

# Real Talk with people who are homeless: having life saving conversations



**GRASSROOTS**  
**SUICIDE PREVENTION**

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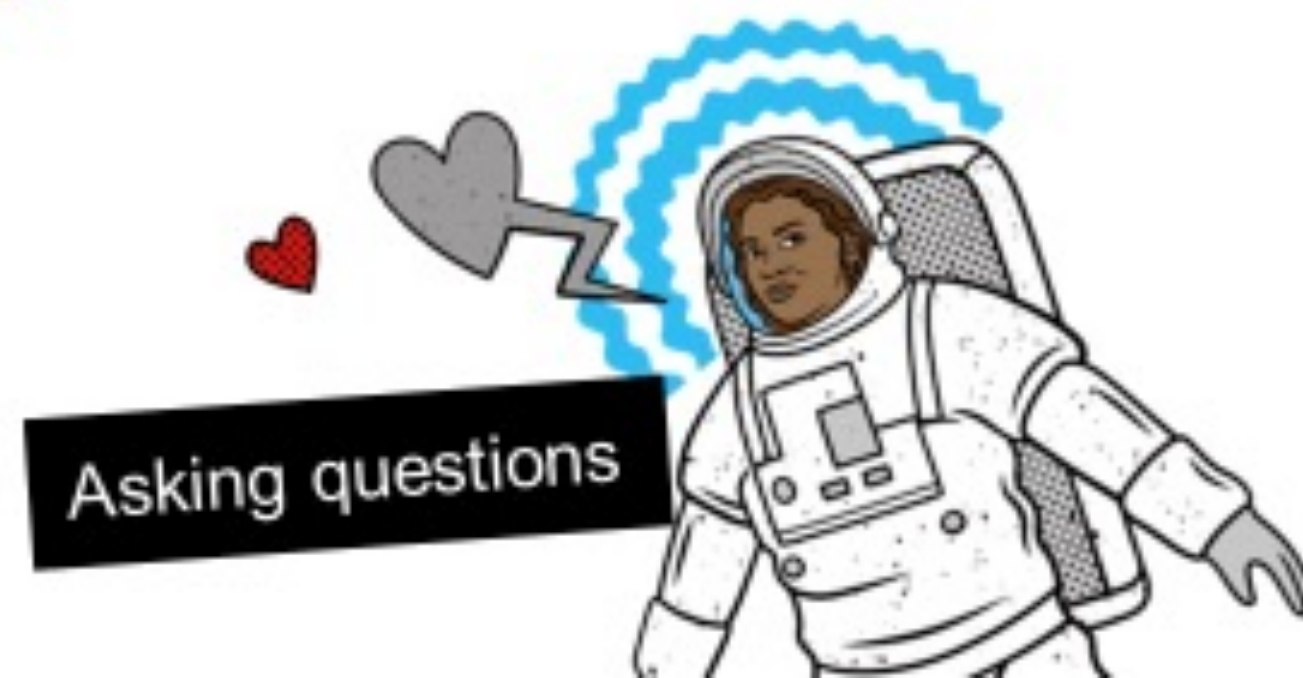
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## By the end of the session, you'll be able to:

- Initiate and engage someone in conversation about suicide
- Determine when/where to elevate concerns or call 999
- Know where to access further information and resources on the above topic









What might prevent a homeless person who is having suicidal thoughts share this with a support worker?

What might stop us from discussing suicide with someone we are concerned about?

