



Feeling Suicidal?

If you have MCS or EHS or severe food intolerance (accumulatively known as Environmental Illness - EI), it is common to feel like you can't go on any more, that you can't endure the pain, isolation or horrendous way of life. It is normal to want everything to stop; for the pain and fear to go away.

You are going through a traumatic experience and these emotions are normal. People with EI often feel powerless to change anything because despite everything they have tried, nothing seems to change or get better.

We have heard from people living in tents, cars and sheds, as well as people living rough in the woods in an effort to make their awful symptoms more manageable. Normally with a chronic condition, people would be able to get some support from their GP, their friends or family or a specialist or social worker. With EI this is much more difficult and friends/ practitioners often don't understand the physical illness, let alone the emotional state that arises from trying to cope when you're reacting to everything.

The feeling that you can't do anything about your situation is common, and that well may be the case at this moment. When people with EI feel suicidal, usually they don't want to stop living, they just want their situation to stop being so awful and they can't see any other alternative. Please remember this time will pass. Your job is just to get through this moment however you can. You are NOT alone – we are here to help as best we can, and you matter very much to us.

What Can You Do?

Accept that you are feeling this way. Accept that things feel awful at this moment.

Is there a reason that life is particularly difficult at this time? What has triggered these feelings?

Is there anything practical that you can do to alleviate your pain right now?

Remember that MCS-Aware has helpsheets on all sorts of subjects. Re-read them as you may have missed something.

Talk to someone. As yet our charity doesn't have the funding for a telephone helpline, so instead:

- Take emotional support from the MCS-Aware magazine. If you can go online, then post on our website forum at www.mcs-aware.org. There are lots of people in the same circumstances as you who can offer a listening ear.
- If you can't go online, ask for a copy of our PenPal Directory and write to other people with MCS. However bad your situation, there will be someone worse, and they will be happy to share coping strategies.
- Write down your feelings honestly and with as much swearing as you like. Destroy the paper afterwards as creatively as feels good. Tearing up tissue paper is also helpful for those without strength. Write key words on the tissue first, or think them as you tear it up.
- At the end of this helpsheet there are suggestions for ways to improve your condition even if everything seems impossible. Please read on.

Are you in immediate danger?

If you feel like you are so depressed that you might try to end your life, then please take whatever steps you need now to keep yourself safe. Please tell someone, even if it is in the middle of the night. If you can use a phone then call the Samaritans. They will not know about MCS/ EHS but they do know about sadness, anger, helplessness, pain and coping with trauma. Numbers for the UK and Ireland are:

UK and ROI Phone: 116 123

Website: www.samaritans.org **E-mail Helpline:** jo@samaritans.org (24 Hour service)

To write: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, Chris, PO Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA.

HopeLine UK – 0800 068 4141 – for practical advice on suicide prevention for young people. Offers emotional support for those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress. Open 9am-midnight every day of the year. Text: 07860039967 Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

In the U.S.: call 1-800-273-8255 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

In Australia call 13 11 14. Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

In other countries there will be a dedicated helpline – look in your phone book or call Directory Enquiries. If you cannot use a telephone or computer, then please read on. You are not alone and you matter very much to us.

Why are you feeling like this?

- If you are not normally suicidal then what has changed? Have you had an overload of toxins in the last few days (perfume, flame retardants, weedkiller, a visit from someone, medication)? If your body is struggling with an increased amount of toxins (xenobiotics) then it can trigger mood swings. They will pass as the body processes and eliminates things.
- Have you started a new vitamin supplement or probiotic or digestive enzyme? All these things can bring about mood swings as they kill off unwanted bugs or release stored toxins, and if your body is struggling with a load of toxins at the moment then this can create feelings of helplessness and suicidal feelings. This is probably not an allergic reaction, but a sign that the supplements are working too well and causing changes too quickly for your body to handle. Slow down on the supplements by cutting the dose or stopping for a few days. When reactions stop you can start taking the supplements again but introduce them more slowly this time. Build up gradually.
- Are you reacting to something new in your home or office? Are you reacting to a new/recent exposure to electromagnetic fields or Wi-Fi?
- Did you do some exercise in the last couple of days? If you have pushed your body physically/ started to sweat you will have stimulated the lymph system and started to empty your store of toxins in the body. If you can't eliminate the toxins they will just circulate until your body can put them back in storage. Take care of yourself for a few days until these feelings pass. Exercise can be good for you but start slowly. Do not push yourself until you have repaired your detoxification pathways.
- Could you be fighting off a virus or infection? Even if you don't have obvious symptoms your body may be working hard to fight off something. This is especially likely if you are feeling tired, and your

sensitivities are worse for no obvious reason. Be gentle with yourself for a few days until your body is back to normal.

