Developing Clinical Skills in Suicide Assessment, Prevention, and Treatment

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Developing Clinical Skills in Suicide Assessment, Prevention, and Treatment

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Dedication and Acknowledgments

I dedicate this book to my son, Matthew, who was born when I started writing this book. I wish that Matthew will learn from others as I learn from him each day.

I would also like to acknowledge the following individuals who have influenced this book and my work in suicidology:

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- **My students.** The reason I wrote this book and chose its style was for my students. I want them to care about life, their careers, and their clients and to learn from everyone. For me, learning is a process and through this process, my students have taught me about life, treating clients, and myself.
# Table of Contents

Preface xv
About the Author xvii
About the Contributors xix

## Section 1

### Basic Clinical Skills and Knowledge

#### Chapter 1

Introduction to Suicide 3

- Overview 3
- Suicide Is Scary 3
- The Mindset of Clients Resistant to Discuss Suicide 4
- Defining Suicide and Related Terms 4
- Suicide Myths 5
- Theories of Suicide 7
  - Literature Explaining Suicide 8
  - Commonalities of Suicide 8
- Prevalence of Suicide and Suicide Attempts in Clinical Practice 9
- Multicultural Considerations 12
- Activities 14
- Chapter Highlights 14

#### Chapter 2

Clinician Ethics, Malpractice, and Documentation Related to Suicide 15

- Overview 15
- Informed Consent and Confidentiality Issues 15
- End-of-Life Issues 16
- Making Ethical and Moral Decisions Regarding Assisted Suicide 17
- Malpractice and Suicide 18
- The Importance of Documentation 20
- No-Harm Contracts 21
- Understanding Yourself, Your Religion, and Your Morals 22
- Activities 23
- Chapter Highlights 23
Table of Contents

Chapter 3
Basic Skills in Working With Suicidal Clients 25
   Overview 25
   Know Your Physical Surroundings 25
   Common Factors in Positive Client Change 26
   Developing Your Attending and Listening Skills 27
      Empathy, Empathy, Empathy!!! 30
      Accepting Others 30
      Being Genuine 30
   What Not to Do With Suicidal Clients 30
   Crisis Intervention Basics 31
   Activities 32
   Chapter Highlights 32

Chapter 4
Models of a Suicide Assessment Interview 35
   Overview 35
   Suicide Acronyms 35
   “SIMPLE STEPS” 36
      Suicidal? 38
      Ideation 39
      Method 39
      Pain (Perturbation) 40
      Loss 40
      Earlier Attempts 41
      Substance Use 41
      Troubleshooting 42
      Emotions and Diagnosis 42
      Parental and Family History 43
      Stressors and Life Events 43
   Timing Is Key! 45
   Activities 46
   Chapter Highlights 46

Chapter 5
Identifying the Level of Lethality: Using the SIMPLE STEPS Model 47
   Overview 47
   Determining Suicide Lethality 47
   Example #1 49
   Example #2 50
   Example #3 51
   Example #4 51
   Example #5 52
   Example #6 53
   Example #7 54
   Example #8 54
   Example #9 55
   Example #10 56
   Discussion of Lethality 56
   Activities 57
   Chapter Highlights 57
Chapter 6

Working With Suicide Assessment Tools 59

Overview 59

The Purpose of Assessment Tools 59

Specific Suicide Assessments 60

Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSSI) 60

Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL), College Student Reasons for Living Inventory (CSRLI), and Brief Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL-B) 60

Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS) 62

Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ) 62

Suicide Assessment Checklist (SAC) 62

Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire (SBQ) 62

Suicide Probability Scale (SPS) 62

Suicide Status Form (SSF) 63

Standardized Personality Tests Suggesting Suicide 63

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-II) 63

Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) and the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) 63

Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D) 63

Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III) 64

Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) 64

Projective Techniques Suggesting Suicide 64

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) 64

Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB) 65

Rorschach Inkblot Method (RIM) 65

Projective Drawings 66

Discussing Results With Clients 67

Activities 70

Chapter Highlights 70

Chapter 7

Distancing the Means 73

Overview 73

“The Means in Which to Kill Myself” 73

The Basics of Working in Violent Situations 75

Know Basic First Aid 77

Working With Clients Who Have a Firearm 77

Case Illustration: Tom Has a Gun 78

Working With Clients Who Have a Knife 79

Case Illustration: Michelle Cut Herself 79

Working With Clients Who Have Overdosed 80

Case Illustration: Janet Took Pills 81

Activities 82

Chapter Highlights 82

Section 2

Necessary Skills and Knowledge for Working With Different Populations

Chapter 8

Preparing to Work With Suicidal Children and Adolescents 85

Overview 85
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Table of Contents</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Statistics</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Risk Factors for Children</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Risk Factors for Adolescents</strong></td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Children and Adolescents</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Diagnostic Issues With Suicidal Children and Adolescents</strong></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Formal Assessment With Children and Adolescents</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Prevention and Treatment Issues</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 9</strong></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Preparing to Work With Suicidal Adults</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Statistics</strong></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Risk Factors</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Diagnostic Issues With Suicidal Adults</strong></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Prevention and Treatment Issues</strong></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Psychotherapeutic Approaches</strong></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Treating Specific Diagnoses Related to Suicide</strong></td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Treating Peg</strong></td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion on Peg</strong></td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter Highlights</strong></td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 10</strong></td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Preparing to Work With Suicidal Older Adults</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Statistics</strong></td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Risk Factors</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Diagnostic Issues With Suicidal Older Adults</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Prevention and Treatment Issues</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Key Things I Should Say and Ask</strong></td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Assessing and Treating Red (Age 68)</strong></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Assessing Red</strong></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Working With Red’s Family</strong></td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion on Red</strong></td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter Highlights</strong></td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 11</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Preparing to Work With Suicidal Clients and Their Family Members</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Introduction to Working With Family Members of Suicidal Clients</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Approaching Family Treatment From a Theoretical Standpoint 134
   Solution-Focused Treatment With Families Dealing
   With Suicide 134
   Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment With Families Dealing
   With Suicide 135
   Goals for Family Therapy 137
Assessing for Suicide Within a Family 137
   Ground Rules for Counseling Families of Suicidal Clients 137
   The Importance of Assessing Perturbation 138
Conclusion 141
Activities 142
Chapter Highlights 142

Section 3

Skills and Knowledge Needed for Practice and Client Follow-Up

Chapter 12

Developing a Suicide Prevention Treatment Plan 145
   Overview 145
   Treatment Planning Basics: It’s Not Just a Treatment Plan,
      It’s a Survival Plan 145
      Client Information 146
      Referral Information 146
      Presenting Problem 147
      Prioritized List of Problems 147
      Working Diagnosis 148
      Motivation to Change 148
      Prioritized Goals and Objectives 149
      Treatment Strategies and Interventions 150
      Prioritized Client Strengths and Barriers to Treatment 151
      SIMPLE STEPS to Assessing Suicide Lethality 151
      Issues of Safety 151
      Referral for Evaluation 152
      Criteria for Ending Treatment 152
      Responsible Staff 153
      Signatures and Next Review 153
      Continual Revision, Alteration, and Monitoring 153
      Activities 154
      Chapter Highlights 154

Chapter 13

Knowing the Resources 157
Scott C. Baker
   Overview 157
   Development of a Personal Toolkit 157
      Common Resources 157
      Assessment Instruments 159
      Emergency Procedures 160
      Basic Needs 161
      Unique Supports 163
Table of Contents

Consider Survivors 164
Consider Yourself 164
Conclusion 165
Activities 165
Chapter Highlights 166

Chapter 14
Working in Different Settings: Assessing “PRICES” 167
Scott C. Baker
Overview 167
Introduction to “PRICES” 167
Prevention 168
Know the Suicide Prevention Plan 169
Know the Unique Prevention Needs of the Setting 169
Prevention in Schools 169
Roles 170
Clinician as Innovator 170
Clinicians’ Multiple Roles 171
Role of the Institution 171
Role of Other Members of the Treatment Team 171
Interventions 172
Hospital Settings 172
Outpatient Settings 173
Communication 173
The Value of Communication 173
Informed Consent and Release of Information 174
Evaluation 175
Processes 176
Tools 176
Statistics 176
Conclusion 177
Activities 177
Chapter Highlights 178

Chapter 15
Knowing How to Consult and Receive Supervision 179
Overview 179
Context of Consultation and Supervision 179
Knowing When to Receive Supervision 179
The Cube Model of Supervision and Suicide 180
Basics of the IDM: Supervisee Development 180
Basics of the Discrimination Model: Supervisor Roles 181
Basics of Suicide Lethality in the Cube Model of Supervision and Suicide 182
Putting It All Together: The Cube Model of Supervision and Suicide 182
Recommended Readings 185
Activities 186
Chapter Highlights 187

Chapter 16
What to Do When Clients Kill Themselves 189
Overview 189
Table of Contents

Bereavement of Suicide 189
Postvention Procedures 190
Taking Care of the Clinician 191
Identifying Burnout 192
Steps for Working Through Suicide 193
   Step 1: Reaction 193
   Step 2: Supervision 194
   Step 3: Documentation 195
   Step 4: Administration 195
   Step 5: Postvention 196
   Step 6: Reflection 197
   Step 7: Education 198
Final Thoughts on Surviving 198
Activities 198
Chapter Highlights 198

