uncomfortable, and the other person may not like your decision, it's ok to stick to your boundaries even if the person is in distress.



“You see your phone light up and it's just instant dread. Do I want to answer this? Sometimes you just have to step back.”

Only you can decide what your own boundaries are, and these can change at different times in your life, but it could include things like:

- Switching off your phone at certain times of the day and night.
- Being unavailable while you are on holiday.
- Saying no to being the point of contact while you are dealing with another situation in your life.
- It's okay to decide to take a step back.

Can you have a conversation with the person and be clear on what your boundaries are, and work together to come up with alternative sources of support.

Feeling controlled

It is **not** okay for anyone to try to control you, even if they are unwell or in crisis. There is a big difference between someone saying:

“I am having suicidal thoughts and I need your support,” and
*“If you don’t do this, **then** I will take my own life.”*

Nobody should stop you from:

- Ending an intimate relationship
- Leaving home or moving house
- Spending time with other people
- Seeking support for your own problems

If you are concerned about someone’s behaviour towards you, or you feel unsafe at home contact [Scotland’s Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](https://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/mentalhealth/forcedmarriage) 0800 027 1234

SELF CARE

Little things that we do to take care of ourselves can have a big impact on our wellbeing in the long term. It is important to prioritise your own wellbeing, even 10 minutes a day can make a difference. Find what works for you:

- Notice if you are being hard on yourself – what would you say to someone else in your situation? Try to be gentle with yourself
- Can you go for a walk, get outside?
- Keep in touch with friends and family
- What do you enjoy doing? Can you take it up again, even in a small way? Or start something you've always wanted to try
- Prioritise sleep when you can
- Watch what you eat and drink
- Writing down how you are feeling can be helpful in thinking more clearly and understanding what we are feeling
- Practice Mindfulness - sessions may be available through your carers centre or there are lots of free online resources including on You Tube
- Prioritise your own health appointments and treatments
- Get a break – your local carers centre can provide information about respite support
- Read a magazine, watch your favourite programme...
- Other ways to relax - breathing, stretching, guided relaxations
- Contact your local Carers Centre to find out about wellbeing sessions for carers - [Carers Centres in Glasgow and Carers Information Line](#)

There is more information about self care here:

[NHSGGC Wellbeing Glasgow](#)

[Lifelink information & counselling adults and young people](#)

[Mental Health Foundation wellbeing tips](#)

[Self-care for parents & carers - Anna Freud Centre](#)

CREATE A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

People with lived experience of supporting someone in crisis told us that the best advice they had was to create a network of support to support both you and the person you are supporting.

Friends and family

Family and friends can be great sources of support in times of need. It can be helpful to consider:

- Who has the time to support me?
- Who has a relationship with the person I am supporting and may be able to step in?
- Who is best at listening, and who is best at practical support?
- Who can I trust to respect my privacy?

A listening ear

Support from a professional can be a useful way of helping us to make sense of what we are feeling and what we are going through. These organisations provide a listening ear for you, or the person you are supporting. You can ask your GP about other supports and services.

- [Samaritans](#) call 116 123
- [Breathing Space](#) call 0800 83 85 87
- [Childline](#) call 0800 1111
- [HOPELINE UK](#) call 0800 068 4141

Organisations offering support

These organisations may be helpful for you and the person you are supporting:

- [Chris's House: Centre for Help, Response and Intervention Surrounding Suicide](#)
- [Lifelink](#)
- [Healing for the Heart](#)
- [Tom Allan Centre](#)
- [Gamcare Support for anyone affected by gambling](#)
- [We are with you: Support for alcohol, drugs and mental health](#)
- [Glasgow Council on Alcohol](#)

Carers Centres & Carers Information Line

“All carers that look after someone in Glasgow are eligible for carer support with a universal offer of information and advice for all,” Glasgow HSCP.

If you are providing unpaid support to someone because of their mental health you are entitled to advice and information and a carers assessment from your local carers centre. Carers centres can provide:

- Information and advice on how to access services
- Emotional support, including peer support
- Income maximisation and financial support.
- Training on mental health; suicide awareness; well-being and mindfulness sessions.
- Short breaks to allow you respite.

Contact the [Carers Information Line](#) 0141 353 6504 to find out more.

Your rights as a carer

If you are providing support to someone you may have certain rights as a carer. This may be particularly important if the person you are supporting is detained in hospital or is accessing mental health services. There is information about your rights and how to implement them here.

