

# SUICIDE: A GUIDE TO KEEP YOU SAFE

[Hope: believing that there is light ahead, despite the darkness.]

**#TALK  
SUICIDE**

TOGETHER WE CAN HELP PREVENT SUICIDE



**brighter futures**  
creative support, housing and employment

# INTRODUCTION

“ This booklet has been created by Brighter Futures, it is designed to be a source of help whether you may be having thoughts of suicide yourself, or if you are concerned about someone else.

The **Suicide Prevention Champions Project** runs across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and is a way of helping individuals at risk of suicide with the aim to ultimately help save lives.

Very often suicide is seen as a taboo subject and consequently people are fearful of talking about it. The truth however is that by simply talking and/or listening to someone who is thinking about suicide can in itself be life-saving.

The **Suicide Prevention Champions Project** is focused on helping individuals, organisations and businesses across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent gain the skills and confidence they need to talk about suicide in their community.

Anyone and everyone can save a life and can also help break down the stigma around suicide and better understand how to support someone who may potentially be a suicide risk.

”

“ Find out more about our work and this project by heading over to the Brighter Futures website <https://www.brighter-futures.org.uk/suicide-prevention-community-champions/> or to access suicide prevention training visit [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/talksuicide](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/talksuicide)

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# ARE YOU CONTEMPLATING SUICIDE?

# WAIT AND PROMISE NOT TO DO ANYTHING RIGHT NOW

Even though you are in a lot of pain you do not have to act on your thoughts of suicide. Thoughts (what we think) and actions (what we do) are two different things.

Your thoughts do not have to become a reality. Your emotions are not fixed, they are constantly changing. How you feel today may not be the same as how you felt yesterday, tomorrow or next week.

Wait and put some distance between your suicidal thoughts and any actions you might take. However isolated you might feel, there are people who want to help you get through this.



# KEEP YOURSELF SAFE FOR NOW

Despite what you might think there are things you can do to stay safe and protect yourself from suicide right now. Here's a few ideas you could try:

## TALK

Even if it doesn't feel like it right now, there are many people who want to support you during this difficult time. Just talking about how you got to this point in your life can release a lot of the pressure that's building up and help you find a way to cope. (see page 14 for help/support)

## SHIFT YOUR FOCUS AND PROTECT YOURSELF

Find something to distract yourself and take your mind off your feelings, try thinking about things which would lift or calm your mood. Reflect on the positive things in your life and perhaps think (and make a list) of what your five reasons for living are (see page 8). Also protect yourself from harm by removing any objects that you could use to hurt yourself.

## CONNECT AND BE AROUND OTHERS

You may want to go to a place that feels safe or perhaps a busy environment where you will not be alone. Try to be with someone you trust and who can help you stay safe for now.

## HOPE

Other people who have felt as badly as you do right now, manage to survive these feelings. Take hope and draw strength from this. There's more than a very good chance that you are going to live through these feelings. But you just need to give yourself the time needed and don't try to go it alone - let others help.



# TRY SOME GROUNDING TECHNIQUES TO DIVERT YOUR THOUGHTS AWAY FROM SUICIDE

**Grounding exercises** are helpful if you find yourself becoming overwhelmed or distracted by distressing thoughts or feelings. Grounding exercises can help you refocus and anchor yourself in the present moment.

These simple exercises encourage us to use our senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch – to reconnect our mind and body in the present moment. It is these basic human senses that remind us we are here now, and we are safe.



Combine these techniques, which use all of our senses, by writing down our observations and reactions. The process of writing something down, getting it out of our head onto paper can be extremely cathartic, and is a great way of letting go of negativity. Try writing down your thoughts and feelings too. Think of writing as a way of 'spring cleaning' your thoughts.

