

DOCUMENTATION AID

Safety planning: an educational overview

An educational overview of the Safety Planning Intervention, a brief, evidence-informed approach developed by Stanley and Brown. For trained clinicians and education; not clinical advice, and not a substitute for assessment, training, or supervision.

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Extra caution: This is an educational overview, not training in the intervention and not clinical advice. Safety planning does not replace a clinical risk assessment. Seek qualified training and follow your institution's protocols.

Current as of July 7, 2026. Laws, payer rules, and billing codes change. Confirm the current requirements for your jurisdiction and setting before you rely on anything here.

What it is

A safety plan is a brief, collaboratively written list a person can use when suicidal thoughts intensify. The Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention is widely taught, and a study by Stanley and colleagues reported fewer suicidal behaviors among emergency-department patients who received it with follow-up.

The common steps

- Recognizing personal warning signs
- Internal coping strategies the person can use alone
- Social settings and people that provide distraction
- People the person can ask for help
- Professionals and agencies to contact in a crisis, including 988
- Making the environment safer, including reducing access to means

How it is used

The plan is written with the person, in their words, kept somewhere accessible, and revisited. It complements, and does not replace, a full risk assessment and appropriate level of care.

Note

Crisis line: call or text 988 in the US. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911. Clinicians should complete appropriate training in the intervention.

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