

Suicide: the Forever Decision*



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Definitions

- ❑ Suicidal Ideation-thoughts about being dead or killing oneself
- ❑ Suicide Attempt-intention to die
- ❑ Completed Attempt-an intentional, self-inflicted death
- ❑ NSIB-non-suicidal self-injurious behavior

Prevalence

- ❑ Suicide is rare in children and early teenage years, but becomes more frequent with increasing age.
- ❑ Suicide is the leading cause of death among those aged 15 – 24-in the US, suicide accounts for more deaths than all natural causes combined
- ❑ 3rd leading cause of death in 10 to 14 year-olds
- ❑ Suicide rates among 15 to 19 year olds more than triple since mid 1950's
- ❑ Wyoming leads the nation in suicides

Suicide among pre-adolescents

- ❑ Much lower prevalence rate, research slow to catch up
- ❑ Part of the difficulty is children lack the abstract thinking skills to allow them to think about the finality of death.
- ❑ They are also more impulsive and lack appropriate coping skills
- ❑ 90% of children who commit suicide have a mental health disorder, usually a major depression. They are likely also to be victims of physical and sexual abuse, and to engage in antisocial behavior like fire-setting, fighting and shop lifting.
- ❑ Many parents and teachers ignore warning signs, such as talking about or threatening suicide, because they don't think kids would really attempt. There is a high potential for adults to discuss this possibility.
- ❑ Most suicides with children involve hanging, with a minority group involving firearms, and poison.
- ❑ Pre-adolescent boys are more likely to complete suicide than are pre-adolescent girls. Evidence suggest that sexual orientation might be a factor, with suicide risk relatively high among young boys who suspect they might be gay.

Risk Factors

- Compared to adolescents with zero problem behaviors, the odds of a medically treated suicide attempt increase exponentially with the addition of each new problem behavior, culminating in a 277.3 times increased risk when six problem behaviors are present

- (Miller, Rathus & Linehan, 2007)

Risk Factors.....

Increase the probability of a negative outcome

Exist on multiple levels

Develop over time

Co-exist

General Risk Factors for Adolescent Suicidal Behavior *

Distal Risk Factors

- ❑ Prior suicidal behaviors
- ❑ Mental disorders
- ❑ Depression & Anxiety
- ❑ Substance Abuse
- ❑ Impulsive, disruptive & antisocial behaviors
- ❑ BPD
- ❑ Comorbidity
- ❑ Disturbed family context
- ❑ Gender
- ❑ Sexual Orientation
- ❑ Ethnicity
- ❑ SES (less certain)

Proximal Risk Factors

- ❑ Stressful life events
- ❑ Childhood sexual and physical abuse
- ❑ Academic difficulties
- ❑ Functional impairment from physical disease and injury
- ❑ Suicide in the social milieu
- ❑ Accessible means of suicide

Distal Risk Factors...

- **Prior suicidal behaviors**
- **Mental Disorders**
- **Depression & Anxiety**
- **Substance Abuse**

Distal Risk Factors...continued...

- **Impulsive, disruptive & antisocial behaviors**
- **BPD**
- **Comorbidity**
- **Disturbed family context**

Distal Factors...

- **Gender**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Ethnicities**
- **SES**

Proximal Risk Factors

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Proximal risk factors....

- ❑ Suicide in the social milieu
suicide cluster

- ❑ Accessible means of suicide
 - ❑ Common methods for males=firearms, hanging, jumping and carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - ❑ Common methods for females=overdosing on pills or ingesting solid and liquid poisons.

How: the methods of adolescent suicide

1. Accessibility and readiness for use
2. Knowledge, experience and familiarity
3. Meaning, symbolism and cultural significance
4. The state of mind of the person at risk for suicide.

Warning Signs: Imminent Dangers

The following warning signs indicate that the person needs intervention now:

- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Increase drug or alcohol use
- Withdrawing from family & friends
- Anxiety, agitation, being unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic mood changes
- Expressing feelings that life is meaningless or that there is no reason to live
- Insomnia
- Feeling desperate or trapped—like there's no way out
- Seeing no reason to live or having no sense of purpose in life
- Acting restless

More warning signs...

- ❑ Look for changes.....in
- ❑ Personality
- ❑ Behavior
- ❑ Sleep pattern
- ❑ Eating
- ❑ Friendships
- ❑ Academic performance

Warning Signs-immmediate intervention

- ❑ Threatening to hurt/kill self, talking about harming himself/herself
- ❑ Obtaining a weapon or other items that could be used to hurt self (stock piling medications)
- ❑ Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- ❑ Giving away prized possessions
- ❑ Neglecting their appearance and hygiene
- ❑ Peacefulness

Warning Sign Statements

- "who cares if I am dead anyway?"
- "I wish I were dead."
- "Nobody cares."
- "My family would be better off if I were dead."
- "All my problems will soon go away."
- "Soon you won't have to worry about me."
- "What's the point of living?"

Reasons for Living vs. Reasons for Dying

□ Reasons for Living

- Family
- Friends
- Responsibility to others
- Burdening others with suicide
- Unrealized plans & goals
- Hope for the future
- Enjoyable things
- Beliefs (religion)
- Preservation of self

Reasons for Dying

- Others (retribution)
- Unburdening others
- Loneliness
- Hopelessness
- Issues about self
- General escape
- Escape to the past
- Escape the pain
- Escape responsibility

Protective Factors



....a characteristic or attribute that reduces the likelihood of attempting or completing suicide. Protective factors are skills, strengths, or resources that help a person deal more effectively with stressful events. They can be either personal or external/environmental....

Protective Factors.....

- ❑ External/Environmental Factors
- ❑ Strong relationships, particularly with family members
- ❑ Opportunities to participate in and contribute to school and or community projects/activities
- ❑ A reasonably safe and stable environment
- ❑ Responsibilities/duties to others
- ❑ Pets

Personal Protective Factors

- ❑ Attitudes, values and norms prohibiting suicide
- ❑ Social skills
- ❑ Good health and access to physical and mental health care
- ❑ Strong connections to friends, family and supportive significant others
- ❑ Cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs that discourage suicide
- ❑ A healthy fear of risky behaviors and pain
- ❑ Hope for the future, optimism
- ❑ Sobriety
- ❑ Medical compliance and sense of the importance of health and wellness
- ❑ Impulse control
- ❑ Strong sense of self-worth or self-esteem
- ❑ Sense of personal control or determination
- ❑ Access to a variety of clinical interventions & support for help seeking
- ❑ Coping skills
- ❑ Resiliency
- ❑ Reasons for Living
- ❑ Being married or a parent

Finally.....

- How to talk to kids & adolescents about suicide.....