

HERE FOR LIFE

PAPYRUS

GETTING THROUGH RIGHT NOW

Distraction techniques and coping strategies

0300 102 2470
HopeLine24/7

When thoughts of suicide feel overwhelming, having something to turn to can help you get through the moment safely.

This resource brings together coping strategies and distraction techniques in one place. Not everything here will work for everyone. That's okay. Use it as a starting point to find what helps you.

You don't have to get through everything at once. You just have to get through right now.



Distraction is most useful for helping you stay safe in the moment, not for avoiding your feelings all together.

IF THOUGHTS FEEL VERY STRONG RIGHT NOW...

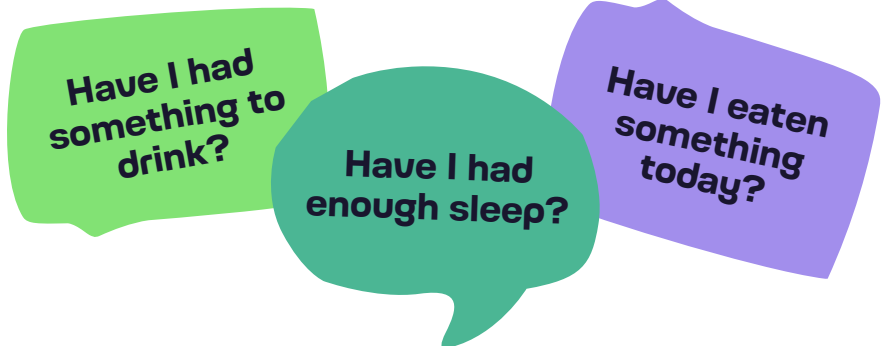
If you're struggling to stay safe in this moment, start here before anything else.

- **PAUSE** you've made it to this moment and that matters.
- **NAME WHAT'S HAPPENING** say to yourself: "I'm having a hard moment. I'm thinking about suicide." Naming it can release some of the pressure.
- **GO SOMEWHERE THAT FEELS SAFE** your bedroom, a friend's house, a relative's house, or somewhere with other people around.
- **MOVE** anything nearby that could put you in danger out of reach, or ask someone to help you store it safely.
- **REACH OUT** call, text or email HopeLine 24/7. We're here.

SELF CARE FIRST...

It's important to allow yourself to feel your emotions. Distracting yourself from them constantly can make it harder to understand what you're going through.

It can also be really hard to focus on anything if your basic needs aren't being met. Before trying anything on this list, **ask yourself:**



PHYSICAL TIPS

Moving your body can help shift how you feel, even if only for a moment.

- **WALK** somewhere that feels safe and comfortable. A library, a café, a park, or just around the block. Sometimes getting out of the house is enough.
- **HIT OR SCREAM INTO A PILLOW** if you're feeling frustrated. Make sure you have a private space to do this.
- **PRACTICE YOGA** or a stretching tutorial on YouTube in the comfort of your own space. Yoga can help strengthen the connection between your body and your mind.
- **GO OUTSIDE** if you can, try sitting in a garden or a park and listening to the sounds around you. Nature can have a really soothing effect on the nervous system.
- **TRY TIDYING OR CLEANING** rearrange your furniture or reorganise a drawer. Finishing a task can bring a real sense of relief and accomplishment.
- **PLAY** with a stress ball or a fidget toy. You can even make your own – fill a balloon with flour or rice using a funnel for a really satisfying DIY stress ball. Use a second balloon over the top to keep it secure.
- **DANCE** or listen to music that you love.
- **BOUNCE A BALL** against a wall.
- **MOVE YOUR BODY** by jogging on the spot, doing some jumping jacks, or stretching each muscle in your body one by one.
- **TRY PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION** starting from your feet and working up to your head, tense each muscle group for a few seconds then release. This can help your body calm down and ease anxiety.







CREATIVE TIPS

Being creative can give your mind somewhere to go when thoughts feel too loud.

- **TRY DRAWING, PAINTING OR COLOURING** mindfulness colouring books are available in most shops and online. They let you focus on something without the pressure of having to think too much.
- **DRAW YOURSELF AS A SUPERHERO** What would you wear? What would your name be? What colours would you use? What superpower would you have? What would your strengths and weaknesses be? Do you have a sidekick? Let your imagination go wherever it wants.
- **START A JOURNAL OR A DIARY** writing about how you feel can be a really powerful tool. It gives you space to express yourself privately, and somewhere to look back on to remind yourself how strong you can be.
- **MAKE A PLAYLIST OF SONGS** that help you through difficult moments. These can be sad, uplifting, or anything in between.
- **PLAY AN INSTRUMENT** if you play at any level, try picking it up. Rearrange your furniture or Music lets you express emotions in a completely different way, through sound, tone and feeling.
- **BAKE OR TRY A NEW RECIPE** focusing on the steps of cooking can be a helpful distraction.
- **PLAY** with kinetic sand or Oobleck (cornstarch and water mixed together) for some sensory play.
- **TRY INTERACTIVE DIGITAL TOOLS** some favourites include weavesilk.com, sandart.app and jigsawplanet.com. Or search "online puzzle" to find something that suits you.
- **LEARN THE LYRICS** to a song you love by listening to it on repeat.
- **MAKE A HOPEBOX** see our HopeBox resource for ideas.