# Risk Factors

Have made previous suicide attempts

Have a family history of suicide

Have access to lethal means

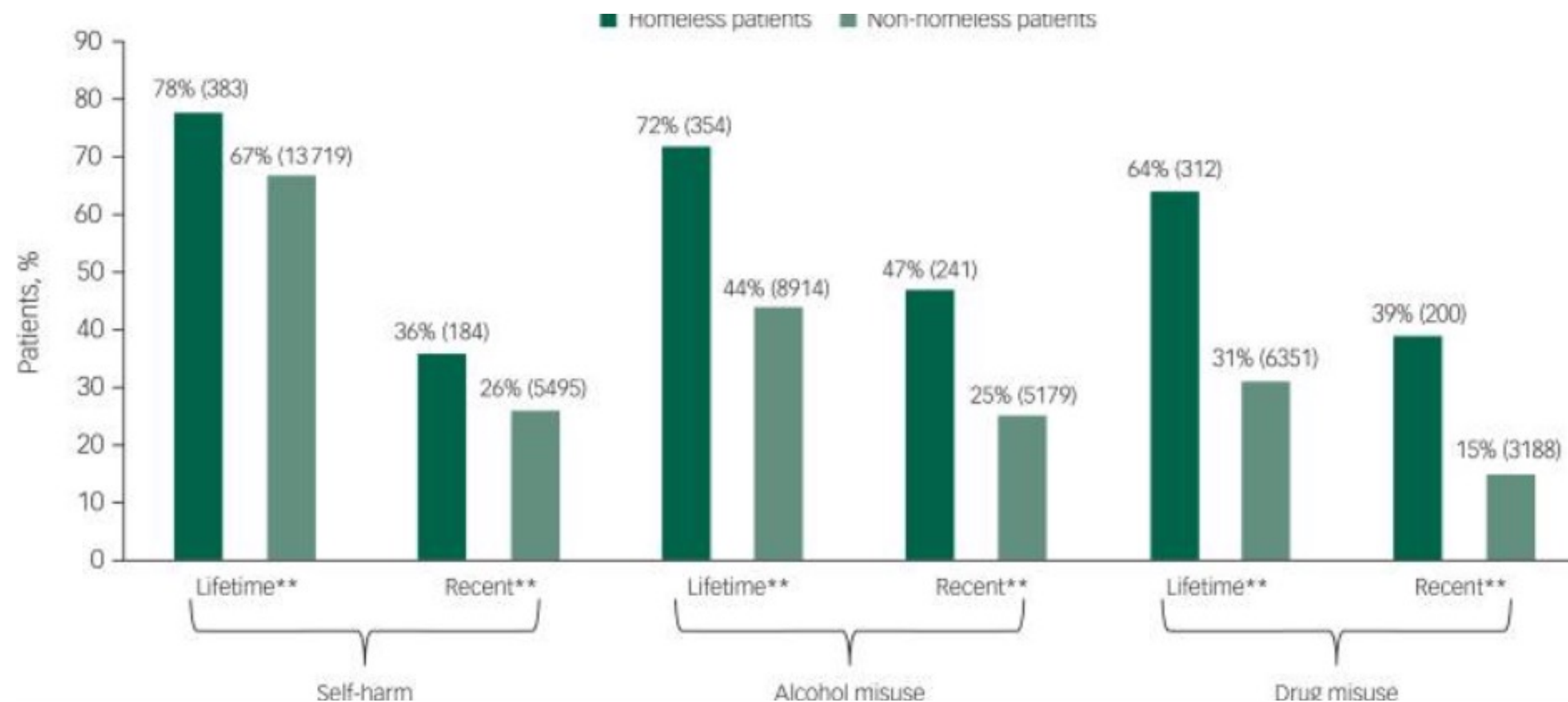
Untreated/Diagnosed with a mental health condition

