“It felt like it was all too much.”

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

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 guidance, aronga/direction and suggestions for how to make your way out of these thoughts. 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.**

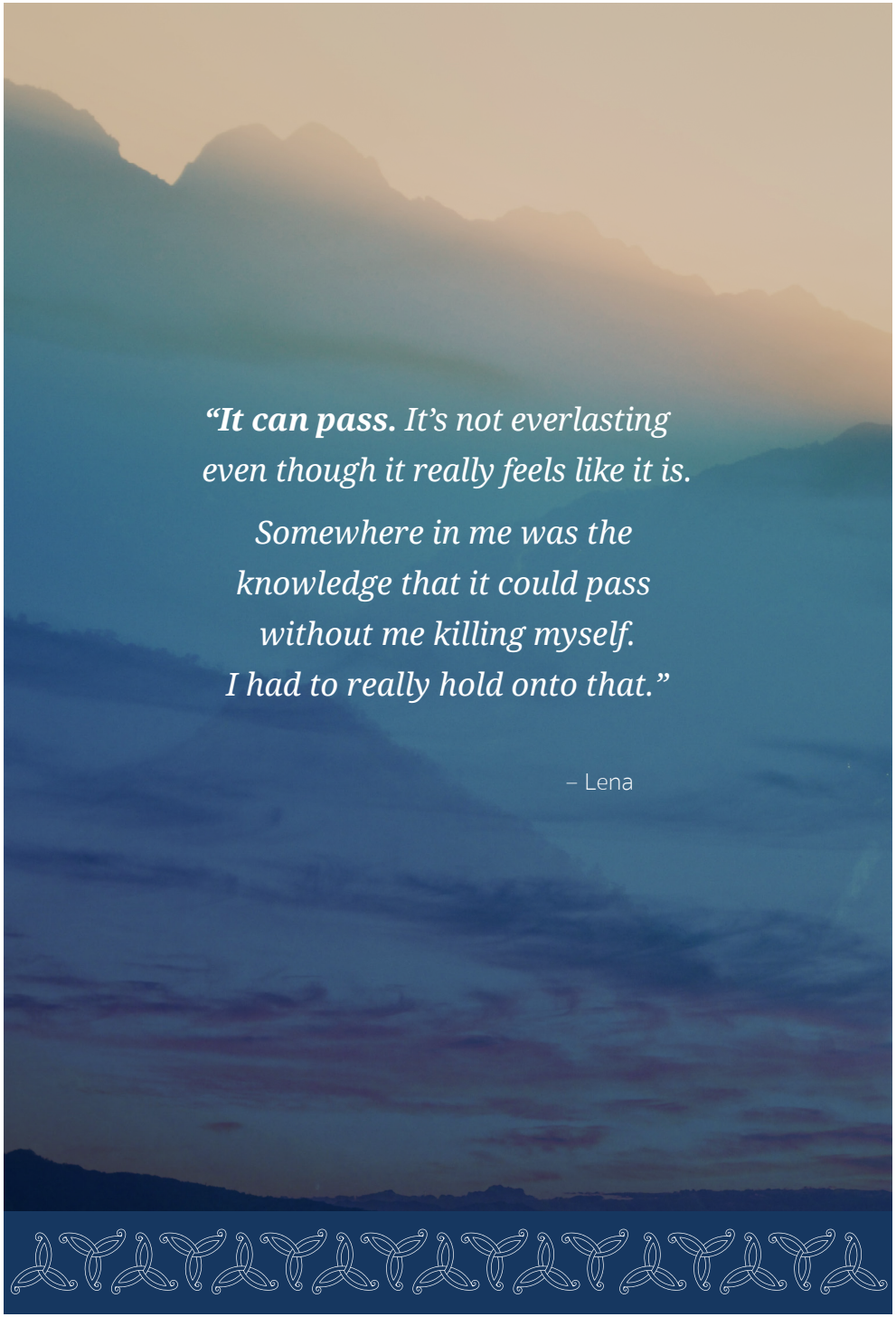
You might feel extremely depressed or anxious, or you might just feel really bad and not understand why.

