

The Novel Advocate

Lighting the Way
A Suicide Prevention Guide For Supporting Yourself and Others
By Cynthia Smith - Founder of The Novel Advocate

www.thenoveladvocate.com

Disclaimer:

This guide is intended for informational and supportive purposes only.

It is not a substitute for medical advice, mental health care, diagnosis, or treatment by a licensed professional.

If you are in crisis or need medical assistance, please seek immediate help from a qualified provider.

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Suicide Prevention Guide

— Lighting the Way

Dear Light Seeker,

If you have found your way here, you are not alone. Whether you are carrying your own pain, standing beside someone you love, or searching for answers after unimaginable loss, this guide is for you.

Suicide has touched my life in many ways — as a supporter, a professional responder, and as someone who has fought my own battles with depression and suicidal ideation. In my time as Vice President of Operations for a crime scene cleanup company, I walked alongside families and communities in the aftermath of devastating losses.

I have stood quietly with strangers in their darkest moments, and I have grieved alongside friends struggling to hold on.

From young to old, from civilians to military members, these experiences are woven into the heart of this guide.

I am also trained in Mental Health First Aid, suicide prevention, and crisis response, with ongoing education in advocacy and support strategies. My commitment to this work is personal — but today, the focus is on you.

Here, you will find simple tools, compassionate guidance, and a pathway to understanding and action. You do not have to be a mental health expert to save a life. You only have to be willing to reach out, to listen, and to believe that hope is still possible — even when it feels far away.

Healing is not linear. Helping is not perfect. But together, we can be the light that guides someone home — or helps them stay a little longer in the world.

You are not alone. You are not helpless. There is a way forward.

Let's begin.

A signature-style name 'Cynthia' in blue, with a pink lotus flower graphic integrated into the letter 'i'.

Founder - The Novel Advocate

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Quick Facts About Suicide

Suicide Can Affect Anyone

Suicide does not discriminate. It impacts people of every age, race, gender, background, and community.

Many who struggle with suicidal thoughts do not “look” like they are in crisis.

Suicide Is Complex – Not Simple

Suicide is rarely caused by a single event.

It often results from a combination of factors like mental illness, trauma, loss, isolation, substance use, or overwhelming stress.

Mental Health Matters

Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health conditions are leading risk factors for suicide.

Seeking help early for mental health challenges can save lives.

Suicide Is Preventable

With the right support, intervention, and hope, many lives can be saved.

**Every conversation, every moment of connection,
and every small action matters**

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Quick Facts About Suicide

Myth vs. Fact

 **Myth**

Talking about suicide will “plant the idea”

 **Fact**

Talking openly about suicide actually reduces risk and stigma.

 **Myth**

People who talk about suicide won't really do it

 **Fact**

Many who die by suicide show warning signs beforehand.

Taking them seriously matters.

 **Myth**

Suicide happens without warning

 **Fact**

Most people show behaviors or verbal cues before an attempt.

 **Myth**

People who survive a suicide attempt are “out of danger.”

 **Fact**

Survivors of suicide attempts remain at higher risk, especially in the first weeks and months after. Ongoing support and care are essential.

**The truth can be a lifeline.
When we replace myths with understanding,
we light the way toward healing.**

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🌸 Understanding Suicidal Thoughts vs. Suicidal Actions

🌸 **Having suicidal thoughts (ideation) and being actively suicidal are not the same thing.**

Suicidal Ideation means thinking about death, wishing for life to end, or imagining escape — without immediate plans to act.

Active Suicidal Intent means the person has a plan, intent, or immediate risk of harming themselves.

🌸 **Both need care, compassion, and support.**

But knowing the difference can help you respond in a way that best protects safety and dignity.

If someone shares thoughts of suicide but denies a plan, it is still serious — but may not be an emergency.

If someone shares they have a plan or means to act, this is a crisis requiring immediate help.

🌸 **The most important thing you can do is listen without judgment — and help guide them to support.** 🌸

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Recognizing Warning Signs

**The earlier we recognize signs of emotional distress,
the more opportunities we have to offer support, compassion, and help.**

Sometimes, the warning signs are **loud**.

Sometimes, they are **hidden** in **small** changes.

You don't have to be perfect to notice — you only have to be willing to care.

Verbal Cues to Watch For

- Talking about wanting to die or expressing hopelessness
- Mentioning feeling trapped, helpless, or like a burden
- Saying things like "I can't go on," "It would be better if I wasn't here," or "You won't have to worry about me much longer"

If someone shares they have a plan or means to act, this is a crisis requiring immediate help.