Are experiencing homelessness

Misuse alcohol and drugs

Are feeling socially isolated/lonely

Have a history of trauma/ACFS



Experience bullying/abuse/trauma/neglect

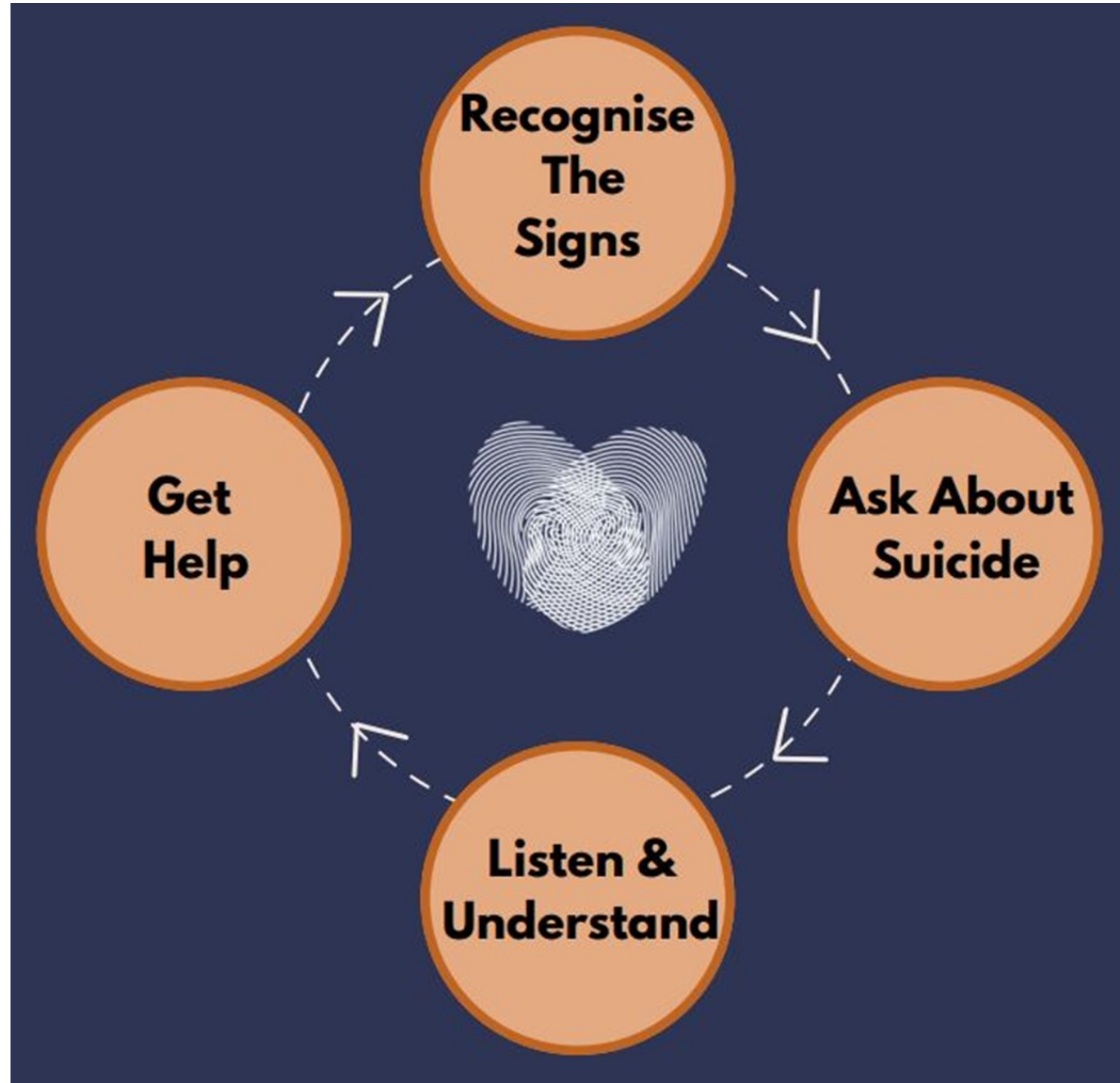
Unemployed for more than one month

Have a incapacitating or terminal illness

Have experienced loss (relationship, death, health)

Have problematic debt

Cognitive deficits (learning, attention, memory)





# Recognising the signs

- Disclosures of suicidal feelings: verbal, letters, suicide pacts or creative writing
- History of family or peer suicide
- Unbearable pain/distress/hopelessness
- Being a burden to others
- Interest in/preoccupation with death, dying or suicide
- Feeling trapped
- Feelings of hopelessness, rejection or being a burden to others
- Depression
- Frequent thoughts of suicide
- Sudden mood swings – in some cases a notable uplift in mood
- Loss of interest in things/places/people usually enjoyed
- Irritability/Rage/Anxiety, agitation
- Humiliation



- Previous suicide attempt
- Self neglect
- Self harm
- Withdrawing from family and friends and stopping engagement with support services
- Withdrawing from activities
- Increased use of alcohol and or drugs
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Acting recklessly
- Looking for a way to kill themselves
- Visiting, calling or emailing and messaging people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions

- Sometimes, when people are feeling the way you are, they think about suicide. Have you been thinking about ending your life recently?
- Have you ever wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?
- Have you had any thoughts about ending your life? Does it ever get so bad that you think about ending your life?
- Are you telling me you want to kill yourself/end your life/ die?
- It sounds like you just can't live with this pain/face this situation and life feels too hard for you right now and you want to kill yourself, is that right?
- Are you thinking "let fate decide if I live or die from taking all these pills."?

"I asked this question since almost all people at one time or another during their lives have thought about suicide. There is nothing abnormal about the thought. In fact it is very normal when one feels so down in the dumps. The thought itself is not



“I’ve just been feeling so alone recently, honestly I don’t think I can carry on.”



“

Sometimes  
when people...



have financial problems...

say 'there's no point'...

feel depressed or overwhelmed...



they are thinking of  
suicide. Are you thinking  
about suicide?

”

We should ask all the traditional questions about onset, frequency, duration, and intensity of suicidal ideation.