- Could your gut flora be worse? Have you eaten more sugar, fruit, bread, yeast or alcohol than usual? If candida and other yeast/ fungal growths in the gut are fed too much sugar they grow and release toxins of their own, leading to mood swings, depression and cravings. If this is a suspected issue, ask for our helpsheet on Candida.

If your depression is due to an overload of toxins – either from internal or external sources, this will pass. If you do not normally feel suicidal, assume you are being affected by something you don't normally have to deal with. Label it: "These feelings are not my fault, they are likely to be because of XXX. And if I can gently get through this time I will feel better again."

Having some idea of what is causing this despair will help you to accept that these feelings are temporary and they are not your fault. As your body rebalances and gets rid of the trigger you will rebalance and return to how you felt before.

If your sensitivities are worse DO NOT PANIC. Do whatever you need to do to get through this bad patch. Sensitivities do not worsen for no reason. If you can't think of any trigger then it is probably because your body is fighting off an infection (without external symptoms). Make whatever changes you need to your home, diet and lifestyle to get through this bad patch. Be gentle with yourself as you would with an ill child. This will pass. How long it takes your body to recover depends on how ill you are and what the trigger is. Your body can react to something 48 hours after exposure.

Stress will make things worse.

Any form of stress on the body – emotional, physical, mental or environmental will make symptoms and emotions harder to deal with. Work out what you can do to lower this load. Stop watching negative programmes like the news or detective murders or real-life dramas. Watch, read or listen to things that lift your mood: comedies, comics, travel shows with beautiful scenery. While you are in this phase you are fragile. You need to take care of yourself.

MCS, EHS and food intolerance are traumatic. You never know what you are going to react to next and you can feel like you are never in control. This is enormously stressful. Your body cannot be in a stressed state (fight/ flight or freeze) and heal at the same time. When you are in a stress response your body shuts down your digestive and immune systems to divert energy to your flight/ flight response so you can fight or run away. You will also use up more B vitamins, magnesium etc that will then not be available to process toxins.

You cannot be in a stressful state AND heal. It's one or the other. If your life is stressful for whatever reason, then you need to make sure you plan some time-out EVERY DAY as many times as possible, for your body to have some healing time. An Epsom salts bath, a comedy programme, a call to a friend, a cuddle with a pet, a hobby, music or meditation will all help. This relaxation time is a vital part of your recovery. DO NOT let anything interfere with this time. Having a minimum of half an hour of de-stress time is as vital as any medication. This is one of the reasons the Annie Hopper and Ashok Gupta training programmes work for some people. They adjust your body out of the stress response so it can then start healing. 'Tapping' can also provide immediate benefit, see below.

Can't tolerate paper or ink?

If your health is particularly bad this is likely. It will pass as your body heals. In the meantime cover the paper with a sheet of Perspex (solid plastic that is not flexible) or glass. Make a reading box which can be as simple as a box with a glass cover to keep the fumes in (ask MCS-Aware for details). Try using artists felt tips to write – these are usually water-based and odourless (test carefully). Or use a propelling pencil. Acid free watercolour paper should be tolerable for writing. For more details ask for the MCS-Aware Suppliers Directory.

Depression

If you have recently had a virus or cold, or have been in hospital or some other place where you have had an overload of toxins, this will be enough to affect your mood. An overload of toxins/ electromagnetic fields or Wi-Fi can physically leave you feeling suicidal for no obvious reason as the toxins wreak havoc with your body chemistry. Be gentle with yourself. Do something that is a treat. This is a temporary state. It will pass. If you're bedbound listen to birdsong, or a favourite or therapeutic piece of music. Eat something nice, meditate or imagine going elsewhere for 20 minutes. How soon this passes will vary from each person, but nothing stays the same forever. Taking control of some aspect of your situation, even if it is just reading this, will empower you to get through this difficult moment. Start tapping to break the pattern of symptoms – see details below.

If you can access counselling then do it. Find someone who has experience of dealing with people with debilitating health conditions and trauma. Don't expect them to understand the particulars of MCS or EHS, but use them to talk about your emotions and general feelings of powerlessness, uselessness, frustration or pain. Talk about how you feel let down by the people around you and how they are making your life worse. Let it out. Call the Samaritans to talk through your frustration and pain (In UK or ROI tel. 116 123).

Make sure you are having enough of the vitamin supplements you need. Magnesium and calcium balance is important for stopping anxiety. If you're not sure, ask a nutritional therapist (not an NHS dietician – they won't know). Details of practitioners are available from MCS-Aware.

Tapping is a very good way to break the physical effects of mood and EI symptoms. It can help calm the limbic part of the brain that is responsible for survival. Tapping is also known as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). It involves tapping on acupuncture points and can make an immediate difference to all kinds of physical and emotional symptoms and trauma. If you are not able to access counselling or do not (or cannot) talk about your feelings then EFT is an excellent way of addressing pain without having to face it. Because this is such a powerful and simple technique for trauma we have included details at the end of this article.