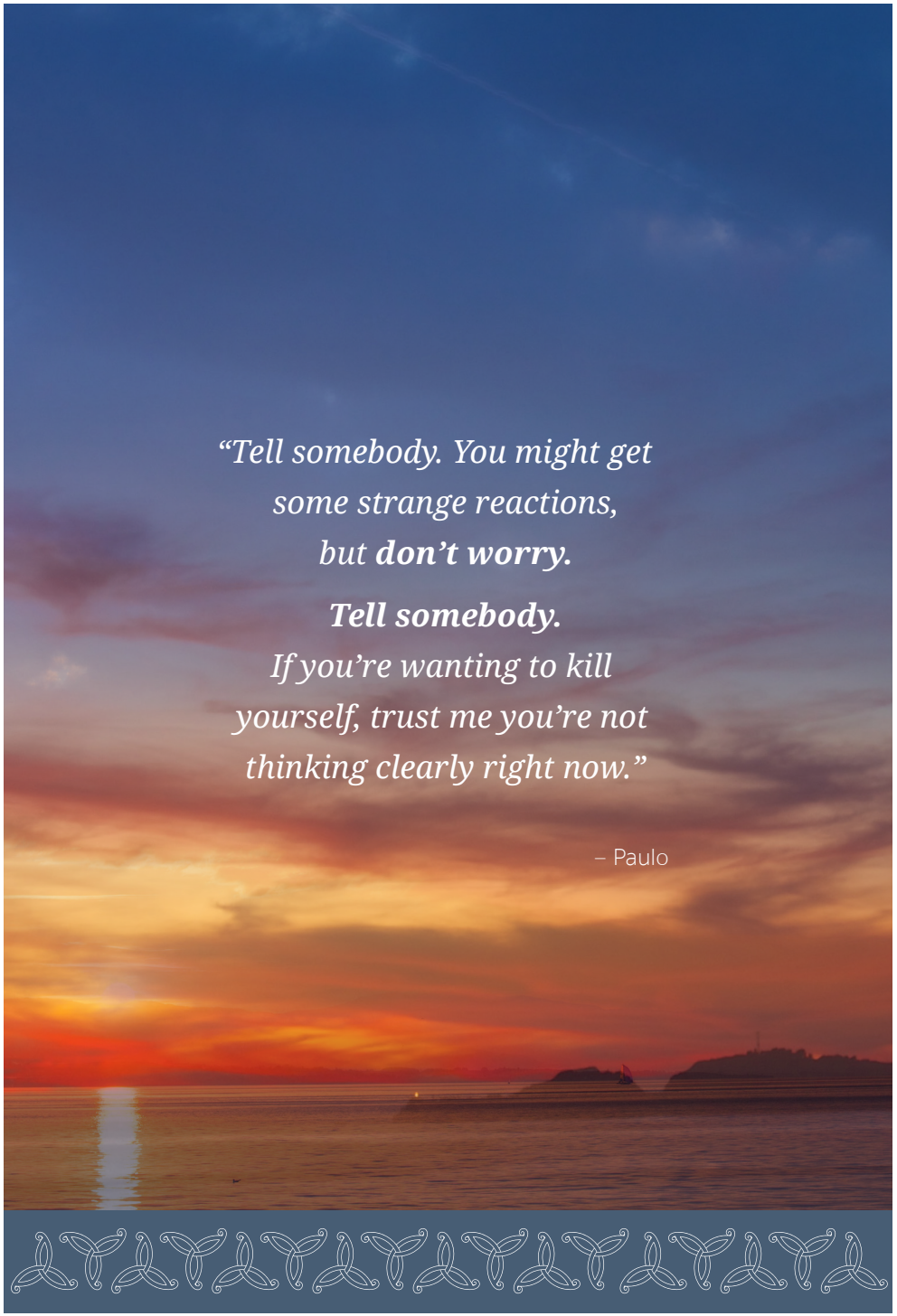
You might be finding the world harsh and painful, or feel like no one understands.

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.





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, confidential 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.

