

Mental Health Crisis Support

*Support tips around self-harm
and suicidal thoughts written by
and for trans, non-binary and
intersex people*



the
clare
project

Supporting TNBI Communities,
Campaigning for Inclusion.

Content note

This booklet discusses topics around self-harm and suicide, and we know this can be distressing. It is intended as a support resource for those who live with self-harm and / or suicidal thoughts.



We believe that the word 'suicide' should not be treated as taboo. It is better for people who live with suicidal thoughts to be able to obtain clear information about the topic.

We also acknowledge that self-harm and suicidal thoughts are very different experiences, though they can be linked for some people and the support services for both are often very similar.

If you are experiencing extreme distress **right now**, there is a list of resources available for your support on the final page

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when we take actions that might:

- Cause us harm, such as cutting ourselves or over-exercising
- Impact our safety, such as deliberately putting ourselves at risk of assault or injury
- Impact our recovery from existing harm, such as neglecting to treat an injury

Self-harm happens for many reasons, and may or may not be linked to suicidal feelings. Most people who self-harm do not intend or want to die as a result of their actions.

Some people self-harm in order to feel more control over something in their life, or as a kind of pressure-release. Some are punishing themselves for beliefs about themselves.

There are many, many reasons beyond these few - as many reasons as people, really.



Suicide

Suicide is when we cause our own death by injuring ourselves with the intent to die.

A suicide attempt is when we harm ourselves with an intent to end our life, but we do not die as result of our actions.

Suicidal ideation is when we think about ending our life. It may or may not include planning how we might die. It may be active planning, or it might be vague thoughts - like fantasies - where there are no plans or intent to harm ourselves at all.



Not all people who feel suicidal self-harm, and most people who do self-harm don't have suicidal thoughts. They are different ways that people's minds deal with trauma, pain, anger and other difficult feelings.

Safety and Support

If you are experiencing self-harm or suicidal thoughts, you might feel like you are in the worst place. There is always a possibility that things can improve, although it is okay to doubt this sometimes. Whilst you are experiencing the most difficult and intense moments, there are ways you can keep yourself as safe as possible, and there are places you can turn to for support.

You might need a safe space with others who understand how you are feeling. You might need medical support to deal with any injuries. You might need other people to help you keep yourself safe.



Some people prefer to rely on family or friends for support whilst they are unwell. But remember, healthcare professionals are also available to support you, whether these be your GP, counsellor, therapist, local mental health team, charity worker, local crisis service, the ambulance service, or your local A&E.

Being TNBI and self-harming

Trans, non-binary and intersex (TNBI) people may struggle with self-harm more often than cisgender or non-intersex people. This may be because of feelings of anger towards their bodies, because they are less likely or able to access mental health support, or because they are more likely to feel isolated or hopeless due to systemic discrimination, family conflict, and long waiting lists for support.

Although we do live in a society which is unfair for TNBI people, we have to remember that TNBI people can and do live happy lives. There are plenty of people who are TNBI or are our allies, that will love and support us.



Your body is like your home. If you don't like your home, you don't punch holes in the walls. You redecorate, build an extension, or convert the attic.

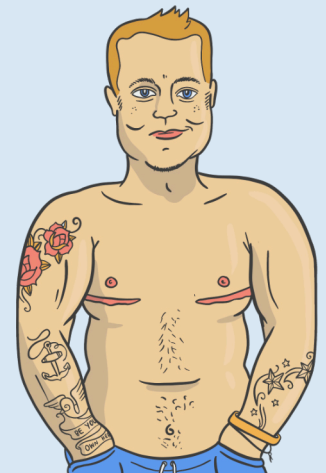
Being TNBI and feeling suicidal

Many people experience suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives, and TNBI people are no different.

TNB people who wish to access medical transition are particularly at risk pre-transition. But there is a lot of hope, because studies show that once these people have accessed hormone therapy or surgery, the rates of suicidal thoughts decrease hugely.

Experiencing discrimination and harassment is also associated with suicidal thoughts in TNBI people. This is why it is really important that if you are TNBI, you surround yourself with as many allies as possible, and you seek support following any incidents of discrimination and harassment.

Some of the best things you can do, as a TNBI person, to reduce your suicidal thoughts, is to practice good self-care, make a safety plan, and seek appropriate and timely support. The next few pages describe how.



Self-care

Self-care is important. You need to look after yourself. This does not necessarily mean expensive yoga retreats or spa days. For many, just getting out of bed, or making themselves a cup of tea, is an act of self-care that takes significant effort.

The important thing is to think about what you need or want, and if there is a way to do this for yourself. If you feel unable, or you need to ask someone to help, that is okay too. Be as kind to yourself as you can be.