How often do you find yourself thinking about suicide?

Do you have a plan, such as how and when?

How long have you been feeling this way?

What seems to trigger your suicidal thoughts? What gets them started?

How long do these thoughts stay with you once they start?

How intense are your thoughts about suicide? Do they gently pop into your head or do they have lots of power and sort of smack you down?

In addition, we need to ask about what's happening when suicidal ideation stops, or what's happening when the suicidal ideation isn't present.

It sounds like you've been having suicidal thoughts over this past week. What makes them go away?

What's usually happening when you're not having any suicidal thoughts?

Experiencing suicidal thoughts can feel confusing, scary, and overwhelming. Although these thoughts may not disappear automatically, there are some things that help to calm, or distract from suicidal thoughts. What have you found helpful so far?

Shall we explore more ways to give you some space to seek further support and get the help you need?



“If we could somehow magically change just one thing in your life that meant that you would no longer want to die, what would that be?”

## STRENGTH BASED QUESTIONING

When is your sadness gone?

What has helped before?

If you had a good afternoon today, what would that look like?

What could possibly happen today (or in our session) that would give you some small hopes for tomorrow?

What helps you concentrate?

What helps you sleep?

What recreational (fun) activities do you enjoy now or enjoyed before?

What brings a little light into the darkness?

What transforms your blackness to blueness?

What advice would you give to a good friend going through the very same experience as you?



## SAFETY PLANNING:

- What helps the individual to manage suicidal thoughts or feelings in their experience?
- What coping strategies have been useful in the past/what support is needed?
- What is the best course of action for them in the event of a crisis?
- What will they want to do when they experience suicidal thoughts/ feelings?
- Who do they prefer to speak to when they have suicidal thoughts or feelings?
- Which other agencies can they contact or who are they happy to be contacted by staff on their behalf (such as support or advice lines, Mental Health Teams or Emergency Services)?

## SIGNPOSTING/REFERING

“It’s not uncommon to have thoughts of suicide. With help and support most people can work through these thoughts and stay safe.”

“You’ve shown a lot of strength in telling me this. There is hope. There is help available and we can find it together. I want to help you find support.”

“There are organisations that offer support like the Samaritans/CALM. I can help you find their contact details and support you talking to them.”





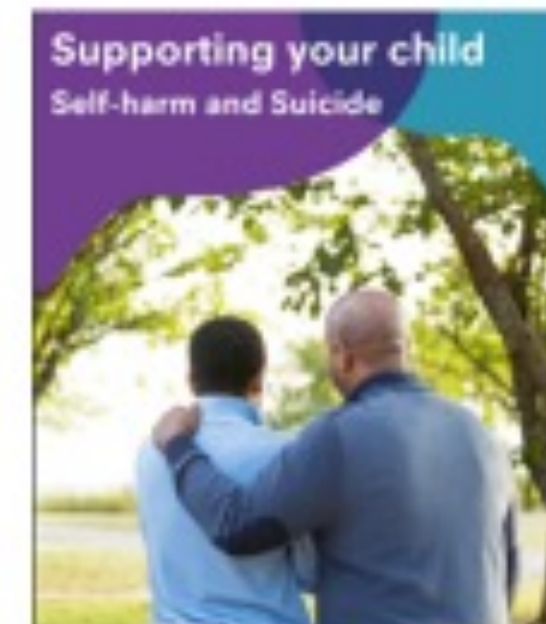
ONLY IN AN EMERGENCY:

*“We need urgent help. I’m  
going to call 999.”*

IN A NON-EMERGENCY:

*“Let’s find someone who can  
help & talk to them together.”*

Where else could you refer them  
to?





