

Suicide Prevention

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Disclosures

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Screening for Suicide Risk

- ▶ When screening for suicide risk, it is important to have resources and systems in place to connect anyone identified at being at-risk to appropriate follow-up care and assistance



What is a Suicide/ Homicide Assessment?



- ▶ If you think that someone wants to kill him/herself or someone else, they must be evaluated.
 - ▶ If risk is significant, they may need to be hospitalized.
 - ▶ If risk is minimal, a plan needs to be developed in case thoughts/feelings get worse.

Facing the facts...



Suicide Is Not Predictable in Individuals

- ▶ In a study of 4,800 hospitalized veterans, it was not possible to identify who would die by suicide – too many false-negatives, false-positives.
- ▶ Individuals of all races, ethnicities, SES, and educational levels die by suicide. There is no typical victim of suicide.

Facing the facts...



Suicide Communications Are Often Not Made to Professionals

- ▶ In one psychological autopsy study only 18% told professionals of intentions.
- ▶ In a study of suicidal deaths in hospitals:
 - 77% denied intent on last communication
 - 28% had “no suicide contracts” with their caregivers

Substance Use as a Risk factor

- Suicide is leading cause of death among substance users.
- Individuals treated for SUD are at 10x greater risk for suicide; 14x for IDU.
- Co-occurring depression is associated with *both* SU and suicidal behavior.
- People with SUD often seek treatment when they are most vulnerable and when their SU symptoms are most severe.



Mental Illness as a Risk factor

- Common psychiatric risk factor leading to suicide
 - Depression*
 - Major Depression
 - Bipolar Disorder
 - Schizophrenia
- Other psychiatric risk factors with potential to result in suicide
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Eating Disorders



Other Risk factors

- ▶ Major physical illness—especially recent
- ▶ Chronic physical pain
- ▶ History of trauma, abuse, or being bullied
- ▶ Family history of death by suicide
- ▶ Being a smoker
- ▶ Aggressive or impulsive personality



Protective Factors

Buffers that lower long-term risk:

- ▶ Reasons for living
- ▶ Being involved in recovery, including 12-step participation
- ▶ Religious or spiritual teaching that opposes suicide
- ▶ Presence of a child in the home
- ▶ Intact marriage
- ▶ Trusting relationship with healthcare provider
- ▶ Employment
- ▶ Trait optimism



Symptoms and Warning Signs of Suicide



- ▶ Talking about suicide.
- ▶ Statements about hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness.
- ▶ Preoccupation with death.
- ▶ Suddenly happier, calmer.
- ▶ Loss of interest in things one cares about.
- ▶ Visiting or calling people one cares about.
- ▶ Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.
- ▶ Giving things away, such as prized possessions.

Symptoms and Danger Signs

Warning Signs of Suicide

Warning Signs

- ▶ Observable signs of serious depression
 - Unrelenting low mood
 - Hopelessness
 - Anxiety
 - Withdrawal
 - Sleep problems
- ▶ Increased alcohol and/or other drug use
- ▶ Recent impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks
- ▶ Threatening suicide or expressing strong wish to die
- ▶ Making a plan (giving away possessions, obtaining means of killing oneself)
- Unexpected rage or anger



Quick Screen/Assessment of Suicide

- ▶ Have you ever wanted to go to sleep and not wake up?
- ▶ Have you ever thought about hurting or killing yourself?
- ▶ If you were to kill/hurt yourself, how would you do it?
- ▶ If you *have* thought about how you might do it, have you ever carried any of that plan out?



Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ)

In the past few weeks, have you wished you were dead?

In the past few weeks, have you felt that you or your family would be better off if you were dead?

In the past week, have you been having thoughts about killing yourself?

Have you ever tried to kill yourself?

Are you having thoughts of killing yourself right now?

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/ask-suicide-screening-questions-asq.shtml>



Intervention

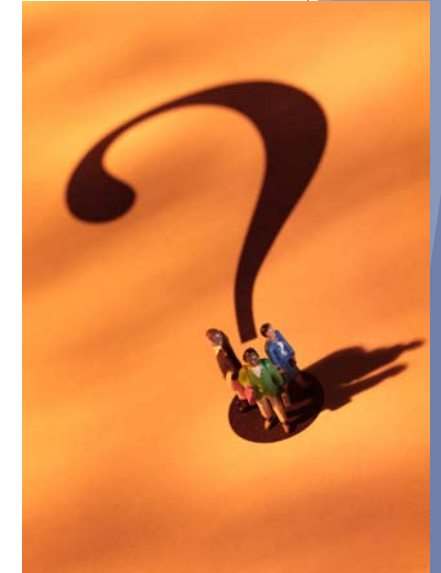
If You See the Warning Signs of Suicide...

- Have a conversation
 - Suicidal thoughts are common with depressive illnesses
 - Your willingness to talk about it in a non-judgmental, non-confrontational way helps a person accept professional help.



Intervention

- ▶ Four Basic Steps
 1. Show you care
 2. Be genuine
 3. Ask about suicide
 4. Get help



Show You Care and Be Genuine

- Show you care
 - Take ALL talk of suicide seriously
 - If you are concerned that someone may take their life, trust your judgment!
 - Using a Motivational Interviewing style:
 - Listen empathically
 - Reflect what you hear
 - Use language appropriate for age of person involved
 - Do not worry about doing or saying exactly the “right” thing. Your genuine interest is what is most important.



Assess Treatment Resources

- Treatment
 - Do you have a therapist/doctor?
 - Have you seen him/her recently?
 - Are you on any psychiatric medications?
 - If so, are you taking your medications?

Get help

But do NOT leave the person alone

- Know referral resources
- Reassure the person
- Encourage the person to participate in helping process
- Outline safety plan