If you injure yourself, make sure that you take appropriate care of any wounds and injuries to prevent infection or further harm. It's okay to do things like take painkillers when an injury is sore.

Focus on the basics:

- Try to get enough sleep and to eat well
- Try to move your body or go outside regularly
- Try and connect with other people regularly, in person, over the phone or online
- Try to speak kindly to yourself
- Try to do one thing every day that makes you feel productive, and one thing that makes you feel happy, however small those things are.



Self-care is for everyone

Sometimes I think self-care is this regimented thing... when actually it is just letting go and not being hard on yourself

Just heal whichever way you can

It's okay to find it difficult

Sometimes self-care is just cuddling up in blankets

Woof!

For me, self-care is a work in progress that's for sure. I'm still doing a lot of learning



Reach out to your community - they might have ideas!



It's normal to be scared when reaching out for the first time. You just have to try

Reading others' experiences has really helped me understand myself

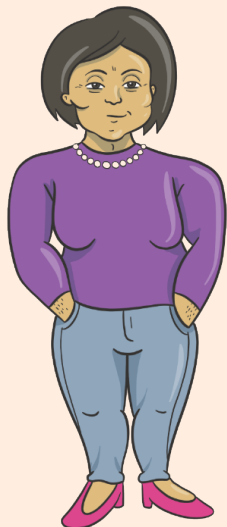
Sometimes self-care is eating the vegetables and the cake!

Safety planning

Something that might help you, and people you spend time with and trust, is to create a safety plan.

This usually notes:

- what kinds of things trigger you or make you ill / anxious / distressed / depressed
- how people around you can recognise warning signs that you are struggling
- what you can do (or not do) to support yourself
- what others can do (or not do) to support you
- what your preferences are if it comes to referral for treatment and you are too unwell to discuss these



It is usually best to write a safety plan when you feel well, as it can feel difficult, overwhelming even. If you can talk to someone who has seen you when you are unwell, this might help to capture some things that you may not be aware other people observe if you start to become unwell.

There are various templates that you can use - you can find them online - but the points above are important to document clearly in any format you prefer. Don't forget to share it with people who will be able to support you when given this information.

Mind.org has a webpage called "what can I do to help myself cope" and another called "self harm - helping yourself now."

A safety plan template can be found at www.stayingsafe.net.



I have a safety plan. It details that doctor's appointments are a trigger for me, and suggests how other people can help calm me down when I am triggered. I have shared it with my mum, my partner, my key worker and my doctor. I also keep a copy on my phone to look at if I get triggered.

Seeking support: NHS

Your GP. Your GP is usually the best place to start to get any advice or a referral to support services.

Psychological Therapies Service. Your local psychological therapies service may be able to support you. In Brighton, this is the Brighton Wellbeing Service. In East Sussex, this is Health in Mind. In West Sussex, this is Time To Talk. Other local psychological therapies services will be available in any part of the UK.

Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). Your local CMHT may be able to support you. Your GP can refer you to this service if you need more specialist mental health support. You will be assessed by the Assessment and Treatment Service, and support offered could include seeing a psychiatrist, a psychologist, or being allocated a mental health 'care coordinator' to support you.

Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team (CRHT). Your local CRHT offers safe and effective care in your own home if you experience a mental health crisis. They try and keep you out of hospital if possible.

Blue light services. The police, fire brigade, coastguard and ambulance services should all have training in suicide awareness and prevention, diversity and inclusion safer language, and autism awareness.

Havens. Instead of A&E you might be referred (or taken by blue light services) to a Haven service. These are available 24/7, providing support and assessment for adults over the age of 18 in Sussex who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

A&E. A&E provides emergency treatment at a hospital for urgent physical and mental health issues. They can organise referrals or arrange for you to be part of the Compassionate Call Service, where you will be offered a call back in three days to check how you are doing.

Inpatient services. There are several inpatient wards for people with serious mental health issues in Sussex. You may be referred with your agreement, or possibly under the Mental Health Act ('sectioning'), if it is felt you need extra support to keep yourself safe. It may take some time for them to find a bed for you in an inpatient ward - you may have to wait at home, in A&E or in a Haven for a few days.

Seeking support: charities

Mind. National Mind has a website with lots of helpful information and advice. You likely also have a local Mind service which can offer local advice, support, and sometimes advocacy or counselling.

Recovery College. Check and see if you have a local Recovery College. These are centres where you can sign up for free classes to help you understand your mental health issue, or learn new skills or hobbies. In Sussex, visit the Community Roots or the Sussex Recovery College website for more details.

Charity networks. Sometimes there is a local webpage or phone number where you can find out details of all the local mental health support charities. In Sussex, you have Community Roots in Brighton and Hove, Pathfinder in West Sussex, and in East Sussex, the best point of call is the organisation Southdown.