- **Notice five things** you can see, four things you can hear, and three things you can feel, two things you can smell, and one you can taste.
- **Splash some water on your face.** Notice how it feels. Notice how the towel feels as you dry. Use words in your mind to describe the sensations.
- **Get up and walk around.** Take your time to notice each step as you take one, then another.
- **Pick an interesting object** in your field of vision. Trace its outline with your eyes, as if you were drawing it in your mind. Notice the shape, the ins and outs, the shade.
- **Hold a cold can or bottle** of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and taste as you drink from it.
- **Take a seat and feel the chair** under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it. Notice the pressure of the chair, or floor, or table against your body and limbs.
- **Take time to look around you,** notice what is in front of you and to each side. Look at those things that you are so familiar with and describe to yourself their qualities. Look at larger objects and then smaller ones.
- **Clap and rub your hands together.** Hear the noise and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.
- **Spend some time with your pet** (if you have one). Look at them closely, what is special and different about them, what are their distinguishing features. What is it that makes them who they are?
- **If you have a garden** or perhaps some pot plants, tend to them for a bit. Give them some TLC as Plants, and indeed soil, can be an excellent "grounder!"
- **Run your hands over something** with an interesting texture. Describe it in your mind, as if you have never felt anything like it before.
- **Imagine a friend/ relative is struggling** with suicidal thoughts. What would you say and how would you support them? Try acting with the same kindness towards yourself.

# TRY DEEP BREATHING

Being conscious of our breathing is the bedrock of most wellbeing practices and is a simple way to ground ourselves in the present moment and **re-take control of our thoughts**. Some may argue that it is natural for the mind to focus on negativity, (the things that can/or do go wrong), as this trait has historically helped humans too avoid risk and survive for so long.

To much focus on negativity however can spiral out of control and have the opposite effect, and in fact put us more at risk. Given how you are feeling right now it is time to re-take control of your thoughts.

**This technique will help you to shift your perceptions** and grab a little space between you and your thoughts and beliefs. From that new space, you will be able to feel lighter and see things more clearly.

1

Stand up or sit in a comfortable upright position. Loosen your clothing to prevent restricting your breathing.

2

Set your intention and tell yourself you're going to clear negative thoughts and beliefs.

3

Take three small connected breaths. Breathe in through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Try and transition from breathing in and out without any pause - make it fluid and smooth.

4

Having done a set of three breaths then take a (small) pause - we do not want to hyperventilate.

