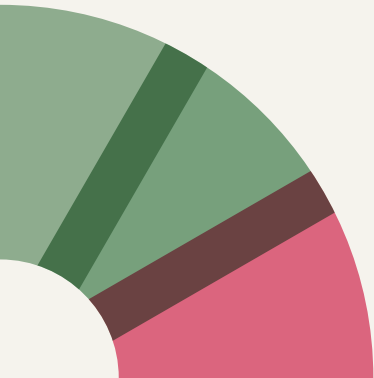

Rape Crisis Scotland

**Information
for survivors of
sexual violence**

**Suicidal
thoughts/feelings**



Suicidal thoughts/feelings

What are suicidal thoughts/feelings?

- » Suicidal thoughts/feelings are a natural response to trauma
- » Trauma can cause overwhelming feelings that may make you feel like you cannot cope any longer. It may be impossible to imagine life without this pain. Feeling/thinking like this can be exhausting and can be very frightening

How do suicidal feelings affect survivors of sexual violence?

- » Sexual violence is traumatic and can affect self-esteem and self-confidence. Many survivors of sexual violence experience emotions including shock, fear, anger, shame, guilt and betrayal. After effects can include panic attacks, flashbacks or nightmares which can increase distress and make it feel as if there is no way of moving on from what happened
- » Many survivors do not have the support they need at the time. They may see suicide as a way of escaping from overwhelming pain and distress; or as a way of taking back control
- » Suicidal feelings can be confusing. You may not want to die. But you may feel that you can no longer cope with what happened or how you feel now. Many people think about suicide at some time in their life. If you are finding that you are thinking about how you would end your life, or if you have a history of attempting suicide, then it is important to get help straight away

What you can do: self-care tips for survivors

- » Remember that you and your safety are important
- » Remember that anyone can feel suicidal at some point in their life. Although it may not feel like it, it is possible to heal from sexual violence and have better times ahead. The way you are feeling now may change over time and with support
- » It is helpful to talk to someone. Simply talking can help with the feelings. This could be a trusted friend or relative, your GP, a mental health worker. You can also talk to the RCS Helpline or a local rape crisis centre (details below)
- » Make sure that you speak to someone safe who will believe you and not judge you. You can get individual support or join a support group if you would like to meet other survivors with similar experiences (your local rape crisis centre may run a group). Sharing experiences with others who have gone through the same as you have can help
- » When you feel alone and in crisis (for example in the middle of the night) you can phone Samaritans, Breathing Space or Rape Crisis Scotland (see details below). Samaritans is available 24 hours a day. You may also be able to get email, online and face-to-face support
- » If you feel you cannot talk to anyone, write it down
- » Think about what stopped you acting before now. What are your reasons for living?

- » Try to avoid:
 - › Being alone: this can make the thoughts worse. Try doing something to take your mind off your thoughts such as visiting a friend
 - › Thinking about suicide as this can make suicidal thoughts stronger
 - › Alcohol and drugs as these lower your inhibitions and can make you act impulsively
 - › Driving
 - › Things that make you feel upset such as certain music, films, photos

- » Learn techniques which can help you manage the intense feelings and reactions which make you think about suicide. They may not stop the thoughts but they may stop you acting on them. This includes:
 - › Talking to someone supportive (RCS Helpline can help with this)
 - › Building up self-esteem and self-confidence and reducing self-blame
 - › Reducing stress and anxiety
 - › Relaxation and breathing techniques
 - › Exercise, activity and distraction

See the information sheet on *Coping after sexual violence* for some helpful techniques as well as the help and information section below

- » Keep yourself 'grounded'. It can help if you stick to a daily routine, with regular times for getting up, going to bed, eating and relaxing. Do things that make you feel better and keep your mind occupied (such as reading, sport, doing a class). Eat a well-balanced diet. Eating little and often may help you to avoid over- or under-eating. Reduce or avoid using alcohol and drugs. They may help you feel better in the short-term but can lead to longer-term problems

- » Make a plan to help you stay safe. When you feel suicidal, it is hard to think clearly and rationally. Having a plan means you have a list of people and organisations you can contact, and things you can do to keep yourself as safe as possible. Keep it somewhere to hand. You can make a safety plan at the following link: www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/aboutsuicide/crisisplancontact.asp

Remember: you are important. Your feelings matter. You do not have to cope on your own.

Help and information

There are many people who want to help. You can phone/email the RCS Helpline for support and information. We can tell you about services in your area. You do not need to give your name. RCS Helpline (6pm to midnight every day) on 08088 01 03 02 or email anytime on support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

If you are feeling overwhelmed and you think this is having a serious effect on your health, speak to your GP or another professional. They may be able to refer you for talking or other therapies which can help you manage better.

The information in this leaflet draws on various sources including those below. **You can find more information online at:**

- » www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk
- » Information after rape and sexual assault:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/13141931/0
- » www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk
- » www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Anger.asp
- » www.mind.org.uk
- » www.getselfhelp.co.uk

App: eCBT Trauma

A useful book is: *The Courage to Heal Workbook: For Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* by Laura Davis, 1990. Published by: HarperCollins in paperback.

Local rape crisis centres

Rape Crisis Centres are located in all local authorities in Scotland; for the most up to date contact information and referral criteria please go to: www.rapecrisisScotland.org.uk/about-local-rapecrisis-centres/

Aberdeen

Rape Crisis Grampian

Argyll & Bute

Argyll & Bute Rape Crisis Centre

Dumfries & Galloway

Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Dundee

Women's Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre

East Ayrshire

The STAR Centre

Edinburgh

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre

Fife

Fife Rape & Sexual Assault Centre

Forth Valley

Forth Valley Rape Crisis

Glasgow & Clyde

Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis Centre

Lanarkshire

Lanarkshire Rape Crisis Centre

Moray

Moray Rape Crisis

Orkney

Orkney Rape & Sexual Assault Service

Perth

Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre Perth & Kinross

Highland

Rape & Sexual Abuse Service Highland

Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre

Shetland

Shetland Rape Crisis

Western Isles

Western Isles Rape Crisis Centre

Information for survivors of sexual violence in this series:

- Anger
- Coping after sexual violence
- Dissociation
- Flashbacks
- Healing from sexual violence
- Nightmares and sleeping problems
- Panic attacks
- Relationships
- Self-harm
- Sexual health
- Suicidal thoughts/feelings
- Trauma



Helpline: **08088 01 03 02**

Email: **support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

For information on your local rape crisis centre visit
our website: **www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

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