Behavioral Changes

- Withdrawal from friends, family, or favorite activities
- Changes in sleeping patterns (too much or too little)
- Increase in risky behaviors (substance use, reckless driving, unsafe decisions)
- Giving away treasured possessions
- Saying **goodbye** to people in **unusual** or **unexpected ways**

Emotional Shifts

- Dramatic mood swings
- Increased agitation, anger, or anxiety
- Emotional numbness or withdrawal
- **Sudden calmness** or relief after a period of intense depression (sometimes a sign a decision has been made)

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Recognizing Warning Signs

Risk Factors That Can Heighten Danger

- History of previous suicide attempts
- Recent loss (relationship, job, home, death of loved one)
- Mental health conditions (depression, PTSD, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders)
- Substance use or addiction
- Exposure to suicide (family history, community loss, media coverage)
- Lack of access to mental health care
- Isolation or lack of supportive relationships

Protective Factors That Can Strengthen Hope

- Strong connections with family, friends, or community
- Access to mental health care and crisis intervention
- Sense of purpose, belonging, or identity
- Healthy coping skills and the ability to problem-solve
- Hope for the future and belief that recovery is possible

Recognizing warning signs is an act of love.

You are not diagnosing.

You are noticing.

You are caring.

You are offering a lifeline.

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Responding with Care: The ALGEE Action Plan

When someone is struggling, it's easy to feel helpless – but you are not powerless.
The ALGEE Action Plan gives us a way to respond with courage, clarity, and compassion.

A – Approach and Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

- Approach the person calmly and with genuine concern.
- Ask direct, caring questions like:
 - "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"
 - "Are you feeling so overwhelmed that you're thinking about ending your life?"
- Stay present, patient, and nonjudgmental.

L – Listen Nonjudgmentally

- Allow the person to share without rushing to fix or judge.
- Use open body language and quiet, supportive responses.
- Listening can be more powerful than any advice.

G – Give Reassurance and Information

- Let them know they are not alone and that help is available.
- Remind them that suicidal feelings are treatable, and that reaching out is a sign of strength.
- Offer hope without minimizing their pain.

E – Encourage Appropriate Professional Help

- Suggest connecting with a mental health professional, crisis line, doctor, or counselor.
- Help them make a call or look up services if they seem overwhelmed.
- Normalize seeking professional support as part of healing.

E – Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies

- Encourage them to lean on safe, supportive friends, family, or community groups.
- Support them in finding healthy coping strategies – like exercise, journaling, creating art, or mindfulness practices.
- Remind them that small steps forward are still steps.

 You don't have to have all the answers.
You only have to be willing to stand beside someone in the dark
— and help them find their way toward the light. 

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Immediate Crisis Steps

When someone is in immediate danger, acting quickly and calmly can save lives.

🌸 If You Believe Someone Is Actively Suicidal:

- Stay with them.
 - Do not leave them alone unless you must do so for your own safety.
- Remove potential means if it's safe.
 - Take away firearms, medications, sharp objects, or anything that could be used for self-harm.
- Call for help immediately.
 - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (Dial 988)
 - Call 911 if there is immediate danger and you cannot keep them safe alone.
- Speak calmly and clearly.
 - Say things like:
 - "I'm here with you."
 - "We can get through this together."
 - "You are not alone."
- Offer reassurance — not pressure.
 - Avoid arguing, threatening, or giving ultimatums.
 - Focus on safety, not solving all the underlying problems immediately.

🌸 When Calling for Emergency Help:

- Let responders know if the person has expressed suicidal thoughts or has a plan.
- Be clear if there are weapons involved.
- Stay calm and provide simple, direct information.

🌸 **Your calm presence can be a life raft in a moment of storm.** 🌸

You do not have to be perfect — you only have to stay connected, stay steady, and help bring them to safety.

◦

Building a Safety Net

Creating Support Beyond the Crisis

Saving a life doesn't end when the immediate danger passes.

True healing happens through **consistent care, connection, and hope**.

Helping someone (or yourself) build a safety net is one of the most powerful gifts you can give

What is a Safety Net?

- A safety net is a personalized plan of people, resources, and strategies that support someone's mental health.
- It helps create a path back to safety during future moments of overwhelm.

Key Pieces of a Personal Safety Net

Trusted People to Call

- Close friends, family members, or mentors who can be reached in tough moments
- Crisis lines or mental health hotlines

Safe Spaces

- Identifying places where the person feels calm, supported, and secure
- Therapy offices, community centers, places of worship, even a favorite park

Coping Strategies

- Personalized calming techniques like breathing exercises, art, journaling, mindfulness, prayer, or grounding exercises

Professional Support

- Therapists, doctors, case managers, or crisis counselors as part of the regular support system
- Setting up regular mental health appointments whenever possible

Helping Someone Create Their Safety Plan

- Sit down with them (if they're willing) and help brainstorm resources before a crisis happens.
- **Write down:**
 - Emergency contacts
 - Signs they are starting to struggle
 - What helps when things feel overwhelming
 - Reasons to hold on (family, pets, future goals, meaningful memories)

Encourage keeping the safety plan somewhere easy to find – phone, wallet, journal.