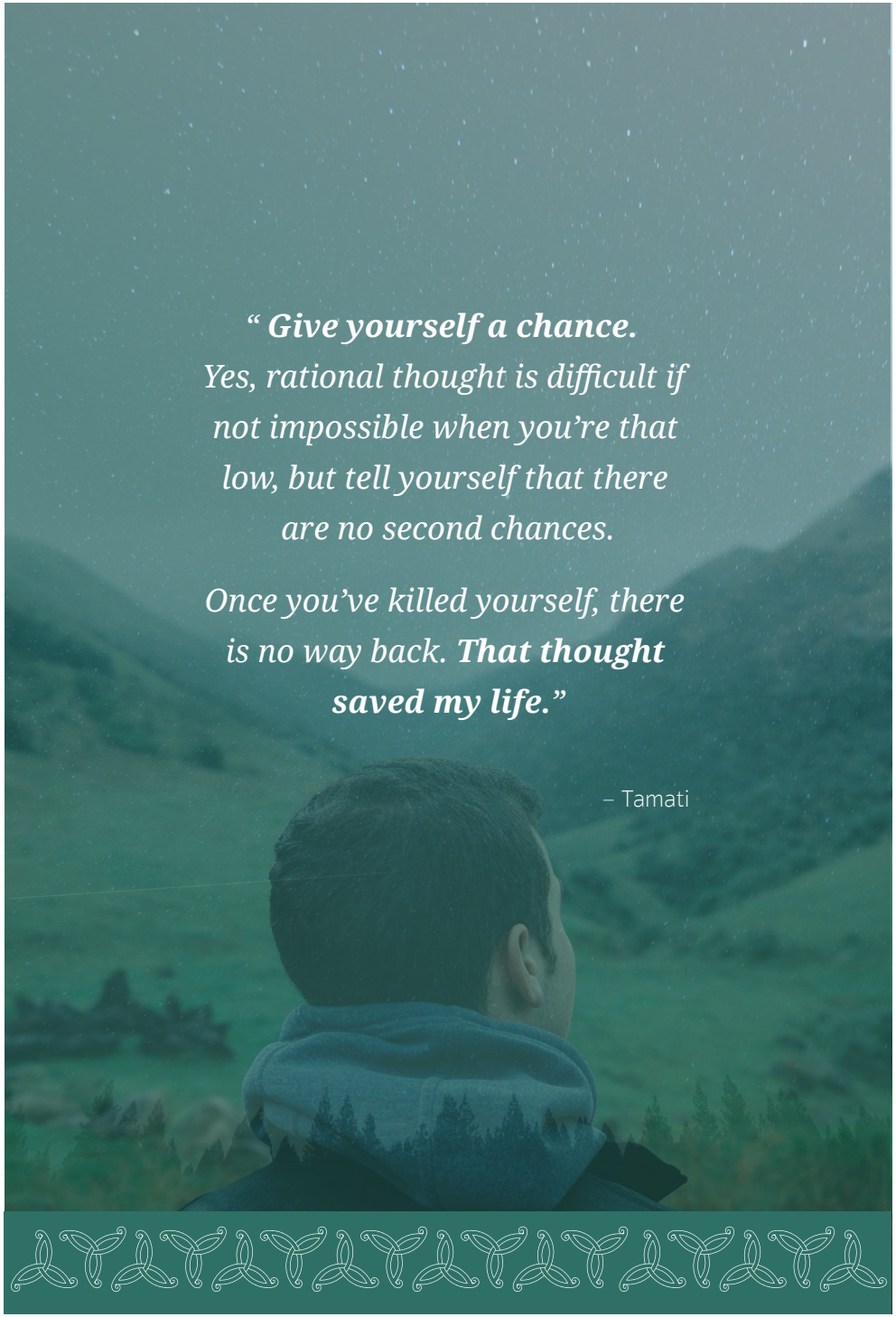
If you're having thoughts about dying or have made a plan to hurt or kill yourself, tell someone exactly what you're planning, including how and when, so they understand how serious this is and how to help.

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



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

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 discuss with you what kind of help you want or offer medication.

They may 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[1].

Either way, before you leave hospital, professionals can support you to develop a safety plan to help you if you get to a crisis point again. **Visit mentalhealth.org.nz/safety-plan to see our range of free safety plans.**

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.

[1]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 **names** of the medicines
- What **symptoms** they are supposed to treat
- **How long it will be** before they take effect
- **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

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.

