

Surviving Suicidal Feelings

Suicidal feelings can seem overwhelming and at times almost impossible to resist. They do not respect class, ethnicity, status or profession: indeed, some surveys suggest that up to 1 in 10 of us may experience suicidal feelings at some point in our lives. If you are currently feeling suicidal, you are certainly not alone.

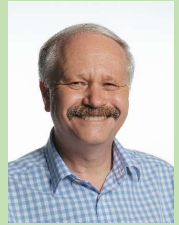
Thoughts of suicide occur when the pain a person is feeling exceeds their capacity to cope with it. It is important, therefore, to seek professional help to try and identify the source of the pain and to find ways to make it more bearable. Nevertheless, it can take time to find appropriate help. Rather than providing an alternative to counselling, the tips and resources offered here are intended merely as a survival guide while you find a therapist you feel you can work with to seek a more permanent solution.

“People often turn to suicide because they are seeking relief from pain. Remember that relief is a feeling. And you have to be alive to feel it.”

Martha Ainsworth

Resources

- *How I stayed alive when my brain was trying to kill me* by Susan Blauner. ISBN: 0066211212
- Samaritans provide confidential support 24/7 for those contemplating suicide: www.samaritans.org
- The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) provides help for men experiencing suicidal thoughts: www.thecalmzone.net



Dr Paul Fairchild

Some practical suggestions

- Try to identify what has brought you comfort during difficult times in the past that might provide relief in your present crisis
- Focus on the here-and-now and surviving the current moment. All feelings are temporary and will pass: suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem
- Develop an action plan for when you are feeling suicidal: where will you go, what will you do and who will you contact for help?
- If you currently have nobody to confide in, you may like to try expressing what is going on for you in writing. You may even share your story anonymously with others struggling in a similar way through www.suicideproject.org
- If expressing your feelings in prose does not come naturally, consider using poetry, music or art to help convey something of your darkest emotions
- Delay making any decision to take your life for 24 hours or longer if possible: such a ‘cool-off’ period is routine when making important financial decisions but what decision could be more important than ending your life?
- Use the 24 hours you have gained to seek help perhaps from your GP or a qualified counsellor who can help to reduce the pain you are feeling while increasing your capacity to cope