

*“It felt like it was  
all too much.”*

Having suicidal thoughts and  
**finding a way back.**



Kei roto i te kōrero, he rongoa  
Kei roto i te reo, te rongoa hei mirimiri  
mō te hinengaro mō te wairua

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Talking is a rongoa (healing)  
for the mind and spirit

Moe Milne

**This book has been put together by people who have lived through suicidal thoughts and experiences.**

If you're having thoughts of suicide, you are not alone. Lots of us have thought about killing ourselves and have found a way through.

We want to offer you clues, tohu and suggestions for how to make your way out of the bleakness or pain you're experiencing. You won't always feel like this.

■ If things are at crisis point for you right now, or you need urgent help, go to your local hospital emergency department or call your local mental health crisis assessment team (numbers are on the back pages of this book).  
**If you're in danger right now, please call 111.**



Having suicidal thoughts can be overwhelming and sometimes terrifying. **It can be really hard to know what to do and how to cope.**

You might feel extremely depressed or anxious, or you might just feel really bad and not understand why.

You might be finding the world harsh and painful, or feel like no one understands.

You can get through this.

**This book will give you tools and ideas to help you:**

- Talk to someone about this
- Get professional help if you want it
- Learn ways to cope right now and recover fully

*“It can pass. It’s not everlasting  
even though it really feels like it is.*

*Somewhere in me was the  
knowledge that it could pass  
without me killing myself.  
I had to really hold onto that.”*

– Lena, 37



*“Tell somebody. You might get  
some strange reactions,  
but **don’t** worry.*

***Tell somebody.***

*If you’re wanting to kill  
yourself, trust me you’re not  
thinking clearly right now.”*

– Paulo, 19

## Getting through this

### Tell someone what you are thinking

As hard as it is, reaching out and talking about how you feel or what you’re thinking with a trusted friend, whānau or family member really can make a difference. **It’s not a sign of weakness to ask for help**, it’s the bravest thing you can do.

If the first person you talk to doesn’t listen, try someone else.

It can feel much worse if no one knows what you are going through or how bad you feel. You don’t need to deal with this alone. There are people who are willing, able and available to help you.

If you can’t find someone you know to talk to, call a helpline. They’re free, anonymous, and have people you can talk to 24 hours a day. Some phone numbers are included in the back of this book.



## Talking to someone you trust can make a real difference.

They might help you calm down and offer a breathing space while you decide what to do next.

**They can be with you at times when you don't want to be alone.**

They might have advice or suggestions about how to manage your situation. It is sometimes easier for other people to see what options you have.

If there's something specific you need, don't be afraid to ask. Maybe it's just someone to sit with you and listen. You could ask someone to go along to the doctor with you, or to call and make an appointment with a counsellor.

### You could talk to:

- People in your **family, whānau, friends** or support networks
- Your **doctor or a counsellor**
- Cultural **elders**, faith leaders, someone from your mosque or church
- **Support groups** for people going through similar things
- Phone **helplines** and websites – *details at the end of this book*

Try to be direct and give as much information as you can so they can understand what's going on for you. Describe what's going through your mind and what help you need.

If you've made a plan to hurt or kill yourself, tell someone exactly what you're planning, including how and when, so they understand how serious this is and how to help.

If you are finding it hard to talk about what you're going through, you can try starting with:

*“Lately, I've been feeling...”*

*“I think it started when...”*

*“I've been feeling this for a while...” or*

*“I'm thinking about...”*

Be prepared for their reaction. They might be fine, but some people can be quite confused and emotional at first. Just keep trying. If the first person you talk to can't help, find someone else.

