

What to Do If You Feel Unsafe

There may be times when emotional distress feels overwhelming and you are unsure you can keep yourself safe. This leaflet outlines clear steps to take if you feel unsafe, and where to seek support.

Trust the Feeling

If you feel unsafe, at risk of harming yourself, or unable to cope:

- Take the feeling seriously
- Do not wait for it to “pass on its own”

Seeking help early is a protective step.

Immediate Steps You Can Take

If you are feeling unsafe right now:

- **Pause and slow your breathing**, if possible
- **Move to a safer environment** (for example, a shared space or somewhere with other people)
- **Remove or distance yourself from anything you could use to harm yourself**, if you can

Small steps can reduce immediate risk.

Reach Out to Someone

You do not have to manage this alone.

Consider contacting:

- A trusted friend or family member
- A mental health professional involved in your care
- A crisis support service

Speaking to another person often reduces the intensity of distress.

When to Seek Urgent Help

Seek **urgent help** if:

- You feel unable to keep yourself safe
- Suicidal thoughts are becoming stronger or more frequent
- You are making plans or feel close to acting
- Distress feels unbearable

Urgent support is about **safety**, not punishment or judgement.

Emergency Services

If you are in immediate danger:

- **Call emergency services (000)**
- **Attend the nearest emergency department**

Emergency services are there to help keep you safe.

Crisis Support Services (Australia)

You can contact:

- **Lifeline – 13 11 14** (24 hours)
- **Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636**
- **Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467**

These services are confidential and available even if you are unsure what to say.

If You Are Already Under Psychiatric Care

If you feel unsafe:

- Follow any **safety plan** discussed during appointments
- Seek urgent help if safety cannot be maintained
- Do not wait for your next scheduled appointment if risk is increasing

Between-appointment safety is important.

If You Are Worried About Someone Else

If you are concerned about another person:

- Take their distress seriously
- Encourage them to seek urgent support
- Stay with them if possible
- Contact emergency services if you believe there is immediate risk

Supporting safety is the priority.

After the Crisis Has Passed

Once immediate safety is restored:

- Discuss what happened with your treating clinician
- Review triggers and supports
- Update safety plans if needed

Experiencing a crisis does not mean treatment has failed.

A Reassuring Note

Feeling unsafe can happen during periods of intense distress. It does **not** mean you are weak, broken, or beyond help.

Support can reduce risk and help you through difficult moments.

Summary

If you feel unsafe, act early:

- Reach out
- Seek urgent support
- Prioritise safety

Help is available, and you do not have to face this alone.
