

Below is information about creating safety plans for individuals who struggle with suicide. This information comes from New York state, which has the lowest suicide rates in the country. In addition, there is now an app for iPhones (and other Apple devices) that is really very nice. The app should be coming out in the future for other phones as well. This is the link:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/safety-plan/id695122998?ls=1&mt=8>

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

A safety plan is a list of coping strategies and social supports that people can use when they are in a suicidal crisis or very distressed. It helps them not act on their suicidal feelings. The plan is brief, is in the individuals' own words, and is easy to read. It is an emergency plan for suicide crises.

WHO SHOULD HAVE A SAFETY PLAN?

Anyone who gets suicidal and wants help feeling better and less suicidal should have a plan.

Clinicians can collaborate with individuals to develop the safety plan. Individuals can also develop plans on their own.

IMPLEMENTING THE SAFETY PLAN

There are 6 Steps involved in the development of a Safety Plan.

Step 1: Warning Signs

List warning signs of a suicide crisis. Include specific thoughts, images, thinking processes, mood, and/or behaviors.

Step 2: Internal Coping Strategies

List activities that can be done without anyone else involved to cope and distract from suicidal thoughts, e.g. going online, listening to calming music, talking a walk, watching television.

Step 3: Social Contacts and Social Settings That May Distract from the Crisis

List individuals and safe social settings that can distract and support the individual. Discussion of suicidal feelings are not included here.

Step 4: Family Members or Friends Who May Offer Help

List family members and/or friends who can help with the suicidal crisis. Discussion of suicidal feelings can be included here.

Step 5: Professionals and Agencies to Contact for Help

List important health professionals, local ER, crisis line number.

Step 6: Making the Environment Safe

Identify how to restrict/remove access to lethal means.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS AFTER THE PLAN IS DEVELOPED?

ASSESS the likelihood that the overall safety plan will be used.

Problem solve to identify barriers or obstacles to using the plan. Determine how to eliminate them.

REVIEW the plan periodically to determine whether the plan needs to be revised.

The Safety Plan app was developed with permission from Stanley & Brown (2012). Developers: Barbara Stanley, Gregory K. Brown, and Padraic Doyle, New York State Office of Mental Health.