

Managing distressing thoughts

There are times in life when we might feel totally, hopeless, helpless and overwhelmed with emotional pain. It can seem like there is no other way out of our problems and that we may have run out of possible solutions. Sometimes this can lead to suicidal thoughts. Suicidal thoughts can be common, but can be frightening and confusing. These thoughts can be a sign that somethings need to change in your life – not that you need to end your life. Here are some thoughts and suggestions of things that have helped other young people who experienced distressing thoughts. See what works for you.

Practice self-care

Now is a really good time to get out your Hope box to help you care for yourself and distract you from the intense feelings. Using your Hope box when you are feeling overwhelmed will soothe you.

Tell someone how you are feeling

You don't have to manage these thoughts alone. Tell a parent, carer or friend. See our crisis contacts sheet for other options. Saying out loud how you feel may help to diffuse your emotion.

Create distance from your thoughts

Try to create distance from your thoughts by putting an imaginary wall between yourself and your thoughts.

Know that these feelings will pass

Give yourself the opportunity for these feelings to pass by not acting on your thoughts. These thoughts may feel permanent but with the right support there can be a different outcome.

Write it down

Write about how you feel in a journal. Try asking yourself: What am I anxious about? What is the evidence for and against what I am thinking? Is there an alternative, more balanced thought I can have about the situation?

Try creative expression

Paint or draw how you are feeling.

Know that depression and pain distorts thinking

It can seem like we're wearing very dark tinted 'gloomy specs'. Everything can look different to how it really is when someone is low in mood.

Use positive coping statements

For example: I've coped this far, I can get through the next day, hour, 10 minutes. If you can't think of any, try researching some on the internet or create a board with them on using an app such as Pinterest or decorate your wall with them.

Live in the now

Use a grounding technique to bring you to the present moment. This technique uses your 5 senses to help shift your attention and ground you in the present moment. Become aware of 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell or taste and then take one big breath. Continue just to notice the sensations that your breathing creates in your body.

The stop skill

Try visualizing a red **STOP** sign in front of you. Don't react when your emotions are hot and filled with energy. Don't let your emotions control you.

Take a break

Step back, take a deep breath, avoid letting feelings make you act on impulse. Try something from your Hope box.

Observe

When you are in a crisis it is hard to see the bigger picture. You need to be able to see the whole picture to work out the best course of action. Is there someone else who could help you do this?

Proceed mindfully

Will reacting impulsively really get you what you want in the long run? A mindfulness exercise will help you become more at peace with yourself rather than fighting the thoughts and feelings that arise.

Things that help me when I am experiencing distressing thoughts: