Patient Education:

Suicidal Feelings: How to Help Yourself

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Suicide is the taking of one's own life. If you feel as though life is getting too tough to handle and are thinking about suicide, get help right away. To get help:

- Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).
- Call a suicide hotline to speak with a trained counselor who understands how you are feeling. The following is a list of suicide hotlines in the United States. For a list of hotlines in Canada, visit www.suicide.org/hotlines/international/canada-suicide-hotlines.html.
  - 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).
  - 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433).
  - 1-888-628-9454. This is a hotline for Spanish speakers.
  - 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889). This is a hotline for TTY users.
  - 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (1-866-488-7386). This is a hotline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth.
- Contact a crisis center or a local suicide prevention center. To find a crisis center or suicide prevention center:
  - Call your local hospital, clinic, community service organization, mental health center, social service provider, or health department. Ask for assistance in connecting to a crisis center.
- Visit the following websites:
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
  - Hopeline: www.hopeline.com
  - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org
  - The Trevor Project (for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth): www.thetrevorproject.org

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF FEEL BETTER?

- Promise yourself that you will not do anything drastic when you have suicidal feelings. Remember, there is hope. Many people have gotten through suicidal thoughts and feelings, and you will, too. You may have gotten through them before, and this proves that you can get through them again.
- Let family, friends, teachers, or counselors know how you are feeling. Try not to isolate yourself from those who care about you. Remember, they will want to help you. Talk with someone every day, even if you do not feel sociable. Face-to-face conversation is best.
- Call a mental health professional and see one regularly.
- Visit your primary health care provider every year.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, and space your meals so you eat regularly.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs, and remove them from your home. They will only make you feel worse.
• If you are thinking of taking a lot of medicine, give your medicine to someone who can give it to you one day at a time. If you are on antidepressants and are concerned you will overdose, let your health care provider know so he or she can give you safer medicines. Ask your mental health professional about the possible side effects of any medicines you are taking.

• Remove weapons, poisons, knives, and anything else that could harm you from your home.

• Try to stick to routines. Follow a schedule every day. Put self-care on your schedule.

• Make a list of realistic goals, and cross them off when you achieve them. Accomplishments give a sense of worth.

• Wait until you are feeling better before doing the things you find difficult or unpleasant.

• Exercise if you are able. You will feel better if you exercise for even a half hour each day.

• Go out in the sun or into nature. This will help you recover from depression faster. If you have a favorite place to walk, go there.

• Do the things that have always given you pleasure. Play your favorite music, read a good book, paint a picture, play your favorite instrument, or do anything else that takes your mind off your depression if it is safe to do.

• Keep your living space well lit.

• When you are feeling well, write yourself a letter about tips and support that you can read when you are not feeling well.

• Remember that life's difficulties can be sorted out with help. Conditions can be treated. You can work on thoughts and strategies that serve you well.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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