

SUICIDE RISK ASSESSMENT

Ask every caller the following questions:

Are you thinking of suicide? If yes, Do you have a plan?

Have you thought about suicide in the past 2 months?

Have you ever attempted to kill yourself?

Do you have access to a gun?

Always try to determine if you're dealing with a suicide in progress before proceeding with a full assessment.

LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
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DESIRE Present?			
Suicidal Ideation	Passing thoughts of suicide	Regularly has thoughts of suicide	Constant thoughts of suicide
Psychological Pain	Little or no psychological pain	Moderate amount of psychological pain	Intense, intolerable psychological pain
Feeling Trapped	Doesn't feel trapped - sees several options to escape pain	Feels somewhat trapped – sees few options to escape pain	Feels very trapped, as if there is no other escape
Hopelessness	Feels some hope that things will get better	Feels very little hope that things will get better	Feels no hope, that there is no other solution
Helplessness	Feels in control of situation	Feels some control of situation	Believes situation is out of his/her control
Perceived Burden	Connected with friends & family; understands impact his/her suicide would have	Ambivalent about whether or not others would be better off without him/her	Believes family and friends would be better off without him/her
Feeling Alone	Feels connected to others	Feels distance from others	Feels intolerably alone

CAPABILITY Present?			
Previous Attempts	None	One or more low-medium lethality	One high, or multiple low-medium lethality
Exposure to Someone Else's Suicide	Has never lost anyone to suicide	Has lost someone and wasn't impacted significantly, or too long ago	Lost someone significant and identifies with that person
Past Violence	None	Isolated incidents	Repeated violence toward others
Current Violence	None	Some anger	Recent acts and/or threats of aggression
Availability of Means	Not available	Available, has close by	Has the means in hand
Currently Intoxicated	No	Has begun drinking or using drugs today	Is currently drunk/stoned
Substance Abuse	No history	Past history	Currently abusing substances
Mood Change	Stable mood	Some mood changes	Recent, dramatic change in mood
Anxiety	Mild, feels some discomfort	Moderate, discomfort increasing; tolerable	Significant increase, feels overwhelmed
Decreased Sleep	No problems sleeping	Some sleep disturbances	Difficulty sleeping
Out of Touch	Seems in touch with reality	Somewhat out of touch with reality	Seems out of touch with reality

LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
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INTENT – Present? YES or NO			
Suicide Plan	Vague, no plan, no specific time	Some specifics, in near future	Very specific; knows how, when, where
Preparatory Behaviors	None	Has thought about it or a few in progress	Many, written a note, made a will, funeral arrangements
Expressed Intent to Die	None	Some expressed intent – unsure of intent	Clearly expressed intent, “I want to die”, etc.

BUFFERS/CONNECTEDNESS			
Immediate Supports	Others present	Others nearby, expected	Alone, no one expected
Social Supports	Has supports who are available and willing to help	At least one support available may be inconsistent	Isolated and withdrawn from others
Engagement	Established rapport; strong connection between caller & counselor	Counselor struggles to make connection; caller hesitant in conversation	Caller & counselor not connected; caller unwilling to talk or be helped
Core Values/Beliefs	Core values/ religion or faith are against suicide	Has some values/beliefs against suicide but they are not very strong	No core values or beliefs that would stand in the way of suicide
Sense of Purpose	Believes life has purpose, can name that purpose	Has difficulty seeing purpose in his/her life	Sees no purpose in living
Future Plans	Can readily name plans for the near and distant future	Has difficulty naming future plans or may have vague thoughts about future	Cannot name any future plans; does not see a future
Ambivalence for Living	Readily acknowledges ambivalence; can see reasons for living	Struggles to acknowledge ambivalence; Has few reasons for living	Sees no reason for living

To assess risk, examine each section (Desire, Capability, Intent and Buffers). If a majority of factors is High or Moderate/High, that component is present. Base your rating (from 0 to 5) on the following model and your assessment training:

- 5 = Suicide attempt in progress or imminent
- 4 = {Desire and Capability and Intent} all present
OR
{Desire and Intent} or {Desire and Capability} + {few or no Buffers}
OR
{Capability alone} + {few or no Buffers}
OR
{Intent alone} + {few or no Buffers}
- 3 = {Desire and Intent} or {Desire and Capability} or {Capability and Intent} + {Numerous Buffers}
OR
{Capability alone} or {Intent Alone} + {Numerous Buffers}
- 2/1 = {Desire alone} present. Buffers have no significant impact.
- 0 = No marks in Desire, Capability, or Intent categories