

## Towards wellbeing

### SAFETY PLANNING REMOTELY

If you have tamariki/rangatahi who have indicated that they are feeling suicidal or who are having thoughts about harming themselves, it is important to put a safety plan in place. This can be a bit more challenging when you are not with te tamaiti/rangatahi or their whānau. If you are engaging with them via a text-based platform (e.g., text or messenger), it is better if you can phone, or ideally, video call them to further check their safety and to put the safety plan in place.

As with face-to-face safety planning, a remote safety plan includes two phases: 1) acute safety planning, and 2) longer-term relapse prevention. This resource focuses on the acute safety planning phase. Use the 'Keeping on Top Plan' from TWB for long term relapse prevention planning.

#### Acute safety planning

Acute safety planning refers to how do we keep te tamaiti/rangatahi safe at this moment. If they have indicated that they are thinking of harming themselves, the first step is to manage their immediate safety. This is ensuring that they do not have access to the means that they are thinking of using of hurting themselves, that they have good, responsible and constant supervision from a sober adult, and appropriate services are accessed if required.

#### Removing access to means

It can be hard to determine if te tamaiti/rangatahi is able and willing to give up their means of harming themselves. Getting their buy-in by asking them if they are willing to do so should be the first step of removing access. If they have a stockpile of pills, you could ask them to flush them down the toilet or give them to a responsible adult in the household. Ideally, they would do this whilst video calling you so that you can watch the means being removed. It is important to follow-up that this has been done by contacting the person that they have given the means to, or by asking an adult in the household to check. It is also important to double-check that what has been removed is all the means that te tamaiti/rangatahi has available because they may have more plans in place or more than one set of means available to them.

In summary: **ASK** about means; **REMOVE** means; **CHECK** this has been completed; **DOUBLE CHECK** all means have been disposed of.

#### Supervision

All tamariki/rangatahi that are at current risk of hurting themselves and of suicide need to have good supervision. If they are having regular thoughts of harming themselves or suicide, supervision needs to be more active and frequent than someone only having fleeting thoughts.

Ideally, Tamariki/rangatahi can identify a trusted adult that can support and monitor them whilst they are going through this period. At home, te tamaiti/rangatahi should not be left alone and should be checked on regularly and the supervising adult must know where they are at all times.

If you are talking to Tamariki/rangatahi on their phone, they may be willing to give their phone to that adult in the household to talk to. If they are not willing to let you talk to an adult, it is important that you follow-up with their caregiver that you have concerns about their wellbeing, and to give explicit clear instructions about monitoring. This is particularly important in houses where there are lots of people and it may be easy to be "missed" or that people may assume that someone else is monitoring the young person. Be clear about who is taking responsibility, how often they will check on te

tamaiti/rangatahi and how they will do this:

For example: *“Aunty Mere, I need you to make sure that Aroha is always supervised and that she remains with you until we agree that she is feeling better. Can you please make sure that Aroha is given space and privacy, but she can’t be in her room for more than 5 minutes with the door closed. Can you please make sure you pop by and check on her every 15 minutes.”*

It is also important to develop a plan to check in with the supervising adult regularly, and who will take over if the supervising adult is unavailable or unwell. Likewise, you may want to arrange with te tamaiti/rangatahi that you will contact them every day or every couple of days to check in on how they are feeling. It may be helpful to ask how they would prefer that you do that – text, messenger, call or facetime, or when you might do this. It is also really important to follow through on this if it is what you’ve committed to doing.

### Accessing help

Many services remain open via online platforms during isolation. Mental health workers are considered an essential workforce and can be contacted if there are concerns. If you are concerned about a tamaiti/rangatahi, do not hesitate to contact your local community mental health service for a consultation, or to call the after-hours crisis line.

If you are unsure about the afterhours numbers in the area, they can be found here <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/mental-health-services/crisis-assessment-teams>

### Finding additional supports

It is also important to work with tamariki/rangatahi to develop a safety plan that they can use in their current situation. Things that you might want to consider are:

#### Warning signs:



What are the signs that they (and those around them) will notice when they are struggling? These are a great time to do something helpful to make the situation better before it becomes overwhelming. *“How would you know if things are starting to get tough/go bad?”* *“What would your whānau/mate notice? We can use these signs to tell us that we need to do something before it all feels like it’s too much”*

#### Helpline numbers:



Are there community resources they can access if distressed? 1737 is a free call or text number available 24 hours per day Youthline [0800 376 633](tel:0800376633) | Free text [234](tel:234) *“Are there places you might use to talk to someone if feeling upset? Or wanting to hurt yourself? What about..... These lines are anonymous and can help coach you through the tough stuff or just give you someone to talk to who won’t judge you.”*

#### Who they can contact:



- Friends numbers
- Whānau numbers
- Social worker’s number

*“Is there anyone in your whānau or friends you could talk to?”*

### Distraction techniques:



What are the things that they can access at home to ground or distract themselves. What are the things that they get into?

*“What are the things you do that can help you focus on something different rather than those thoughts or hurting yourself?”*

### Time out space:



Where can they get some space to calm themselves?

*“I know it’s tough right not with everyone stuck inside together, do you have a space that you could go to? Maybe outside if it’s nice, or a room you can use if there’s too much going on?”*

### Helpful supports:



Are there things that friends and whānau do that are helpful?

*“What’s the stuff that Mum/Dad/Caregiver/friend do that helps when you are feeling down? If we know, we can tell them so that they can help you better”.*

### Unhelpful things:



It may also be helpful to ask about things that don’t help – many of us can do these things without realising so it could be helpful to let whānau know this too

*“Is there anything that anyone does that makes things worse?”*

Once you have a plan with te tamaiti/rangatahi, make sure that they and their key supports have a copy. If you’ve developed this plan over text, get te tamaiti/rangatahi to screenshot it so that they have a copy, or take a copy yourself and send it to them and their whānau. If you’re on the phone, ask te tamaiti/rangatahi to write the plan out in their own words and send you a copy, or you can do this for them. It’s important the everyone knows the plan and follows through with it.

**Your TWB Clinical advisor and the TWB helpdesk ([help@twb.org.nz](mailto:help@twb.org.nz)) are available as normal to support you with remote safety planning for your young people.**