[Understanding your rights under the Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#)

[What are my legal rights if someone is detained or unable to make decisions for themselves](#)

[Understanding your rights around information sharing and confidentiality](#)

[Questions you can ask about the persons care](#)

GP Appointments

If you've been struggling with mental health problems, the first step to recovery can be a visit to your GP. But it can be a daunting thought. What if English isn't your first language and you don't know how to explain?

GAMH worked with people from diverse communities to produce a leaflet giving top tips for appointments. It is available in English, Urdu, Punjabi and French, Polish, Swahili, Arabic, Tamil and BSL. You can access it here [Top Tips for GP Appointments](#)

Interpreting Services

Communication support is available for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde patients so that staff can provide safe and effective patient care. This is for all patients where English is not their first language and who may need communication support in a health setting. This includes people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or deafblind. There is more information here [Interpreting Services - NHSGGC](#)

Interpreting Services - BSL

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde offers an online interpreting service for Deaf British Sign Language users. This film explains how to use the service, which is available via special laptops held at various locations across NHSGGC [NHSGGC BSL Online Interpreting Service](#)

There is more information about health and interpreting services in the films here [Caring for Deaf Patients who use BSL](#)

LGBT

LGBT Health and Wellbeing are a national organisation who work to improve the health, wellbeing and equality of LGBTQ+ people in Scotland. They offer a helpline, counselling services in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as group opportunities.

[LGBT Health and Wellbeing Services and Support](#) LGBT Helpline 0300 123 2523
Tuesdays & Wednesdays (12-9pm) Thursdays & Sundays (1-6pm)

[LGBT Youth Scotland](#) Scotland's national charity for LGBTI young people, working with 13–25 year olds across the country.

Faith

You may wish to approach your place of worship for support. Faith can be an important - sometimes a central - part of someone's life, and places of worship can be integral to providing support. It may be helpful to consider the views of your local place of worship prior to seeking support around suicide.

NHS Education for Scotland have developed a document which provides information about faiths in Scotland [Spiritual Care a multi faith resource for health care staff](#)

Money Advice

Sometimes supporting someone else can have an impact on our income. These organisations provide money advice:

[Money Matters](#)

[Citizens Advice](#)

Mental health services

If your mental health is suffering and is impacting the way you live your life, you can ask your GP for a referral into mental health services for treatment. It may also be that the person you support needs treatment for their mental health or is currently engaged with mental health services. Sometimes mental health services can feel confusing. The following website explains the different services in Glasgow, what they provide, and the roles of the staff who work there [Heads Up Glasgow](#)

Mental health services - BSL

This webpage is for BSL users living in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area whose preferred method of communication is using sign language. All of the resources here are in BSL [Mental Health Support and Services in NHSGGC](#)

Patient Advice and Support Service

If you need support and advice about NHS services the Patient Advice and Support Service can help you [Patient Advice & Support Service](#)

SUICIDE AWARENESS TRAINING

It is helpful for all of us to learn about suicide prevention and there are various ways you can do this. To access current opportunities in Glasgow visit [Your Support Your Way Glasgow](#)

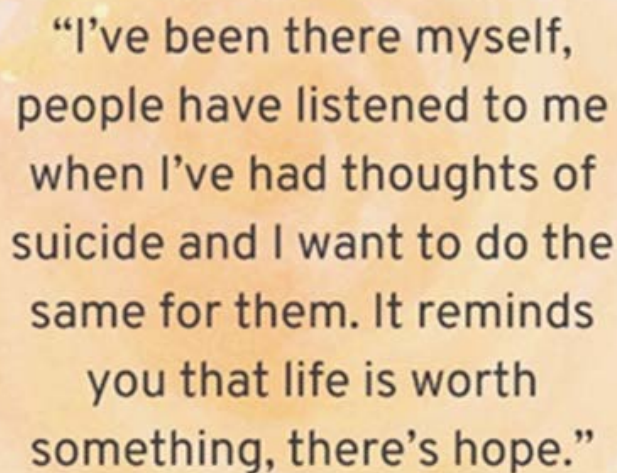
You can also learn online via the NHS Education for Scotland - Ask, Tell, Save a Life - series of videos. These can help you to develop an understanding of mental health, suicide and self-harm, how someone may be affected by suicidal thoughts, and how to talk to someone about their suicidal thoughts.

[Ask, Tell - Look after your mental health](#)

[Ask, Tell - Have a healthy conversation](#)

[Ask, Tell - Save A Life: Every Life Matters](#)

If you are in paid or unpaid work you may be able to access suicide awareness and intervention skills training through your workplace. Your local carers centre may provide suicide awareness training. You can find out by contacting the carers information line - as detailed above.



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