



How to Build a Suicide Safety Plan

A suicide safety plan is a structured list of coping strategies and support systems to use during a mental health crisis. It helps your friend recognize what triggers their distress and outlines exactly what to do before an emergency happens. You can write it down on paper or in a phone notes app — the key is having it ready and accessible.

- 1 Identify Personal Warning Signs**
Write down thoughts, moods, or behaviors that signal a crisis is starting — such as negative self-talk, missing work or school, isolating from friends, or sudden changes in sleep patterns.
- 2 List Internal Coping Strategies**
List activities your friend can do completely on their own to distract and calm themselves — such as taking a walk, listening to a specific playlist, taking a hot shower, or writing in a journal.
- 3 Name People and Places for Distraction**
Identify safe social settings or people who can help take their mind off the crisis without necessarily discussing the struggle — such as a busy coffee shop, a public library, or calling a friend to talk about movies or sports.
- 4 List Trusted Support Connections**
Write down names and phone numbers of loved ones who can offer direct support during a crisis — a parent, partner, close friend, or trusted mentor who knows the situation and can help.
- 5 Contact Professional Help**
List contact information for doctors, therapists, and emergency services in one place — including their therapist's number, the local ER address, and the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** (call or text **988**).
- 6 Make the Environment Safe**
Outline concrete steps to restrict access to items that could be used for self-harm — such as asking a friend to hold onto medication, locking up household hazards, or staying in a shared space instead of a bedroom.

☐ Building this plan together — not for your friend, but *with* them — makes it more personal, more trusted, and far more likely to be used in a moment of crisis.