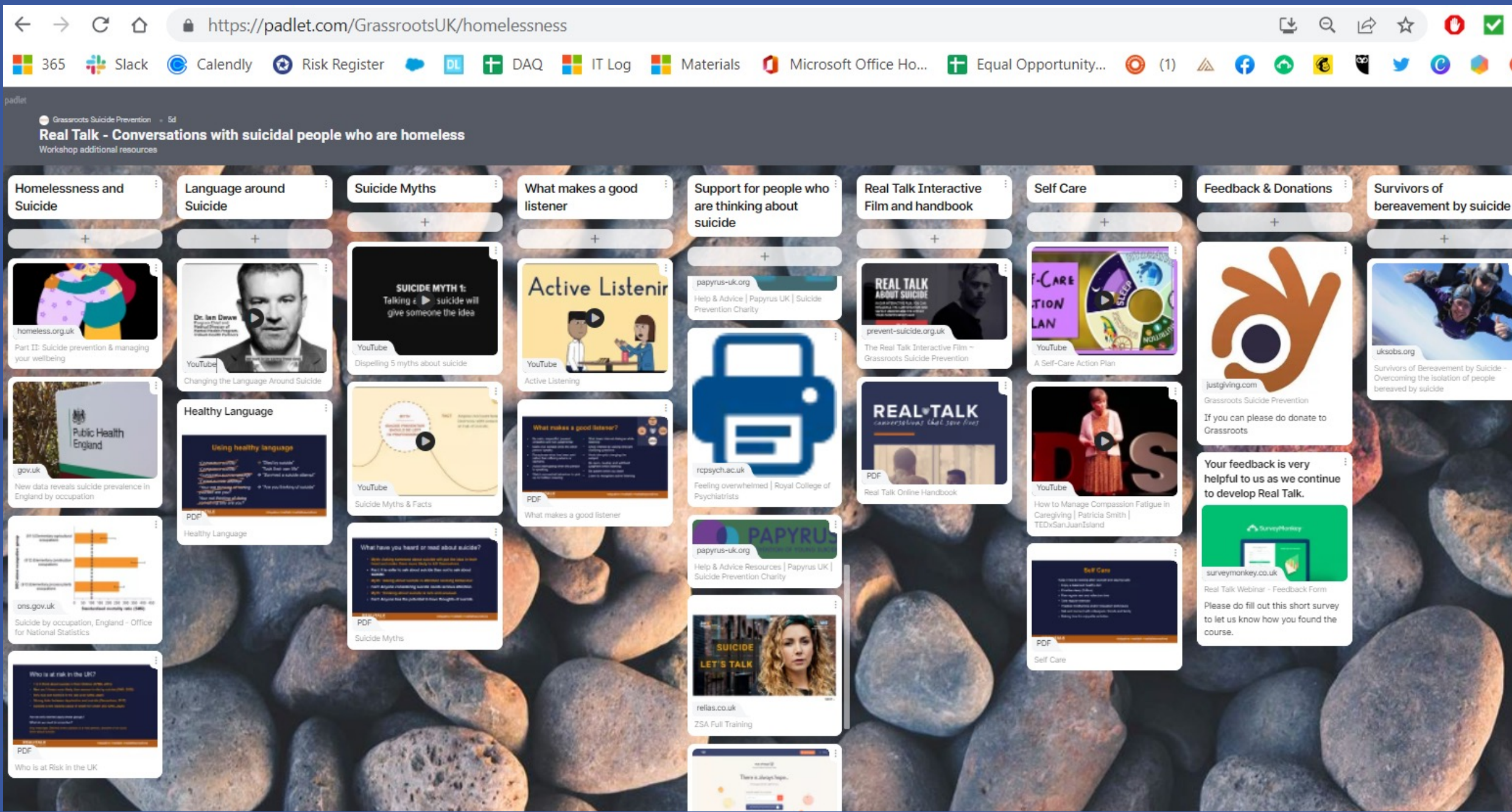
# STAY ALIVE

Stay Alive is a suicide prevention app which offers help and support to people with thoughts of suicide and people who are concerned about someone at risk of suicide. It can be personalised and tailored, key features include:

- Quick access to national crisis support helplines
- A mini-safety plan that can be filled out by a person considering suicide
- A Life Box to upload photos from their phone reminding the person of their reasons to stay alive
- Strategies for staying safe from suicide
- How to help a person thinking about suicide
- Suicide myth-busting
- Research-based reasons for living
- Online support services and other helpful apps
- Suicide bereavement resources







<https://padlet.com/GrassrootsUK/homelessness> Password: Stayalive1



# Mood scaling practice

- Is it okay if I ask some questions about your mood?
- Rate your mood, using a zero to 10 scale. Zero is the worst mood possible. Zero means you're totally hopeless and depressed and so you're thinking about killing yourself. A 10 is your best possible mood. A 10 would mean you're as happy as you could be, maybe dancing or singing or doing whatever you do when you're extremely happy.
- Using zero to 10, what rating would you give your mood right now?
- What's happening now that makes you give your mood that rating?
- What's the worst or lowest mood rating you've ever had? What was happening to make you feel so down?
- For you, what would be a normal mood rating on a normal day?
- What's the best mood rating you've ever had? What was happening that helped you have such a high mood rating?