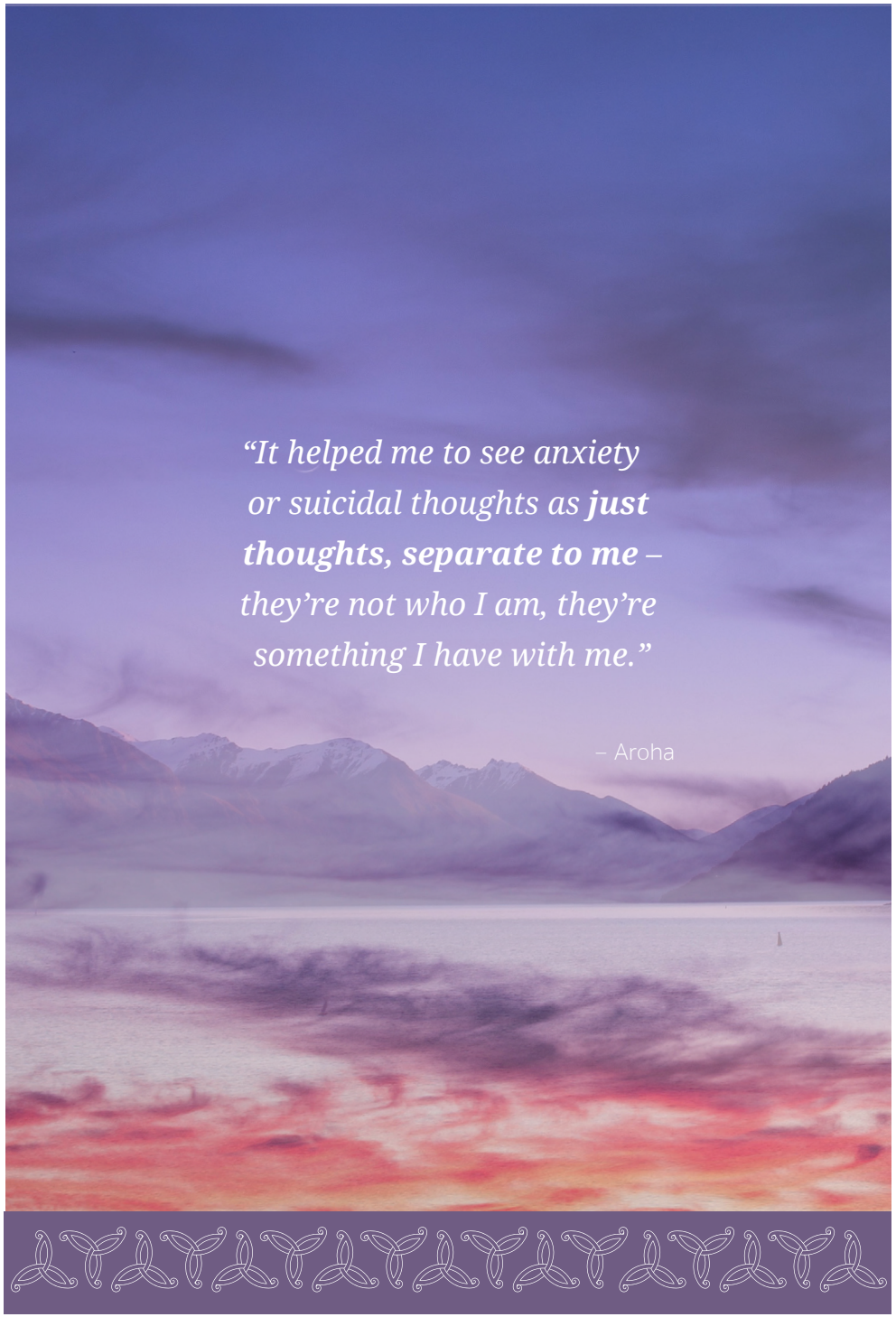
When you ask for help, you have the right to:

- 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.

When you use a health or disability service in Aotearoa you have the protection of the *Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights.* For more information visit **www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights.**

"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



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. *Visit **mentalhealth.org.nz/safety-plan** for more information and to see our range of free safety plans.*

> *"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

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 movie or TV show, connecting with a friend, going for a walk, exercising or stretching, being around other people, 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

Connect with others

Talk to someone you **trust** about what's on your mind, whenever you need to. Don't carry this alone.