Crisis cafe / Crisis houses. Sometimes there are local charities providing places people can go in crisis that are not NHS services. In Sussex, there are three of these 'Staying Well Spaces'.

Seeking support: phone/online

National:

- **Samaritans.** Call 116 123 to talk to Samaritans, or email: jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours
- **Shout Crisis Helpline.** Text "SHOUT" to 85258 to contact the Shout Crisis Text Line
- **Stay Alive app.** Download it for free on Android or iOS.
- **Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline.** This Switchboard provides an information, support and referral services throughout the UK. Telephone Helpline – 0300 330 0630 open 10am till 10pm every day.

Local:

- **Sussex Mental Healthline.** Call 0800 030 9500 to speak to a mental health worker, open 24/7.
- **Mental Health Rapid Response Service.** If you are in Brighton and at serious risk of harm, you can call 0300 304 0078 and speak to a crisis worker.
- **Local LGBTQ+ Charities.** Charities such as Brighton and Hove Switchboard, MindOut, Allsorts and The Clare Project support LGBTQ+ people in Sussex. These are not crisis services.

Useful links and documents:

A website designed to help you find resources close to you locally for all sorts of issues including suicide and self-harm:

hubofhope.co.uk/

Rethink Survivors of Suicide, a charity supporting those who have been bereaved by suicide or who have survived a suicide attempt:

www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/community-support/survivors-of-suicide-sos-brighton-hove/

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy based self-help resources for anyone struggling with their mental health:

www.getselfhelp.co.uk/

Support research and documents for people with variations in sex characteristics/intersex variations:

<https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/reprofutures/>

Experts by experience have produced these resources for managing self-harm:

<https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/experience-led-self-help-resource>

Useful links and documents

A link to look at around 'boring self care':

www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/boring-self-care_n_5914dabae4b00f308cf40a19

Advice on living with feelings of self-harm:

www.memorialmedicalcentre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/520/2019/11/Staying-safer-with-self-harm.pdf

A 'pocket resource card' for people in Brighton and Hove at risk of suicide or who care for someone who is:

www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Suicide-Prevention-Pocket-Resource-Brighton-and-Hove.pdf

A website for people feeling suicidal in Sussex:

www.preventingsuicideinsussex.org

Support After Suicide Partnership help for those affected by the suicide of someone they did not know:

www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/support_after_suicide_booklet.pdf

And finally - if you just need a listening ear and some peer support, you can contact us at the Clare Project - go to www.clareproject.org.uk

NEED URGENT SUPPORT RIGHT NOW?

If you have already taken actions to hurt yourself, this includes any overdose (even small ones), any cuts that won't stop bleeding, or any burns that are large, cause the skin to whiten, char or blister, or are on your face or genitals, or if you have travelled to a dangerous location:

Go to A&E or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

If you think you might take action to hurt yourself in the next few hours call:

Brighton and Hove: 0300 304 0078
East or West Sussex: 0800 030 9500

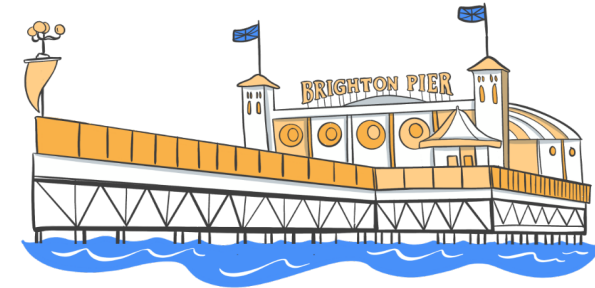
AND: Make sure you are in a safe place with no dangerous objects around you. Try and be around other people, preferably people you trust, or around a pet. Text or call a friend or family member and tell them you are feeling unsafe. Promise yourself you won't take any action for at least an hour. If you manage one hour, try one more.

Don't like NHS or frontline service mental health support?

Call Samaritans (open 24/7) on 116 112
Text the word 'SHOUT' to 85258

**This booklet was designed and produced by
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This is the Spring 2022 edition.
Booklet available in other formats on request.



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The Clare Project began in 2000 when a group of trans women started meeting in the back room of a hairdressing salon to discuss issues affecting their local community. We are now a registered charity run by and for trans, non-binary and intersex (TNBI) people in Brighton, Hove and East Sussex. We have welcomed thousands of TNBI people through our doors, regardless of their gender identity or expression, or variation in sex characteristic.

We run support groups, information sessions workshops and socials for local TNBI people as well as providing information and training for individuals and organisations on TNBI community needs. Our contact details are on the last page of this booklet. Please get in touch with us for more information or to access our support. We are here for you.



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