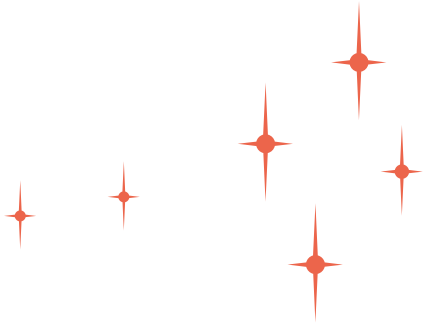


*“It felt like it was  
all too much.”*

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**

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're 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 helpline 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 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 also 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.”*

***“ 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.

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

**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 <b>names</b> of the medicines               | ■ <b>How long it will be</b> before they take effect  |
| ■ What <b>symptoms</b> they are supposed to treat | ■ <b>How long you will have to take them</b> 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

## 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. *To learn more about using a safety plan and to order or download a free safety plan visit [mentalhealth.org.nz/safety-plan](https://mentalhealth.org.nz/safety-plan) .*

*“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.

■ **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, walk on the whenua.

■ 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

- Need to talk?**  
**Free call or text 1737**  
*To talk to a trained counsellor,  
any time*
- Depression Helpline**  
**0800 111 757**  
or free text **4202**  
*Talk to a trained counsellor  
or ask any questions*  
See [www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)
- Samaritans**  
**0800 72 66 66**  
*For confidential support to  
anyone who is lonely or in  
emotional distress or despair*
- TAUTOKO Suicide Crisis Helpline**  
**0508 828 865** (0508 TAUTOKO)  
*For support if you are in distress,  
or worried about someone*
- Lifeline 0800 543 354**  
or free text **4357**  
*For counselling and support*
- AnxietyNZ Trust**  
**0800 269 438** (0800 ANXIETY)  
*For support with all forms of  
anxiety, incl panic attacks, OCD*
- Vaka Tautua**  
**0800 652 535**  
(0800 OLA LELEI)  
*Free national Pacific helpline*
- Asian Family Services**  
**0800 862 342**  
*Free and confidential helpline,  
services available in eight  
languages (Mon-Fri 9am - 8pm)*  
[www.asianfamilyservices.nz](http://www.asianfamilyservices.nz)
- Healthline**  
**0800 611 116**  
*Advice from trained health  
professionals for any health-  
related issues or questions*



### Help for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people

Phone numbers in this brochure can be reached using the relay service, text or video. Visit [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz) to find out more.



Register with New Zealand Police for the **111 TXT service**.

Many services offer text or webchat options, including Facebook (FB) messenger.

## For children and young people

**Youthline**  
**0800 376 633**  
 free text 234, email  
**talk@youthline.co.nz** or chat  
 online at **youthline.co.nz**  
*For young people and their  
 parents, whānau and friends*

**What's Up**  
**0800 942 8787**  
 (0800 WHATSUP)  
 call (11am-11pm) or chat  
 online (11am - 10.30pm)  
 at **whatsup.co.nz**  
*For children and teenagers*

## Online and digital tools

**www.smallsteps.org.nz**  
*Online tools to improve your  
 mental wellbeing for all*

**www.sparx.org.nz**  
*An online game to help young  
 people build resilience*

**www.justathought.co.nz**  
*Free online therapy courses and  
 resources to support you with  
 mental health challenges*

**www.thelowdown.co.nz**  
*A space for rangatahi to find  
 support for your hauora,  
 identity, culture & mental health*

**Headstrong.org.nz**  
*A free app for young people  
 to strengthen your wellbeing*

**www.auntydee.co.nz**  
*A free online tool for anyone  
 who needs some help working  
 through a problem*

## For help with specific issues

**OutLine Aotearoa**  
**0800 688 5463**  
 (0800 OUTLINE)  
*Rainbow mental health support  
 line, if you want to talk about  
 issues around sexual orientation  
 and gender identity (6pm-9pm)*

**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. Māori,  
 Pasifika and Youth lines are  
 available*

### **Women's Refuge Crisis Line**

**0800 733 843** (0800 REFUGE)

*FB messenger: womensrefuge.nz.  
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*