Keep a list of people you can call - this may be a friend, whānau member or a health professional. If you're not sure who you can talk to, try a helpline or text counselling service. See page 26 for more information.

Spend time with people who you like and trust.

Think about what kind of help you need when you feel low. You may want whānau or friends to visit or message you, pick up groceries, help you make appointments (or go with you), share a meal or look after your children. Let people know what you need so they can do their best to support you.

Look after yourself

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

- Try to get a good amount of **sleep, rest and exercise, and eat healthy foods 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 a way that 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 your culture, try to **find a way to reconnect**. If you don't know where to start, you could join a kapa haka or another community group or look online for local events or language classes to help you connect with your 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

More people and places to contact for support

For professional support, talk to your local doctor, hauora service, community mental health team, school counsellor or counselling service. Many GP clinics also have health coaches or health improvement practitioners (HIPs) who can provide support for people with concerns about mental health, addiction, long-term conditions, and general wellbeing.

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 things going on in our lives – this could be financial or relationship issues, violence or sexual abuse, heavy use of drugs or alcohol, being bullied or excluded, having a serious physical illness, experiencing suicide loss, or going through big life 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

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.

For counselling and support

All services are available 24/7 unless otherwise stated.

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**

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

Asian Family Services
0800 862 342
Free and confidential helpline, services available in eight languages (Mon-Fri 9am - 8pm)
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*** *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 (24/7)
0800 376 633
free text **234,** webchat at **youthline.co.nz,** DM on Instagram **@youthlinenz,** Whats App **09 886 56 96**
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.justathought.co.nz
Free online therapy courses and resources to support you with mental health challenges

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

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

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

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)
For women living with violence or 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 postnatal depression

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

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

Moneytalks
www.moneytalks.co.nz
A free financial helpline that can give advice and connect you to mentors and services

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

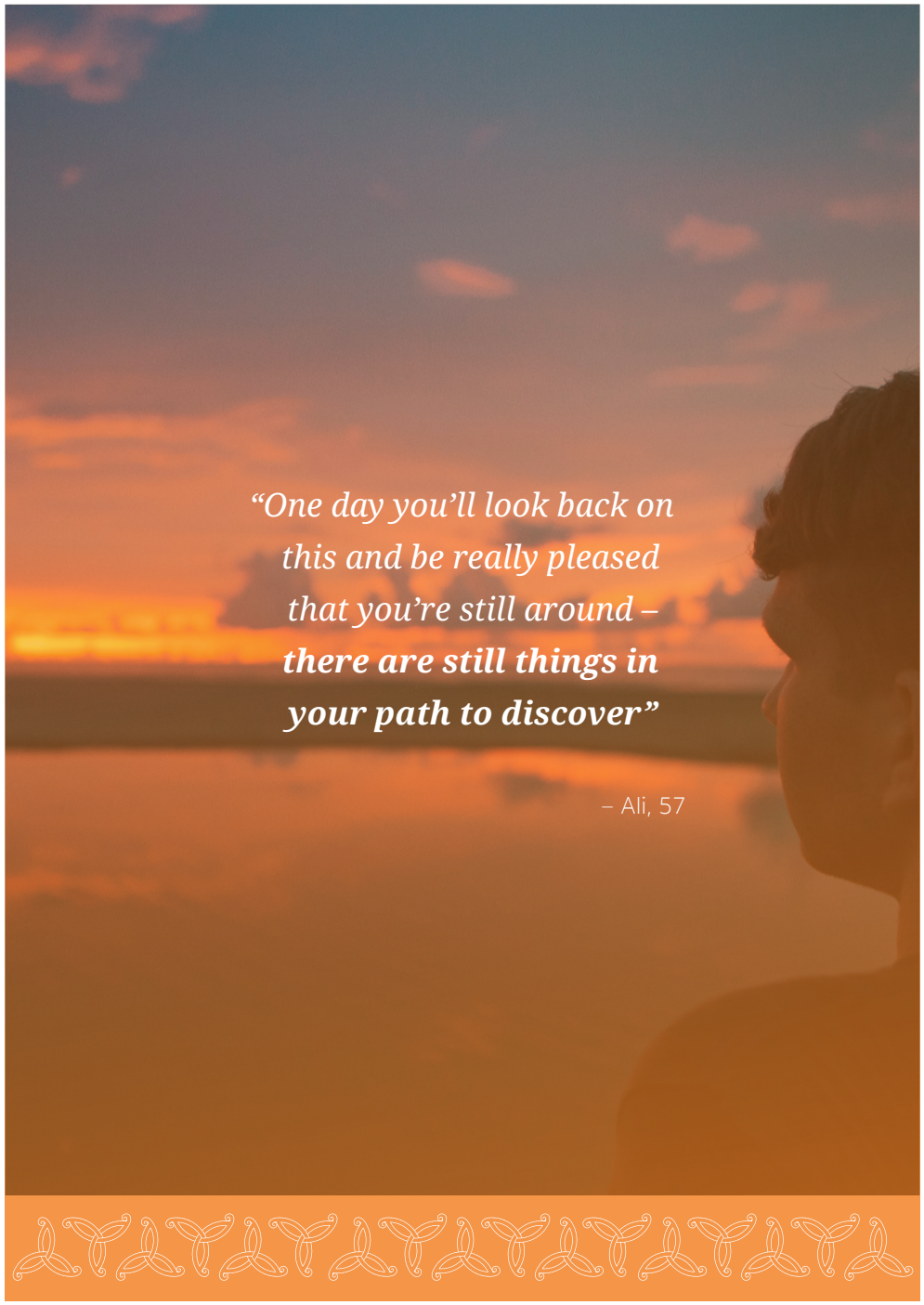
For information on suicide prevention and resources, please see **www.mentalhealth.org.nz/suicide-prevention**