Long Term Help - What can you do to improve your situation?

Emotionally: Get some support as above, become a member of MCS-Aware or join an online MCS group.

Living Conditions: Check the MCS-Aware helpsheets and make sure your diet and environment are as low-toxin as possible; apply for Grants if you need monetary help. We have a helpsheet called 'Grants for Individuals', just ask.

Physically: Ask us for our list of practitioners. Or if you can't afford to see anyone or can't communicate, ask MCS-Aware for the helpsheet: *So You Have MCS, What Can You Do About It?*

Goals: If you're feeling useless or that your life is fairly pointless, please consider volunteering to help the MCS-Aware charity. We are able to accommodate most health conditions, whatever you can contribute. Think about fundraising. Even if you are bedbound you can do a sponsored silence/ wear a silly hat/ socks day. By helping the charity grow you will be helping yourself – think how wonderful it would be to have the resources for the charity to employ a housing advocate or a trained counsellor, or offer grants for DNA tests. You can make this happen. We need volunteers to keep the charity going.

Communication

When you are feeling depressed and suicidal it can help to talk to someone. If you can use a phone or computer then use it to contact one of the helplines below. You can use the MCS-Aware Facebook or website forum at www.mcs-aware.org although you may not get an immediate response. If you cannot use electrical equipment then ask to join the free MCS-Aware PenPal community so you can write to someone.

MCS-Aware does not have the funds for a telephone line at the present time (you can change that by fundraising). Below are some of the helplines that you can use if you need to. Calling people can be a great source of emotional support and get you through a temporary bad patch. However as none of these organisations are experts in MCS, you will also need to take some practical steps to improve your situation. Try not to get dependant on one person for help. If you are repeatedly calling an individual for emotional help, then you need to share the load - try one of the helplines below. If you are not able to use a computer or speakerphone please ask MCS-Aware for the helpsheet: 'Useful Organisations' which has addresses.

25% ME group Voluntary group. Provide a range of services to people affected by severe M.E. Twice yearly newsletter and advocacy service. Tel: 01292 318611 E. enquiry@25megroup.org 25% M.E. Group, 21 Church Street, Troon, Ayrshire, KA10 6HT www.25megroup.org

Action for ME Information and support t: 0117 927 9551 E: questions@actionforme.org.uk www.actionforme.org.uk

Allergy UK National charity with phone helpline for allergies. Not specific to MCS but can be helpful and some advisors do know about mild MCS issues. 01322 619898. Email: info@allergyuk.org www.allergyuk.org

ChildLine is a counselling service for children and young people. Phone 0800 1111, send an email or have a [1-2-1 chat](#), [send a message to Ask Sam](#) and you can post messages to the [ChildLine message boards](#). You can contact ChildLine about anything - no problem is too big or too small. If you are feeling scared or out of control or just want to talk to someone you can contact ChildLine.

ElectroSensitivity UK Support group for electro-sensitivity. Free magazine E. enquirers@es-uk.info. All emails will be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt and provide you with the fastest way of receiving a response from ES-UK. Letters: BM Box ES-UK, London, WC1N 3XX. Allow 14-21 business days for a response. <http://es-uk.info>

Samaritans www.samaritans.org Provides a listening ear without advice. You do not have to be suicidal to phone them, they are very helpful for working through emotions, and venting. Call free any time, UK and ROI on 116 123. Open 24 hours every day of the year. E. jo@samaritans.org or write to Chris, Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, PO Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA.

More information:

Identity, Self and Psychology in Multiple Chemical Sensitivity By Pamela Reed Gibson, James Madison University: <http://www.ei-resource.org/articles/multiple-chemical-sensitivity-articles/identity-self-and-psychology-in-multiple-chemical-sensitivity/> Or request a printed copy of '*Understanding & Accommodating People with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity in Independent Living*' by Pamela Reed Gibson from MCS-Aware

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/suicide-prevention/suicide-help-dealing-with-your-suicidal-thoughts-and-feelings.htm> Ask for a printed copy from MCS-Aware if you need it.

Emotional Freedom Technique

EFT is a simple yet powerful mind-body tool. It discharges negative emotional responses to specific events and issues. This in turn allows the person to feel calmer, and better engage in helpful action. EFT also has a track record of easing physical pain quickly. It involves gently tapping on meridian points on the surface of the skin and engaging in creative word play. It can be learnt for self use, or for complex issues worked on with a qualified practitioner. If you are having suicidal thoughts, it is recommended you work with a qualified practitioner. This can be done online, or by telephone or in person.

For more information and to find a practitioner visit <https://eftinternational.org/>

EFT is not a substitute for medical care from your conventional or alternative doctor, but is a powerful addition to other forms of treatment. We care about you. If you are in danger of ending your life now, please phone the Samaritans immediately: In UK and ROI please call 116 123. It is free.