psychofarm

SKILL SHEET

My Safety Plan

For when a crisis begins

A plan made in advance, to help you stay safe when a crisis or thoughts of suicide begin.

A **safety plan** is a short list of what to do when a crisis starts. You make it when you are calm, with your clinician if you can, because it is hard to think clearly in a crisis and the plan can do some of the thinking for you. It moves from small steps to bigger ones: if one step does not help, go on to the next. You can skip ahead, or call 988 or 911, at any time. The structure here follows the Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention, a widely used approach. Keep your plan on paper and in your phone, and share it with the people on it.

THE SIX STEPS

1. **Know your warning signs.** The thoughts, moods, behaviors or situations that tell you a crisis is building: racing or hopeless thoughts, not sleeping, pulling away from people, hearing voices more, a fight, an anniversary.

2. **Things I can do on my own.** Skills that take your mind off the problem and calm you: slow breathing, a walk, a shower, music, a hobby, a favorite show, reminding yourself that the feeling can pass.

3. **People and places that take my mind off things.** People you can be with without talking about the crisis, and places with others around, such as a library, a cafe, a park or a place of worship.

4. **People I can ask for help.** Friends or family you trust to listen when you tell them you are struggling. Write their names and numbers, and tell them they are on your plan.

5. **Professionals and crisis lines.** Your clinician and their after-hours number, your nearest emergency room or crisis center, and 988 (call, text or chat). Save every number in your phone now, so you do not have to search for it in a crisis.

6. **Make my space safer.** Do this now, while you are calm: make the means of hurting yourself harder to reach. Ask someone to hold or lock up firearms, extra medicine and anything you have thought of using. Keep only small amounts of over-the-counter medicine at home, and limit alcohol and drugs. Store a gun out of the home for now, or locked and unloaded with the ammunition apart and someone else holding the key. Time and distance between you and the means save lives.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PEOPLE TO CALL

You can still use this plan. Use steps 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, and add: **988** (call or text, or chat at 988lifeline.org), **Crisis Text Line** (text HOME to 741741), a warmline or peer support line in your area, and public places with people around you. For step 6 you do not need a friend: use a lockbox or trigger lock, a gun shop or police department that stores firearms (rules vary by state), and a pharmacy take-back program for medicines you do not need.

MAKE IT WORK

- Write it in your own words. Your plan should sound like you.
- Put a copy in your phone, your wallet and on the fridge.
- Tell the people on it that they are on it.
- Go over it with your clinician and update it after any crisis.

WHAT A FINISHED PLAN CAN LOOK LIKE

STEP	EXAMPLE
1. Warning signs	Sleeping four hours a night. Thinking I am a burden. Skipping meals and canceling plans.
2. On my own	Take the dog for a walk. Take a shower. Play my calm playlist. Remind myself: “this feeling will pass.”
3. Take my mind off things	Call my sister Maya just to talk about anything. Sit in the library or the coffee shop on Main Street.
4. Ask for help	Maya (555-0123) and my friend Sam (555-0147). I will say: “I am having a hard night. Can you stay on the phone?”
5. Professionals	Dr. Lee’s office, and the after-hours line on the card in my wallet. Then 988. Then the emergency room.
6. Safer space	My brother keeps my extra pills at his house. My firearm is stored at my cousin’s.

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER RIGHT NOW

Call or text **988** (US), or call **911**, or go to the nearest emergency room. Veterans can dial 988 and then press 1. You do not have to wait until you have finished your plan. If you have already hurt yourself or taken too much of anything, call 911 even if you feel okay.

Fill this in with your clinician if you can. Date made: _____ Reviewed: _____

In danger now: call or text 988, call 911, or go to the nearest emergency room.

1. MY WARNING SIGNS

Thoughts, moods, behaviors or situations that tell me a crisis may be starting:

1.

2.

3.

2. THINGS I CAN DO ON MY OWN

Things that take my mind off it and calm me, without contacting anyone:

1.

2.

3.

3. PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT TAKE MY MIND OFF THINGS

Name and phone:

Name and phone:

A place I can go:

4. PEOPLE I CAN ASK FOR HELP

Name and phone:

Name and phone:

Name and phone:

5. PROFESSIONALS AND CRISIS LINES

My clinician, and their after-hours number:

My nearest emergency room or crisis center:

Always there: 988 (call or text) and the Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741). A local crisis line, if I have one:

6. MAKING MY SPACE SAFER

What I will put out of reach, or store away from home:

Who will help me do that, and by when:

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO ME

The people, reasons or hopes that are worth getting through this for:

Source. A plan in new words that follows the six-step structure of the Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention (Barbara Stanley, PhD, and Gregory K. Brown, PhD), with ideas from the video "Develop a Safety Plan" (Psych Hub). For clinical use, see suicidesafetyplan.com for the authors' own template and training.

More free resources → psycho.farm/free

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION ONLY. NOT MEDICAL ADVICE, NOT A DIAGNOSIS, NOT TREATMENT, NO DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP. THIS SHEET MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. YOU USE IT AT YOUR OWN RISK.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or ending your life, call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (US). If you are in immediate danger, call 911. Not for emergencies. This is general information, not about you, and it does not replace your own clinician, who knows your history. Your clinician's instructions come first. It may be incomplete, out of date, or wrong. The FDA-approved label, your prescriber, and your pharmacist are the official sources, so check with them before you act. Do not start, stop, or change any medicine or treatment because of this sheet.

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