### **National Rape & Sexual Abuse Crisis Line**

**0800 883 300**

*For support after rape  
or sexual assault*

### **24/7 HELpline**

**0800 623 1700**

or free text **8236**

**www.helpauckland.org.nz**

*Support for sexual abuse and  
assault survivors*

### **PlunketLine**

**0800 933 922**

*Support for new parents,  
including mothers experiencing  
post-natal depression*

### **Gambling Helpline**

**0800 654 655**

fee text **8006**

*For help if you're gambling or  
are concerned about someone's  
gambling. Māori, Pasifika and  
Youth lines are available*

### **Rural Support**

**0800 787 254**

*For people in rural communities  
dealing with financial or personal  
challenges*

### **Le Va**

**www.leva.co.nz**

*Information and support  
for Pasifika families and  
communities for the best health  
and wellbeing outcomes*

### **The Mental Health Foundation**

**www.mentalhealth.org.nz**

*For more information about  
looking after your mental health  
and working towards recovery*

*For information on suicide  
prevention and resources, please  
see **www.mentalhealth.org.nz/  
suicide-prevention***

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.**



## Mental health crisis assessment team contact numbers:

Area:

Phone:

<b>Northland</b> <i>(Topuni to North Cape)</i>	<b>Whangārei:</b> 09 430 4101 ext 3537 <b>Kaipara:</b> 09 439 3330 ext 65401 <b>Mid North:</b> 0800 643 647 <b>Far North:</b> 09 408 9187 <b>After Hours (all):</b> 0800 223 371
<b>Waitematā</b> <i>(Wellsford to North Shore and Waitakere)</i>	<b>North Shore:</b> 09 486 8900 <b>Henderson:</b> 09 822 8501 <b>Rodney:</b> 09 427 0360
<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>After hours:</b> 0800 775 222
<b>Waikato</b> <i>(Coromandel, Hamilton to National Park)</i>	<b>Hamilton:</b> 0800 505 050
<b>Bay of Plenty</b> <i>(Tauranga, Whakātane to Te Kaha)</i>	<b>Tauranga:</b> 0800 800 508 <b>Whakatāne:</b> 0800 774 545
<b>Tairāwhiti</b> <i>(Hicks Bay to Gisborne)</i>	<b>Gisborne:</b> 0800 243 500 or after 10pm call 06 869 0512
<b>Lakes</b> <i>(Rotorua, Taupō, Tūrangi)</i>	<b>Lakes:</b> 0800 166 167
<b>Hawke's Bay</b> <i>(Wairoa, Napier, Hastings, Waipukurau)</i>	<b>Napier, Hastings:</b> 0800 112 334

<b>Taranaki</b> <i>(New Plymouth to Waverly)</i>	<b>New Plymouth:</b> 0508 292 467
<b>Whanganui</b> <i>(Ohakune, Whanganui to Bulls)</i>	<b>Whanganui:</b> 0800 653 358
<b>MidCentral</b> <i>(Palmerston North to Peka Peka)</i>	<b>MidCentral:</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>	0800 745 477
<b>Capital &amp; Coast</b> <i>(Kāpiti to Wellington, incl Porirua)</i>	0800 745 477
<b>Nelson Marlborough</b> <i>(Nelson region, Marlborough, Golden Bay area)</i>	<b>Nelson:</b> 0800 776 364 <b>Marlborough:</b> 0800 948 497 <b>Golden Bay:</b> 03 525 7647 or 0800 776 364
<b>Canterbury</b> <i>(Kaikōura to Ashburton)</i>	<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>Southern</b> <i>(Dunedin, Milford Sound south to Stewart Island)</i>	0800 467 846 Press 1 for <b>Southland</b> Press 2 for <b>Otago</b>

*“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



Download or order your free Personal Safety Plan and learn more about using safety plans at [mentalhealth.org.nz/safety-plan](https://mentalhealth.org.nz/safety-plan).

**He oranga ngākau  
he pikinga wairua**

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.*



MINISTRY OF HEALTH



[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

ISBN: 978-1-877318-85-6 (print)  
ISBN: 978-1-877318-84-9 (PDF)

**He Code:** HE2538

**Updated:** March 2025