5

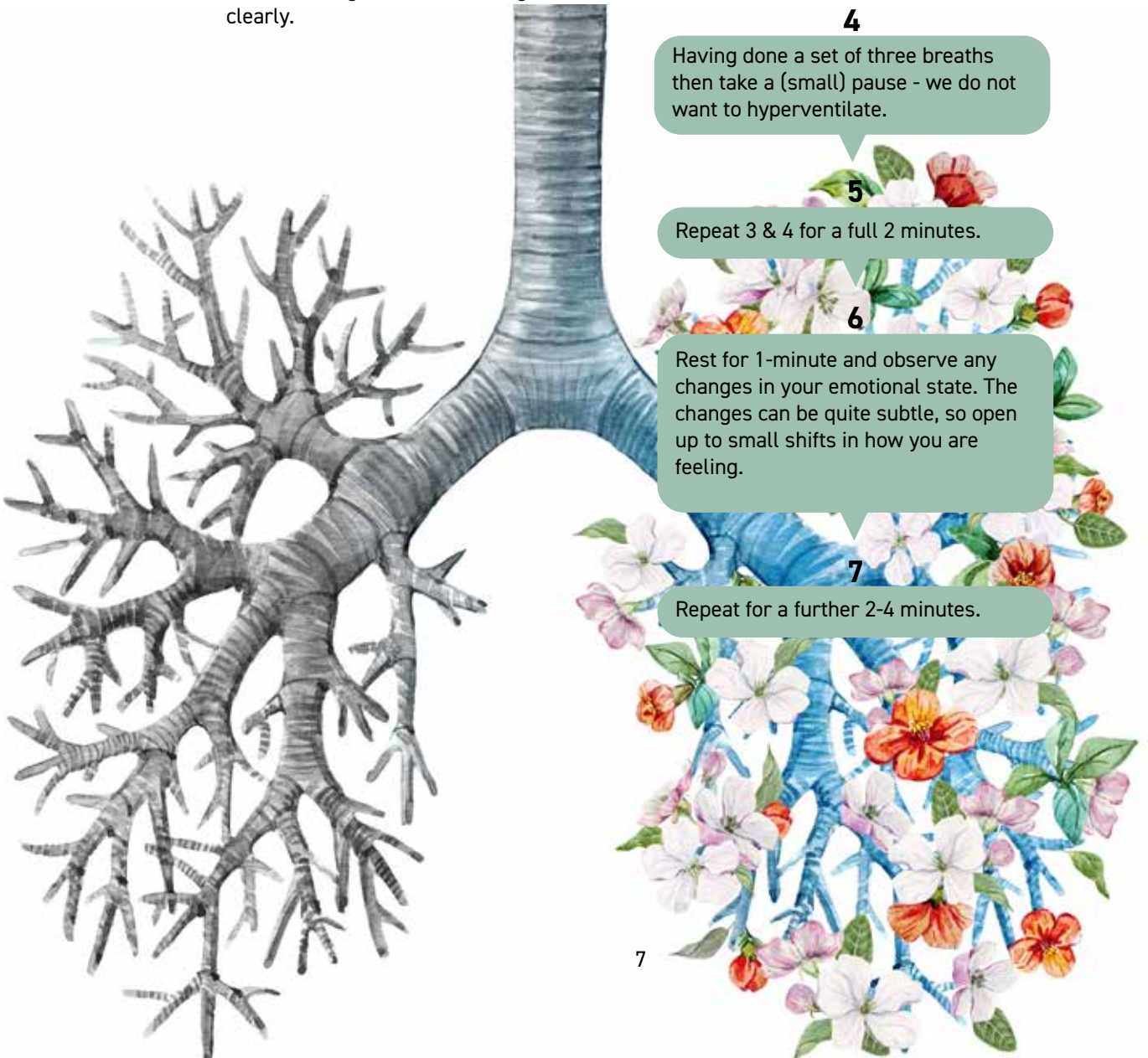
Repeat 3 & 4 for a full 2 minutes.

6

Rest for 1-minute and observe any changes in your emotional state. The changes can be quite subtle, so open up to small shifts in how you are feeling.

7

Repeat for a further 2-4 minutes.





# FOCUS ON THE REASONS FOR LIVING

It is important to remember that whilst your feelings may well have led to you having (what you believe are) reasons for dying, there are also some very strong reasons for living.

Be aware of them (reasons for living), value them and put them in your safety plan or hopes box (see page 10) as a constant reminder of your reasons to stay alive.

Some examples might include:

## ***'I CARE ABOUT MYSELF'***

I care about Myself: I care enough about myself to live – I have the courage to face life – No matter how bad I'm feeling I know it will not last – I'm afraid of the unknown – I'm afraid of actually killing myself.

## ***'I DON'T WANT MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO SUFFER'***

I don't want my Family and Friends to suffer: I love them and if I left they may question whether I did love them, I want to watch my family grow.

## ***'I HAVE BELIEFS AND HOPES'***

I have Beliefs and Hopes: I believe that I can find a purpose in life, I'm positive I can find a solution to my problems, I'm curious what may happen in the future, although life feels really tough, I hope I get better and things improve.

**My own reasons:** (add your own reasons here)

# HOW TO LIFT YOUR MOOD

## (and distract yourself from negativity)

The first stage of managing the emerging thoughts of suicide is knowing how to lift our mood and distract ourselves. This might include:

**GET PHYSICAL** – go out for a run or a walk, head to the gym, go swimming



**GET CREATIVE** – draw, colour, make a playlist, bake a cake



**BE PRODUCTIVE** – make lists, have a clear out, garden, write a letter



**TRY RELAXATION** – meditation, have a bath, listen to music, spend time with a pet, watch a movie



**VISIT PEOPLE AND PLACES** – go out, catch up with a friend, play football in the park, visit a museum, join a club, attend a place of faith.



Think about what works for you, be realistic, and remember different things might help at different times.

**Things I could do include:** (add your own ideas here)

Empty rounded rectangular box for writing ideas.

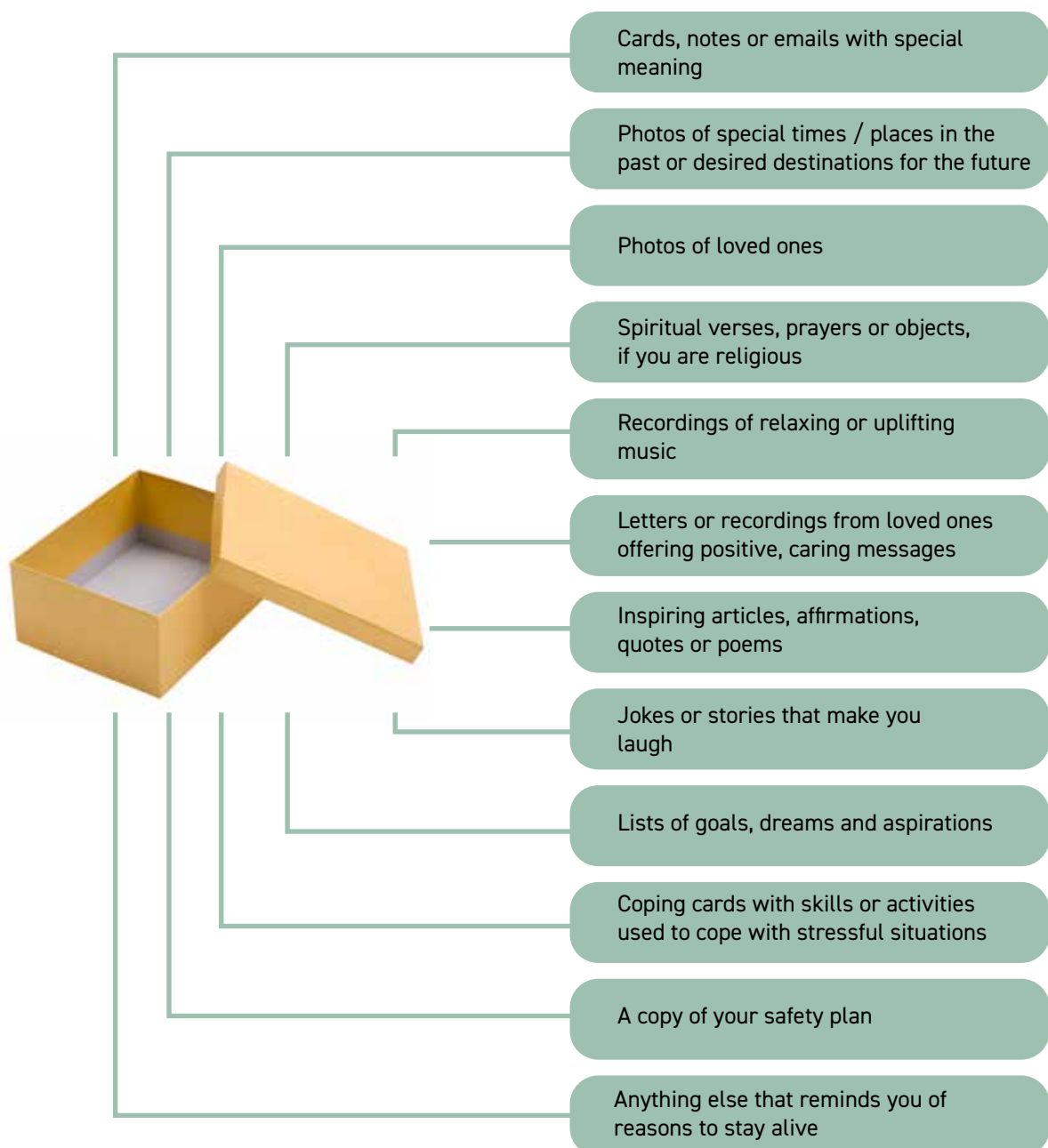
Empty rounded rectangular box for writing ideas.

# CREATE A HOPE BOX

Cultivate hope and create a “hope box”; a collection of items that remind you that life is meaningful and worth living. A hope box is made by getting a box (any box will do) and filling it with objects that mean something to you, things that remind you of better days or happier times; things that give you hope, or that have given you hope in the past.

Some people choose to creatively decorate their box, while others keep them plain and simple, it's entirely up to you - do whatever feels right. Alongside this physical box there is also 'The Virtual Hope Box' - a free smart phone application (Apple, Android) which allows anyone to keep a virtual collection of their reasons for living close by at all times.

Things that you may wish to include in your hope box may include:



# MAKE A PLAN

## (to keep yourself safe)

When thoughts of suicide are overwhelming, staying safe for even 5-10 minutes takes a great deal of strength. This plan is a way of keeping you safe right now so that you still have the chance to fight another day. Your pain may seem overwhelming and feel permanent, your thoughts feel very real; but in time these will pass.

Let's focus on what you can do now to keep safe. Ask yourself some questions..

WHY DO I WANT TO  
STAY ALIVE?

WHAT WILL I TELL MYSELF?

WHERE'S A SAFE PLACE  
I CAN GO TO?

HOW CAN I STAY SAFE NOW?

HOW CAN I MAKE MY  
ENVIRONMENT SAFE?

WHO CAN I CALL?

WHAT WOULD I SAY TO  
A CLOSE FRIEND?

HOW CAN OTHERS  
SUPPORT ME?

WHAT'S MY QUOTE  
FOR LIVING?

WHAT STRENGTHS DO I  
HAVE TO KEEP MYSELF SAFE?

## (here's an example of a plan)

<b>WHY DO I WANT TO STAY ALIVE ?</b>	<p>I want to walk my daughter down the aisle and see my son graduate. I don't want to hurt my family and I hope things will get better.</p>
<b>WHAT WILL I TELL MYSELF?</b>	<p>My thoughts are just thoughts I don't have to act on them, I have got through this before I can do this again, I don't want to hurt the people I love.</p>
<b>WHERE'S A SAFE PLACE I CAN GO TO?</b>	<p>John &amp; Kathleen's House .</p>
<b>HOW CAN I STAY SAFE NOW?</b>	<p>I will focus on my breathing, I will take the dog for a walk, I will call Sarah</p>
<b>HOW CAN I MAKE MY ENVIRONMENT SAFE?</b>	<p>I'll remove anything I could use to harm myself and I'll store my medication at John's house and only keep what I need for three days at home. I won't buy any alcohol.</p>
<b>WHO CAN I CALL?</b>	<p>My wife Sarah, and my best friend John, Dr Rajesh (xxx), Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline (0808 800 2234)</p>
<b>HOW CAN OTHERS SUPPORT ME?</b>	<p>Sarah could remind me to use my box of hope and I could call the Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline as they are great at listening to me.</p>
<b>WHAT WOULD I SAY TO A CLOSE FRIEND?</b>	<p>This time will pass, better days will come, I am here for you when you are ready to talk.</p>
<b>WHAT'S MY QUOTE FOR LIVING?</b>	<p>Sarah depends on me to look after her, my dog needs to be walked and without me looking after him my wife couldn't keep him if I was not here. I am courageous and I am loved by my family</p>
<b>WHAT STRENGTHS DO I HAVE TO KEEP MYSELF SAFE</b>	<p>I tell everyone that the children are my reason for living, when in reality my life is their reason for living.</p>

# CARE FOR YOURSELF - YOU ARE WORTH IT!

Self-care techniques and general lifestyle changes can help manage your own mental health and encourage you to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself.

While some may misconstrue self-care as selfish, it's far from that. Remember you cannot pour from an empty cup. **Consciously taking care of yourself will help build resilience and support your emotional and physical health.**

- \* Take a bubble bath complete with calming music and candles
- \* Spend time outdoors in nature, perhaps gaze at the stars
- \* Take a digital detox or edit who you follow on social media (if they don't bring joy/positivity)
- \* Buy a fun treat for yourself
- \* Watch the sunset or rise. Don't take photos for social media, just watch
- \* Plan an outing or holiday and have some fun
- \* Try out a new hobby
- \* Dance to your favourite music like no one is watching
- \* Give yourself permission to binge watch your favourite show with no guilt
- \* Grab a book and sit in a comfy chair and just read
- \* Sing at the top of your lungs
- \* Cook a nice meal for no other reason than you deserve one



# HELP & SUPPORT

## LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS LINE

**North Staffordshire urgent mental health helpline:** call 0800 032 8728 (opt.1) have an impairment or can't use the telephone, you can text the Access Team on 07739 775202

**South Staffordshire urgent mental health helpline:** call 0808 196 3002 (covers Stafford, Stone, Rugeley, Cannock, South Staffs, Lichfield, Burton, Uttoxeter, Tamworth).

## LOCAL SUPPORT HELPLINE

**Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline** - a free to access confidential helpline run by **Brighter Futures**, offering a safe place to talk Call 0808 800 2234 / Text 0786 002 2821 / Instant Message [www.brighter-futures.org.uk](http://www.brighter-futures.org.uk)

**The Self-Harm Support and Recovery service** - for Staffordshire adults over 18 who are living with self-harm/suicidal thoughts where a hospital visit or admission is neither wanted or needed. For a direct referral contact **Access Team:** T: 0300 123 0907 Option 1 (Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire) T: 0808 196 3002 (South Staffordshire) or **further information** on how the service can help call Brighter futures on 07824 505 538

## OTHER HELPLINES

**Changes** - recovery, wellbeing and peer support workshops Call: 01782 413101  
Email: [wellbeing.here4u@changes.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing.here4u@changes.org.uk)

**Womens Wellbeing Club** - Women's Wellbeing Club peer support group meetings for residents in Staffordshire Email: [info@womenswellbeingclub.co.uk](mailto:info@womenswellbeingclub.co.uk)

**Men Unite** - A social and support group for men across Staffordshire. 24hr online support via Facebook and weekly drop in sessions.

**Andys Man Club** - Free mental health peer support sessions for men in Stafford and surrounding towns. E: [info@andysmanclub.co.uk](mailto:info@andysmanclub.co.uk)

**Mind North Staffordshire** - counselling, parent support, social groups and advice  
phone: 01782 262100 email: [reception@nsmind.org.uk](mailto:reception@nsmind.org.uk)

**Mind Burton** - counselling, support groups and advice for people in Burton, Burntwood, Lichfield & Tamworth phone: 01283 566696 email: [info@burtonmind.co.uk](mailto:info@burtonmind.co.uk)

**Samaritans** - Providing emotional support to people in distress. Call 116 123 /  
Email: [jo@samaritans.co.uk](mailto:jo@samaritans.co.uk) Open 24/7

## APPS

**Calm Harm** - Calm Harm is an app designed to help people resist or manage the urges to harm themselves. It's private and password protected.

**Chill Panda** - A set of simple breathing techniques and light exercises to take your mind off your worries.

**distrACT** - The app gives you easy, quick and discreet access to information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

**The Virtual Hope Box** - A virtual crisis box or self-soothe box filled with anything to help you feel better when experiencing suicidal thoughts.

**Stay Alive** - This app is a pocket suicide prevention resource, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe.

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