



Coping With Thoughts of Suicide During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic can affect you and your loved ones' mental and emotional well-being. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also a city dealing with racial injustice and inequity, and working to confront decades of historical trauma experienced by Black communities and other communities of color. It is natural to feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious and afraid. Physical distancing can feel isolating for everyone and can be even harder for people who struggle with thoughts of suicide. Many people are also experiencing financial distress, social isolation and the death of friends and family due to COVID-19. These overlapping public health crises are significant stressors that can affect mental and emotional well-being. Reactions to these crises (including warning signs that someone may be thinking about suicide), coping strategies, and where someone seeks support can vary across different racial, ethnic, cultural, regional and religious groups. Below are some suggestions and resources for suicide prevention.

If you are thinking about suicide, or know someone who is, counselors are available to listen to and support you 24/7. Contact NYC Well by calling 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), texting "WELL" to 65173 or chatting at nyc.gov/nycwell.

If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of hurting themselves, or in immediate danger because of a health condition or other situation, call 911.

If you are having thoughts of suicide:

Create or Update a Suicide Safety Plan

- A suicide safety plan is a written set of instructions to remind you what to do in the future if or when you think about harming yourself. It is a list of steps you can follow until you feel safe.
- You can work with someone you love or trust to create or update a suicide safety plan. If you do not already have a suicide safety plan, you can use this [Safety Plan Template](#) as a guide, or visit nyc.gov/nycwell and click on "Crisis Services," then "Safety Plan."
- Share your completed or updated safety plan with people with whom you feel comfortable asking for emotional support or people with whom you are in frequent contact.

Seek Mental Health Support From Your Home or Anywhere

- If negative feelings become overwhelming, reach out for support and help. You can contact NYC Well, a confidential 24/7 helpline staffed by trained counselors. NYC Well counselors provide brief counseling and referrals in over 200 languages. For care, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat at nyc.gov/nycwell.

- The [NYC Well](#) website also offers a number of well-being and emotional support [apps](#) that can help you cope: Visit nyc.gov/nycwell and click on “App Library.”
- For additional information about stress and anxiety, including tips for coping and staying connected, as well as information about grief and loss, visit the NYC Health Department’s [COVID-19: Coping and Emotional Well-Being](#) web page.
- The New York State (NYS) COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline at 844-863-9314 is available from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week. The helpline is staffed with professionals who are there to listen, support and refer to care.

If you have had thoughts of suicide or have attempted suicide in the past, even if you feel well now, take extra care of yourself during this time.

Take Care of Your Body

- Stay physically active by moving more and sitting less. In addition, get enough sleep, eat well, and avoid excessive amounts of alcohol, non-prescribed drugs and caffeine.
- For general information about COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19. For real-time updates, text “COVID” to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

Take Care of Your Mind and Stay Connected

- Set a limit on the amount of media you watch and read, including social media, local or national news.
- Connect and talk with loved ones, friends and family via phone or video chat.

If you know a person who might be thinking about suicide:

Know the Warning Signs and Check in on Your Loved Ones

- Pay attention to the way a person talks and behaves. This can help you recognize when someone may be thinking about suicide. Warning signs can include:
 - Talking about death or suicide
 - Showing feelings of hopelessness and/or helplessness
 - Saying they are a burden
 - Avoiding friends and family
 - Losing interest in activities
 - Displaying extreme mood swings
 - Giving away possessions
 - Saying goodbye to family and friends
- Please note warning signs that someone may be thinking about suicide can present differently across different racial, ethnic, cultural, regional and religious groups. For example, speaking about mental health challenges and thoughts of suicide may be less

common and less accepted in some cultures and communities. Physical distancing can make warning signs harder to observe. Check in with your loved ones to see how they are coping, especially those with a history of suicide, depression, anxiety or other mental illness, or those who have experienced a recent loss.

- Supportive adults play critical roles in the lives of young people at risk for suicide. For more information, refer to the NYC Health Department's [Suicide Prevention](#) web page or visit nyc.gov/health and search for "Suicide Prevention." The page includes tips and resources, including how to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) youth.

Listen and Don't Be Afraid to Talk About Suicide

- Be a good listener. You don't have to be a mental health expert to talk with someone about their worries, stress and fear. To learn more about active listening, check out NYC Well's [Helping Friends or Family in Crisis](#).
- Don't be afraid to ask someone if they are thinking about suicide. A common misconception is that talking about suicide will give someone the idea to harm themselves. This is not true. By asking, you are giving someone an opportunity to open up and allow you to help.

Suggest They Seek Professional Mental Health Support, or Help Them Connect to Support

- When someone you know needs support, they can:
 - Visit [NYC Well](#), or call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat at nyc.gov/nycwell. NYC Well staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages.
 - Visit the NYC Health Department's [COVID-19: Coping and Emotional Well-Being](#) web page for additional tips and resources.