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:
Northland *(Topuni to North Cape)*	**Whangārei:** 09 430 4101 ext 3537 **Kaipara:** 09 439 3330 ext 65401 **Mid North:** 0800 643 647 **After Hours (all):** 0800 223 371
Auckland North and West	**North Shore:** 09 486 8900 **Rodney:** 09 427 0360 **Henderson:** 09 822 8501
Auckland City	**Central:** 0800 800 717
Auckland South and East	**South and East:** 09 261 3700 **After hours:** 0800 775 222
Waikato *(Coromandel, Hamilton to National Park)*	**Hamilton:** 0800 505 050
Bay of Plenty *(Tauranga, Whakātane to Te Kaha)*	**Tauranga:** 0800 800 508 **Whakatāne:** 0800 774 545
Rotorua and Taupō	0800 166 167
Tairāwhiti *(Hicks Bay to Gisborne)*	**Gisborne:** 0800 243 500 or after 10pm call 06 869 0512
Hawke's Bay *(Wairoa, Napier, Hastings, Waipukurau)*	**Napier, Hastings:** 0800 112 334

Taranaki *(New Plymouth to Waverly)*	**New Plymouth:** 0508 292 467
Manawatū-Whanganui	**Whanganui:** 0800 653 358 **Palmerston North:** 0800 653 357
Wairarapa *(Masterton to Martinborough)*	**Wairarapa:** 0508 432 432
Wellington, Hutt and Kāpiti	**Wellington:** 0800 745 477 **Hutt:** 0800 745 477
Nelson Marlborough *(Nelson region, Marlborough, Golden Bay area)*	**Nelson:** 0800 776 364 **Marlborough:** 0800 948 497 **Golden Bay:** 0800 776 364
Canterbury *(Kaikōura to Ashburton)*	**Christchurch:** 0800 920 092
West Coast *(West Coast, South Island)*	**Greymouth:** 0800 757 678
South Canterbury *(Timaru, Mt Cook, Tekapo, Temuka, Waimate)*	**Timaru:** 0800 277 997
Southland and Otago *(Dunedin, Milford Sound south to Stewart Island)*	0800 467 846 Press 1 for **Southland** Press 2 for **Otago**



Download or order your free Personal Safety Plan and learn more about using safety plans at 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
MANATŪ HAUORA

Mental Health Foundation
OF NEW ZEALAND
mauri tū, mauri ora
www.mentalhealth.org.nz

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