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Building a Safety Net

🌸 If You Are Creating a Safety Plan for Yourself

- Be gentle with yourself.
- Think of your safety plan as an act of hope, not a sign of weakness.
- You are building bridges back to the light, for when the dark tries to pull you under.
-

🌸 **Healing happens one connection at a time.**

**Building a safety net isn't about eliminating all pain –
it's about making sure you never have to face it alone. 🌸**

🌸 Creating Your Personal Safety Plan 🌸

Healing is not always a straight path.

There may be moments when the world feels heavy, and hope feels distant.

Having a plan – created in calm moments

– can be a powerful act of strength for when the hard moments come.

**This Safety Plan is here to help you map out connections, coping tools,
and reminders that you are never truly alone.**

Take your time.

**This is your space to build a safety net made of people, places, and promises that matter to you.
You deserve to have a plan in place that protects your life, your light, and your future.**

On the following page is a downloadable safety plan to get you or your loved one started

My Personal Safety Plan

✿ People I Can Call When I'm Struggling:
(Write the names and phone numbers of people you trust)

-
-
-

✿ Signs That I May Be Struggling:
(Things I notice in my thoughts, feelings, or behavior)

-
-
-
-

✿ Things That Help Me Feel Better:
(Healthy coping tools, calming activities, self-care)

-
-
-
-

✿ Reasons I Want to Stay:
(Reminders of what matters to me – people, dreams, goals, pets, etc.)

-
-
-

✿ Closing Gentle Reminder:

**This is your safety net.
You deserve support.
You deserve hope.
You are not alone.**

🌸 Healing and Hope: Life Beyond the Darkness

Healing is not a straight road.
It bends, it curves, it sometimes circles back.
But it always, always leads forward.

🌸 After the Crisis

- Healing from a mental health crisis takes time, patience, and gentleness.
- It's normal to have good days and hard days — recovery is a process, not a finish line.
- Support systems matter: stay connected to trusted people, professional help, and coping tools.

🌸 For Those Who Have Survived Dark Moments

- You are not weak because you have struggled.
- You are strong because you stayed.
- Your story is still being written — and it matters.

🌸 For Those Supporting Others

- Be patient with the healing process.
- Celebrate small steps.
- Offer presence, not pressure.
- Remember: showing up consistently speaks louder than the perfect words ever could

🌸 Building Hope, Brick by Brick

- Healing is built through small daily choices: reaching out, accepting help, finding new meaning, showing up again tomorrow.
- Hope can be quiet.
- Hope can be stubborn.
- Hope can grow even when we can't feel it yet.

🌸 You are a light in the darkness
— whether for yourself, for a friend, or for a stranger you may never know.
Long live every brave heart that chooses to stay.
Long live the magic we make by refusing to give up.

Crisis Support Resources

 **If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please seek help:**

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Call or text 988
988lifeline.org

Crisis Text Line
Text HOME to 741741
crisistextline.org

Veterans Crisis Line
Call 988, then Press 1
veteranscrisisline.net

The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ Support)
Call 1-866-488-7386 or Text START to 678678
thetrevorproject.org

Trusted Mental Health Resources

**National Alliance on
Mental Illness (NAMI)**
nami.org
(Information, education,
and support groups)

**Mental Health America
(MHA)**
mhanational.org
(Mental health screening
tools and information)

 **American Foundation
for Suicide Prevention
(AFSP)**
afsp.org
(Advocacy, education, and
community programs)



Recommended Reading and Healing Media

Reasons to Stay Alive by Matt Haig
The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk
It's OK That You're Not OK by Megan Devine
Maybe You Should Talk to Someone by Lori Gottlieb

The Novel Advocate – Lighting the Way Series
www.TheNovelAdvocate.com

Remember:

There is always help  **There is always hope**  **You are not alone.**

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🌸 A Final Note 🌸

Even the smallest light can guide someone home through the darkest night.

If you are reading this, know that your life matters.
Your story is not over.

Your presence creates ripples you may never even see.
Carry hope with you, even when it feels small.

Carry compassion for yourself, even when it feels hard.
Carry courage into the quiet moments when no one else can see the battles
you're fighting.

Long live the magic we make when we choose to stay.
Long live the walls we crash through.
Long live every heart that dares to heal.



With light and hope,


Cynthia

Founder of The Novel Advocate