*“I realised it was more the unbearable pain I wanted to end rather than my life as such. The thing is that **the pain does end** if you don't end your life.”*

– Jono, 27

*“ Give yourself a chance.  
Yes, rational thought is difficult if  
not impossible when you’re that  
low, but tell yourself that there  
are no second chances.*

*Once you’ve killed yourself, there  
is no way back. **That thought  
saved my life.**”*

– Tamati, 40

## What does professional help look like?

There are lots of ways you can find support to get through this – what will work best for you depends on your situation, what you need and the relationships you have. **There is help available for everyone.**

### Professional support can include:

- **Talking** to someone about your thoughts and feelings
- **Staying in a hospital** or mental health service for a while and having people keep you safe
- **Peer support**, where someone else who has been through this can support you
- **Medication** to help manage your moods
- **Learning** ways you can help yourself



**Helplines** are free phone services you can call to talk to trained volunteers or counsellors about what you're going through.

They won't judge who you are or what you're feeling. Helplines can also tell you more about how the mental health system works and what's available to you.

*Helpline numbers are at the back of this book.*

**Your GP, doctor or hauora service** can help you access counselling, mental health services or medication.

Your doctor will listen to you in private, and ask questions about you and your situation. You might want to have some of your family, whānau, friends and support network with you. Or you might not. Just say what you would prefer.



**Counsellors, school counsellors or psychologists** are people who are trained to talk through the really hard stuff.

They can talk to you about your situation, help to make sense of what you are going through, and explore different ways to cope and recover. It's completely private, and a really good option if you don't feel like you can open up to your whānau or friends.

**Mental health crisis assessment teams** can help in emergencies if you're feeling really unsafe.

They can check what kind of help you need, and help you access it. In some parts of the country, they can come and visit you wherever you are. Check the back of this book for contact details.

*“The world is screwed up and makes things feel a lot worse, so you've got nothing to feel ashamed about – it means you have a brain and a heart and are alive! **Find someone you can talk with** about how the world feels to you, someone who will support you in that”*

– Maia, 22

## Hospital and community mental health services can help if you don't feel you can cope or stay alive by yourself.

The thought of going to hospital or needing medication can seem really scary but a lot of people find it's helpful.

If you need help to stay alive, you can go to the Emergency Department of your local hospital. They may offer you medication, discuss with you what kind of help you want, or suggest you stay in hospital.

Usually this is your choice, but if doctors are worried that you might kill yourself and you won't accept treatment, they can make you stay in hospital for a while. If this happens, you should be given information about your rights under the Mental Health Act<sup>1</sup>.

Either way, before you leave hospital, professionals should support you to develop a safety plan to help you if you get to a crisis point again. **There is a safety plan inside the back cover of this book.**

Community mental health teams support people at home, or outside of hospital. They might refer you to a respite service or crisis house, which can offer intensive support and a place to stay while you work through things and start feeling stronger.

## Medication can help you feel calmer or less down.

Your doctor may prescribe you antidepressants, anxiety medications or other treatments.

### If you are prescribed medication you are entitled to know:

- The **names** of the medicines
- **How long it will be** before they take effect
- What **symptoms** they are supposed to treat
- **How long you will have to take them** for and what their side effects (short and long-term) are.

*“Feeling down is actually ok, you don't have to feel bad about feeling bad.”*

– Jo, 22

<sup>1</sup>Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992

## Your rights

Your doctor or health professional may want to talk to your whānau, friends or family about you and your situation.

They will do this with your permission but if there is serious concern that you are in danger, they may talk to others without you agreeing.

**When you ask for help, you have the right to:**

- Be **respected** and taken **seriously**
- Have your distress **acknowledged**
- Speak **privately** to people about yourself and your situation
- Be **listened** to
- Be **encouraged** to recover
- Have your family, whānau, friends or support network with you to **help you make decisions** about your care, if you choose to
- Have your **cultural needs acknowledged and supported**, if that's what you want.

*“If there’s abuse where you are, find a way to get away from it – get help if you need to – **changing your environment can be the first step in changing your reality.**”*

– Heather, 31

*“It helped me to see anxiety or suicidal thoughts as **just thoughts, separate to me** – they’re not who I am, they’re something I have with me.”*

– Aroha, 29

## Coping right now – and then recovering fully

When you are in emotional pain it can be hard to believe that you will ever feel better.

