

## Having a Safety Plan

Suicidal thoughts can seem like they will last forever – but for many, these thoughts and feelings pass. Having a plan in place that can help guide you through difficult moments can make a difference and keep you safe. Ideally, such a plan is developed jointly with your counselor or therapist. It can also be developed with a Lifeline counselor who can help you write down actions to take and people to contact in order to feel safe from suicide. In general, a safety plan is designed so that you can start at step one and continue through the steps until you feel safe. You should keep your plan in a place where you can easily access it (your wallet or cell phone) when you have thoughts of hurting yourself.

What it may look like:

- Someone who I can go to or call if I need help?
- Where can I go if I am feeling suicidal? It needs to be around an adult who can help you (mom, dad, counselor, teacher).
- If you have a plan an adult or someone will call 911 to help you

## What Family Members Can Do

- Remove all guns from the house and restrict access to lethal means as much as possible.
- Remind and support your loved one in following their Safety Plan.
- Suggest a session with the therapist for the loved one and the family/caretakers before leaving the hospital.
- Get individual and family therapy.
- Create scales for 3-5 emotions or thoughts such as loneliness, depression, or suicidal thoughts that can help gauge how he or she is doing and whether or not they need your help.
- Family members need to be supported to deal with their own feelings/reactions. Reach out to trusted friends for help and encourage the rest of the family to do the same.
- Ask your mental health professional for information on suicide and mental illness. Learn more about what your loved one is experiencing and possibly how to help.
- Talk about it with trusted friends and/or family members.
- Be gentle with yourself and remember to take care of yourself also.
- Try to make statements such as, “I’m sorry you felt that way and I wish I could have helped you” or “I’m sorry I didn’t realize you were in such pain” or “I can’t imagine how bad you must have felt” or finally, “I want to help you, tell me what I can do to help you now.”