

## **Mental Health Protocols - Suicide Safety Planning Information for Family and Friends**

Support from loved ones can be a lifeline when helping someone develop a safety plan to prevent suicide. Your presence can offer encouragement, provide distractions from distressing thoughts, or simply be a listening ear during challenging times. Here's how you can assist your friend or family member with their Mental Health Protocols safety plan:

### **Support in Creating a Suicide Safety Plan:**

Often, a healthcare professional will collaborate with the individual to create a suicide safety plan. You can contribute by offering suggestions for each of the seven steps. For instance, you might: Share your observations of their warning signs.

#### ***Help them articulate reasons to keep living.***

Provide ideas for activities that make them feel resilient, or suggest people and places they can reach out to for support. It's crucial to respect their pace and comfort level. If they find the process overwhelming, take breaks and work through the plan one step at a time. For more detailed guidance on creating a suicide safety plan, you can visit: [Mental Health Protocols - Suicide Safety Planning].

### **Being a Designated Support Person:**

If your friend or family member has designated you as a supporter and shared their plan with you, ensure you understand your role and responsibilities. Begin by discussing the type of support you can offer.

### **Planning for Communication:**

Establish clear communication regarding the support you'll provide. Your role may involve simply being there for them, engaging in enjoyable activities outlined in their plan, or just spending quality time together.

### **Addressing Suicidal Feelings:**

If they choose to open up about their thoughts or feelings related to suicide, it's important to listen non-judgmentally, acknowledge their distress, and offer support in a way that feels natural to you.

### **Encouraging Plan Utilization:**

You can assist by encouraging your loved one to use their safety plan if they begin experiencing warning signs or if you notice changes in their behavior. If there are topics you're uncomfortable discussing, communicate this openly so they can involve other supporters in their plan.

### **Crisis Support:**

Ensure that your friend or family member's safety plan includes contact information for professional support services. Familiarize yourself with these resources and understand when to reach out in a crisis. In situations of immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.

### **Post-Crisis Debrief:**

After any crisis has passed, it can be helpful to have a conversation with your loved one to determine what strategies were effective and what could be done differently in the future. This feedback can be valuable if they require your support again.

### **Self-Care:**

Engaging in conversations about suicidal thoughts can be emotionally challenging, especially if you're already dealing with your own stress. Prioritize your mental health and well-being by making time for activities you enjoy and maintaining a support network you can turn to when needed. Find additional resources on self-care while supporting someone else here: [Look after your wellbeing while supporting someone else]