Some of us have found the following ideas have given us hope and helped us recover from suicidal feelings.

### Thoughts, not actions

**Try to remember that thoughts about killing yourself are just thoughts.** You don’t have to act on them, no matter how overwhelming they are or how often you have them. You won’t always have these thoughts.

**Be kind to yourself.** You only have to cope with one day or one hour at a time.

If you can, try to notice the world around you and give yourself a break from focusing on your distress.





## Keep safe

Get rid of anything you think you might use to hurt or kill yourself, or put it somewhere you can't access it.

**Try to avoid drinking alcohol or taking non-prescription or recreational drugs.** They can change the way you think and feel, mostly in unhelpful ways.

**Make a safety plan** so you know what to do if you feel really bad. *See the back of this book for a safety plan template.*

*“I give myself a break - it's okay to cry until you can't cry anymore - it's the mind's natural way of fighting the illness. Learn from others – read about how other people have managed.”*

– Gavin, 49



## Distract yourself

While it may feel like you have to act now, try to **postpone any decisions** about hurting yourself.

**Keep a list of things you can do to distract yourself.**

This might include watching a video online, calling a friend, exercising or listening to music. Check your list and find something you can do to distract yourself from suicidal thoughts.

**Fill a 'distraction box' with things that you find comforting and meaningful.** This could be music you like listening to, photos, phone numbers of friends you could ring, a taonga, notes to yourself, perfume, a toy, or anything else you find helpful.

*“If you can think of anything that makes you feel the tiniest bit better, do it. Then do it again. You can actually start to release the pain that way.”*

– Helena, 32

## Connect with others

Talk to someone you **trust** about what's on your mind, whenever you need to.

Keep a list of people you can call. If you're not sure who you can talk to, try a helpline or text counselling service.

Spend time with people who you like and trust.

Think about what kind of help you need when you feel low. You may want friends to visit you, send you texts or messages, pick up groceries, cook you a meal, or give you advice. Let people know so they can do their best to support you.

## Look after yourself

Here are some other ways you can **take care of yourself**:

- Get a good amount of **sleep, rest and exercise, and eat regularly**.
- If you're taking prescribed medicine (whether it is for a physical illness or a mental health problem), **don't stop taking it without talking to your doctor first**.
- **Take time** off work or school if you need to. Your doctor can help arrange this.

- **Keep a diary, or write a letter** to someone that you don't send. Writing things down can help you understand what you're thinking or feeling, or how you're reacting to situations. It can also help you find solutions to any problems you're facing.
- **Do things you find healing**. Go for a massage or some mirimiri.
- **Express yourself** in whatever way makes sense to you: Sing waiata, take photos, dance, draw.
- **Learn how other people have got through this**. Watch videos or read books. It really can help hearing other people talk about how they managed their feelings of wanting to die. There are suggestions at the end of this book.
- **Connect with areas of your life that give you a sense of meaning** e.g. your friends, whānau, culture, spirituality, whatever you're passionate about.
- **Go to places that restore you**. Swim in the ocean, go home to your marae, sit in a park under the trees.
- If you're disconnected from being Māori, **find a way to reconnect**. If you don't know where to start, join a kapa haka group or start learning te reo to be around the culture.
- **Reach out and find people who are like you**, or who are going through similar things. If you're questioning your sexuality or gender, or feeling isolated because of who you are, check out the list at the end of this book to find someone to talk to.

*“There really are so many things in life that aren’t fair or equal or right.*

***You’re not crazy if you think like that, you’re onto something. Racism, prejudice, abuse. Don’t let it implode you. Turn the anger back out where it belongs. Learn to channel it into changing your world.***

***You’re way more powerful than you realise.”***

– Wai, 55

## More people and places to contact for support

For professional support, talk to your local doctor, medical centre, hauora service, community mental health team, school counsellor or counselling service.