PRODUCTIVE TIPS

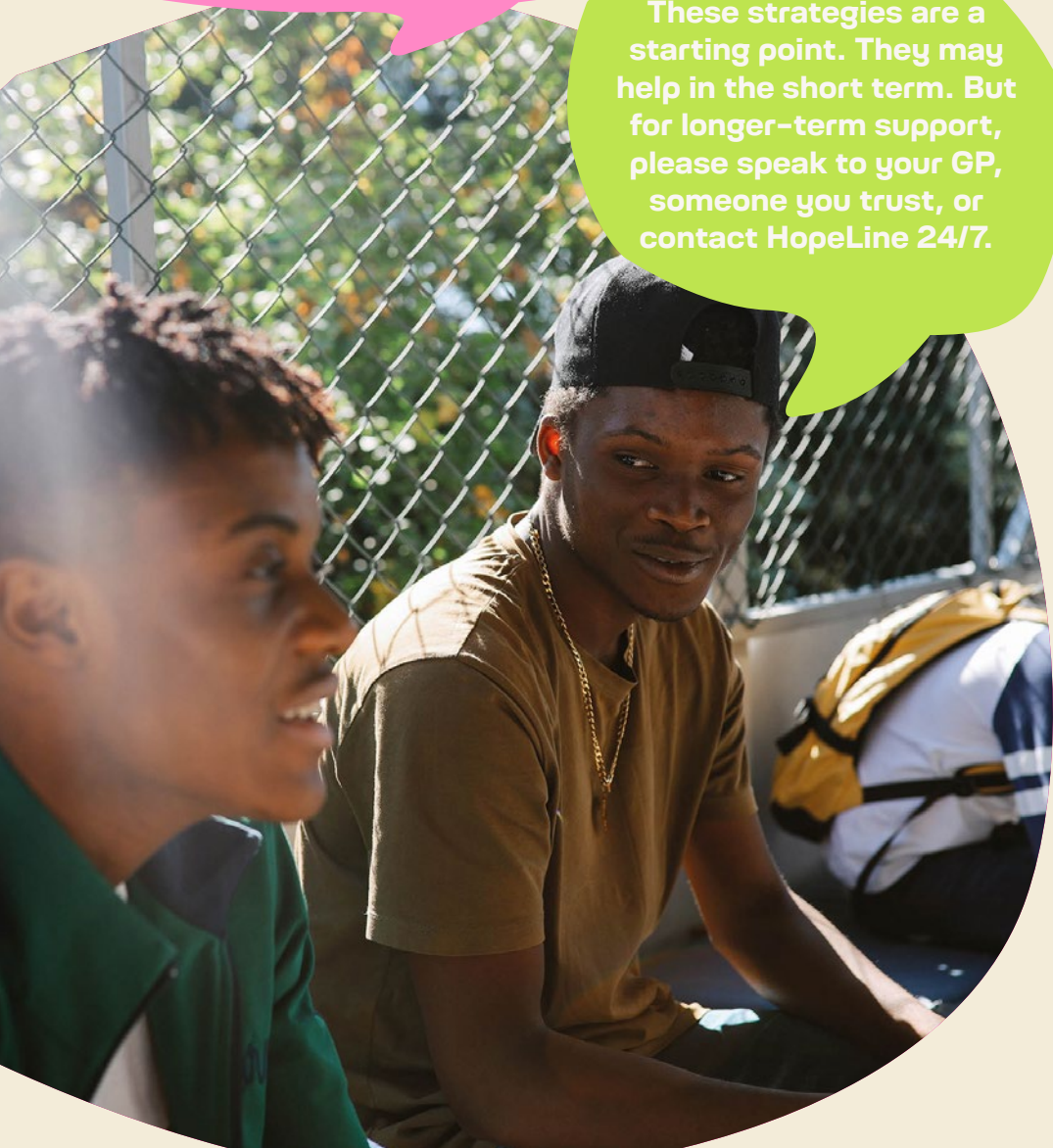
If doing something purposeful helps you feel more grounded, try one of these:

- **MAKE A TO-DO LIST FOR TODAY, OR FOR THE WEEK** Keep it simple. It can include things like “drink some water” or “send a message to someone I trust.”
- **DO SOMETHING KIND FOR SOMEONE ELSE** Being kind to others can have a positive impact on how you feel about yourself too.
- **READ A BOOK OR RESEARCH** something that has always interested you.
- **WATCH A TED TALK** There are thousands of short, fascinating talks on almost every subject you can think of. Find one that sparks your curiosity at [ted.com/talks](https://www.ted.com/talks)
- **TRY LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE** Duolingo makes it fun and free. Even just a few minutes can give your brain something different to focus on. [duolingo.com](https://www.duolingo.com)
- **TIDY** your bedroom, open a window and let some fresh air in. Put on fresh bedding if you can.
- **HAVE A CLEAR OUT** of things you no longer need. Consider donating them to a charity.
- **CREATE A LIST OF THINGS YOU'D LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE** Big or small. A place you'd like to visit. A skill you'd like to learn. A film you want to watch. It can be as extravagant or as simple as you like.
- **TREAT YOURSELF** to something small, online or in a shop. Even the materials to make a HopeBox.



When trying anything new, please make sure you're safe. Check for any allergies to foods or materials, and clear away anything nearby that could cause harm before you begin.

These strategies are a starting point. They may help in the short term. But for longer-term support, please speak to your GP, someone you trust, or contact HopeLine 24/7.



SOOTHING TIPS

Sometimes the most helpful thing is to **slow right down and be gentle with yourself.**

- **HAVE A LONG BATH OR SHOWER.** Use your favourite products and set the mood with candles or relaxing music if that helps.
- **CURL UP** under a cosy blanket with a book, an audiobook, or your favourite film.
- **TAKE A BREAK** from your phone and technology for a little while. Sit quietly and focus on your breathing. Try belly breathing, box breathing, or simply notice the air going in and out.
- **EAT** your comfort food or make yourself a warm drink.
- **WATCH VIDEOS** that help you zone out and switch off. "How it's made" videos, animal videos, or anything that holds your attention gently.
- **TRY A SKINCARE ROUTINE** a face mask, or painting your nails. Being mindful and careful with yourself can feel grounding.
- **WATCH** a childhood film or TV programme that brings back good memories.
- **TRY A MEDITATION TOOL** like [pixelthoughts.co](https://www.pixelthoughts.co), or the Headspace app, which is also available on YouTube and Netflix.
- **SPEND TIME WITH A PET** if you have one. Stroking an animal can be really calming.



GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

Grounding helps bring you back to the present moment when thoughts feel overwhelming. Try to find...

5 THINGS
YOU CAN
see

4 THINGS
YOU CAN
TOUCH

3 THINGS
YOU CAN
HEAR

2 THINGS
YOU CAN
SMELL

1 THING YOU
CAN TASTE

Other grounding techniques:

- **PICK UP OBJECTS NEAR YOU AND NOTICE THEM MINDFULLY** How do they feel? What do they smell like? What colour are they?
- **TRY TO MOVE YOUR BODY GENTLY** A short walk, some stretches, or jogging on the spot.
- **SAVOUR THE TASTE OF SOMETHING MINDFULLY** A herbal tea, a piece of fruit, or something warm and comforting.
- **LISTEN CAREFULLY TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS** Try to pick out each individual Sound and write down what you can hear.
- **MINDFULLY FEEL DIFFERENT PARTS OF YOUR BODY** Notice the tiny hairs on your arms, the feeling of your clothing on your skin. Do your arms feel loose or heavy? Is your heartbeat fast or slow? Are your legs stretched out or crossed? Wiggle your toes. Bend your fingers.
- **TRY PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION** Work slowly through each muscle group from your feet to your head, tensing and then releasing. It helps your nervous system settle.



EXPRESSING AND COMMUNICATING

Sometimes putting feelings into words, or into something creative, can release some of the pressure.

- **WRITE DOWN HOW YOU'RE FEELING**

Try turning your emotions into lyrics, poetry or a story.

- **WRITE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE THIRD PERSON**

It can sometimes feel easier to process things this way.

- **WRITE A LETTER** to help others understand how you feel. You don't have to send it.

- **DRAW FREELY** even with your eyes closed. See what comes out.

- **CREATE A MOOD CHART OR DIARY** to track how you're feeling. Keep it somewhere visible if you'd like others to understand how your day is going.

- **WRITE A GRATITUDE LIST** When your mind keeps pulling you towards difficult thoughts, try writing down ten or more things you're grateful for. They can be as small or as big as you like.

- **FINISH THESE SENTENCES. YOU CAN WRITE THE ANSWERS DOWN OR JUST THINK THEM THROUGH:**

I am really good at...

I really enjoy...

I am a good friend (or son, daughter, sibling, cousin) because...

I have worked hard to get better at...

I am proud of myself because...

I am at my happiest when...

The things I like about me are...

- **WRITE DOWN NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND GENTLY CHALLENGE THEM. ASK YOURSELF:**

What makes this feel true?

What might suggest it isn't?

What would I say to a friend who was feeling this way?

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HopeLine24/7

If you are thinking about suicide or are concerned about a young person who may be, you can contact HopeLine24/7 for confidential support and practical advice.



CALL
0800 068 4141

TEXT HOPE
88247



email
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papyrus-uk.org