

A Difficult Day: My Next-Step Plan

Prepare this short plan when you have time, then keep it somewhere easy to find. It is a personal support aid, not a risk score or a substitute for a clinician-developed crisis plan.

Keep completed notes private. Use short notes in each box; continue on another copy or separate paper when needed. Save the completed PDF on your device and reopen it to check your notes before closing.

Decide what kind of help is needed

Choose the appropriate next contact [1] [2] [3] [4]

Situation	Action
Immediate physical danger, suspected overdose, inability to awaken or serious breathing difficulty	Call 911. For possible opioid overdose, give naloxone if available and stay with the person. Do not finish the worksheet first.
Emotional distress or a mental-health, suicide or substance-use crisis	In the U.S., call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also contact 988 because you are worried about someone else.
A difficult moment without immediate danger	Use your chosen support contact and care-team instructions. Say what help you need now.

Make the first action easy to begin

Asking clearly for the help you want can make a conversation more useful. You might want someone to listen, help call your clinician, or stay with you while you reach support. Choose a person or service you can actually contact and include a backup. [4]

A message you can send or say

Original example: "Today is difficult and I need some support. Can you talk with me now or help me contact my care team? If you cannot, please tell me so I can try my next contact."

Pick one non-medical action that has helped you before, such as moving to a familiar calmer place, pausing a stressful task, or calling a supportive person. Treat it as a bridge to support, not a requirement to manage distress alone. If you already have a clinical safety plan, keep it with this card and use its instructions. [4]

My quick-use card

I notice I need support when...

A few words in your own language; this is not a symptom score.

My first manageable action

An action that fits your situation and any care-team guidance.

My first contact and what I will ask

Name/service, number, likely availability and one specific request.

My backup contact

Who or which service I will try if the first person cannot help.

Professional advice I already have

Where I keep it and the clinician/service number for questions.

After the moment has passed

What helped or needs changing

Something to bring to the next appointment or use to revise this plan.

Keep completed notes private. Share only what you choose with the people helping you. These are original educational and planning prompts, not a validated assessment.

Useful next steps

988 online chat and support

<https://988lifeline.org/>

SAMHSA tips for asking for help

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help>

Sources

[1] SAMHSA: 988 versus 911

<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/988/988-versus-911-social-media-post>

[2] SAMHSA: 988 Frequently Asked Questions

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988/faqs>

[3] CDC: Preventing Opioid Overdose

<https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/prevention/>

[4] SAMHSA: Asking for help

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help>