**If you don’t get the help you need the first time, keep trying.**

Sometimes when we feel suicidal it can be related to other stuff that’s going on in our lives – money issues, relationship breakups, violence or sexual abuse, or going through big changes. When you need support with things like this, there are people who can help. Social workers, youth workers, Whānau Ora navigators, or free helplines can support you to work things out or direct you to the help you need.

*“Climb your maunga, swim in your river, talk with your kuia. The medicine is in your whakapapa.”*

– Elena, 53

Over the next pages, you’ll find a list of some of the places you can contact for support, information and help. All of these services are free, and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week unless otherwise stated.

## For counselling and support

- **Lifeline**  
**0800 543 354**  
*For counselling and support*
- **Healthline**  
**0800 611 116**  
*For advice from trained registered nurses*
- **Depression Helpline**  
**0800 111 757**  
*To talk to a trained counsellor about how you are feeling or to ask any questions*
- **Samaritans**  
**0800 726 666**  
*For confidential support to anyone who is lonely or in emotional distress*
- **Tautoko Suicide Crisis Helpline**  
**0508 828 865**  
(0508 TAUTOKO)  
*For people in distress, and people who are worried about someone else*
- **www.depression.org.nz**  
*includes The Journal free online self-help tool*

## For children and young people

- **Youthline**  
**0800 376 633,**  
Free text **234** or email  
**talk@youthline.co.nz**  
*For young people, and their parents, whānau and friends*
- **www.thelowdown.co.nz**  
or free text **5626**  
*Support for young people experiencing depression or anxiety*
- **What's Up**  
**0800 942 8787**  
(0508 WHATSUP)  
*For 5-18 year olds (1pm to 11pm)*
- **SPARX.org.nz**  
*an online self-help tool that teaches young people the key skills needed to help combat depression and anxiety*
- **www.auntydee.co.nz**  
*a free online tool for anyone who needs some help working through problems*

## For help with specific issues

- **OUTLine**  
**0800 688 5463**  
(0800 OUTLINE)  
*For sexuality or gender identity issues, or if you are thinking you might be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex and want to talk it through with someone who gets it (10am-9pm M-F, and 6pm-8pm S-S)*
- **Alcohol Drug Helpline**  
**0800 787 797,**  
free text **8681** or online chat at  
**www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz**  
*For people dealing with alcohol or other drug problems*

■ **Women's Refuge Crisis Line**  
**0800 733 843**  
 (0800 REFUGE)  
*For women living with violence, or in fear, in their relationship or family*

■ **Shakti Crisis Line**  
**0800 742 584**  
 (0800 SHAKTI)  
*For migrant or refugee women living with family violence*

■ **Rape Crisis**  
**0800 883 300**  
*For support after rape or sexual assault*

■ **PlunketLine**  
**0800 933 922**  
*Support for new parents, including mothers experiencing post-natal depression*

■ **Rural Support**  
**0800 787 254**  
*For people in rural communities dealing with financial or personal challenges*

■ If things are at crisis point for you right now, or you need urgent help, call your local **mental health crisis assessment team** (numbers on the next pages) or go to your local hospital emergency department.  
**If you're in danger right now, please call 111.**

■ **Le Va**  
**www.leva.co.nz**  
*Information for Pasifika families and communities on how to support you*

■ **Refugees as Survivors**  
**0800 472 769**  
**www.rasnz.co.nz**  
*Psychological support for refugees and asylum seekers*

■ **Mental Health Foundation**  
**www.mentalhealth.org.nz**  
*For more information about looking after your mental health and working towards recovery*

■ *A list of videos and resources about people who have survived feeling like they want to die is available at [www.mentalhealth.org.nz/suicideprevention](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/suicideprevention)*

## Mental health crisis assessment team contact numbers:

DHB:

Phone:

<b>Northland</b> <i>(Topuni to North Cape)</i>	<b>Whangarei:</b> 0800 223 371
<b>Waitemata</b> <i>(Wellsford to North Shore)</i>	<b>West Auckland and North Shore:</b> 09 487 1414 <b>After Hours:</b> 09 486 8900 <i>(ask for North Crisis Team)</i>
<b>Auckland</b> <i>(Auckland City)</i>	<b>Central Auckland:</b> 0800 800 717
<b>Counties Manukau</b> <i>(South Auckland to Te Kauwhata)</i>	<b>South Auckland:</b> 09 261 3700
<b>Waikato</b> <i>(Coromandel, Hamilton to National Park)</i>	<b>Hamilton:</b> 0800 505 050
<b>Bay of Plenty</b> <i>(Tauranga, Whakatane to Te Kaha)</i>	<b>Tauranga:</b> 0800 800 508 <b>Whakatane:</b> 0800 774 545
<b>Tairāwhiti</b> <i>(Hicks Bay to Gisborne)</i>	<b>Gisborne:</b> 0800 243 500
<b>Lakes</b> <i>(Rotorua, Taupo, Turangi)</i>	<b>Lakes:</b> 0800 166 167
<b>Hawke's Bay</b> <i>(Wairoa, Napier, Hastings, Waipukaurau)</i>	<b>Napier, Hastings:</b> 0800 112 334
<b>Taranaki</b> <i>(New Plymouth to Waverly)</i>	<b>New Plymouth:</b> 0508 277 478

<b>Whanganui</b> <i>(Ohakune, Whanganui to Bulls)</i>	<b>Whanganui:</b> 0800 653 358
<b>Mid Central</b> <i>(Palmerston North to Waikanae)</i>	<b>Mid Central:</b> 0800 653 357
<b>Wairarapa</b> <i>(Masterton to Martinborough)</i>	<b>Wairarapa:</b> 0508 432 432
<b>Hutt Valley</b> <i>(Lower and Upper Hutt)</i>	<b>Hutt Valley:</b> 04 566 6999 <b>After hours (4.30pm – 8am)</b> 0800 745 477
<b>Capital &amp; Coast</b> <i>(Kapiti to Wellington)</i>	<b>Wellington, Kapiti Coast, Porirua:</b> 04 494 9169 <b>After hours (4.30pm – 8am)</b> 0800 745 477
<b>Nelson Marlborough</b> <i>(Top of South Island to Hanmer Springs)</i>	<b>Nelson:</b> 03 546 1421 <b>After hours:</b> 03 546 1800  <b>Marlborough:</b> 03 520 9907 <b>After hours:</b> 03 520 9999
<b>Canterbury</b> <i>(Kaikoura to Ashburton)</i>	<b>Ashburton:</b> 0800 222 955  <b>Christchurch:</b> 0800 920 092
<b>West Coast</b> <i>(West Coast, South Island)</i>	<b>Greymouth:</b> 0800 757 678
<b>South Canterbury</b> <i>(Timaru, Mt Cook, Tekapo, Temuka, Waimate)</i>	<b>Timaru:</b> 0800 277 997
<b>Otago Southland</b> <i>(Dunedin, Milford Sound south to Stewart Island)</i>	0800 46 78 46 <b>Southland Mental Health Services:</b> Push 1 <b>Otago Mental Health Services:</b> Push 2 <b>Gore:</b> 03 208 0299

*“One day you’ll look back on this and be really pleased that you’re still around – there are still things in your path to discover”*

– Ali, 57



**He oranga ngākau  
he pikinga wairua**

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When the heart is well,  
the spirit is lifted

*The quotes in this book are real,  
but the names have been changed.*

*The manawa design used throughout this  
resource, was created for us by Boydie  
Te Nahu. It symbolises strength, power,  
freedom- and reconnecting with source.*



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