Section 4
Stories and Reflection

Chapter 17
Stories From the Field 203
   Overview 203
   Learning From Clients 203
      Jason M. McGlothlin
   Suicide Is Preventable 204
      Mary Brennen-Hofmann
   Suicide in the Schools 205
      John S. (Steve) Rainey
   College Counseling: It’s Not Just About Relationships and Time Management 206
      Jason L. Miller
   Working With Families 207
      Thomas Newman
   Needing to Be Resourceful 209
      Scott C. Baker
   Changing Over Time 210
      Laura Bruneau
   The Aftermath of Suicide 211
      Adam P. Iarussi
   A Father’s Suicide 212
      Vicki Montesano
   Reflections of Working With Suicidal Children and Adolescents 214
      Rachel M. Hoffman
   Relying on Basic Skills 215
      Jason M. McGlothlin
   Conclusion 215
   Activities 216
   Chapter Highlights 216

References 217
Table of Contents

Appendix A
No-Harm Contract 241

Appendix B
Generic Treatment Plan
(Including Suicide Lethality Assessment) 243

Appendix C
Background Information and Sample Treatment Plan 251

Appendix D
Suggested Reading for Families and Clinicians Who Experienced a Suicide 259

Index 261

List of Tables

Table 1.1
Common Single Predictors of Suicide 7

Table 1.2
Overall Rank of Suicide Compared With Other Leading Causes of Death in the United States 13

Table 3.1
Techniques for Building Relationships With Suicidal Clients 28

Table 4.1
The SIMPLE STEPS Model of Suicide Assessment 37

Table 4.2
Descriptors of Suicidal Ideation 39

Table 4.3
Psychiatric Disorders Associated With Suicide 44

Table 5.1
SIMPLE STEPS to Assessing Suicide Lethality 49

Table 5.2
Depiction of the SIMPLE STEPS Lethality Assessment of the 10 Examples Illustrated in Chapter 5 50

Table 6.1
Selected Instruments for Assessing Suicide 61

Table 8.1
Rank of Youth Suicide (Birth–19 Years of Age) in 1981 and 2003: Leading Cause of Death in the United States 86

Table 9.1
Rank of Adult Suicide (20–39 Years of Age) in 1981 and 2003: Leading Cause of Death in the United States 106

Table 9.2
Rank of Adult Suicide (40–59 Years of Age) in 1981 and 2003: Leading Cause of Death in the United States 107

Table 10.1
Rank of Older Adult Suicide (60–85+ Years of Age) in 1981 and 2003: Leading Cause of Death in the United States 120

Table 11.1
Example of Outcome Responses Related to the Three Scaling Questions 140

Table 13.1
Seven Considerations in the Development of a Personal Toolkit of Resources for Suicidal Clients and Their Families 158
Table 13.2
List of Assessment-Related Publishing Companies 160

Table 14.1
“PRICES” 168

Table 16.1
Steps for Working Through Client Suicide 194

Table 16.2
Information and Suggestions for Surviving a Suicide 199

List of Figures

Figure 1.1
Rate of Suicide (Birth to 85+ Years of Age) in 2003 10

Figure 1.2
Rate of Suicide by Year (1981–2003) and Gender 10

Figure 1.3
Rate of Suicide by Year (1983–2003) and Ethnicity 11

Figure 1.4
Rate of Suicide by Year (1981–2003), Gender, and Ethnicity 12

Figure 3.1
Graphic Representation of Lambert’s (1992) Four Factors That Lead to Client Improvement 26

Figure 5.1
Phases of the Suicidal Process 48

Figure 6.1
Drawing of a Boy 67

Figure 6.2a
Drawing of the House in the House-Tree-Person Test 68

Figure 6.2b
Drawing of the Tree in the House-Tree-Person Test 68

Figure 6.2c
Drawing of the Person in the House-Tree-Person Test 68

Figure 6.3
Drawing of a Woman and Her Family in the Kinetic Family Drawing Test 69

Figure 6.4
Drawing of a Man 69

Figure 7.1
Approximate Percentages of Means Used for Suicides in 2003 74

Figure 8.1
Rate of Youth Suicide (Birth to 19 Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003) 86

Figure 8.2
Rate of Youth Suicide (Birth to 19 Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003) and Gender 87

Figure 8.3
Rate of Youth Suicide (Birth to 19 Years of Age) and Ethnicity 87

Figure 8.4
Rate of Youth Suicide (Birth to 19 Years of Age) and Gender 88

Figure 8.5
Sample Likert Scale for Children 97

Figure 8.6
Adam’s Drawing 101
Table of Contents

**Figure 9.1**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (20–39 Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003)  
*Page 107*

**Figure 9.2**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (40–59 Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003)  
*Page 108*

**Figure 9.3**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (20–39 Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003) and Gender  
*Page 108*

**Figure 9.4**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (40–59 Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003) and Gender  
*Page 109*

**Figure 9.5**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (20–39 Years of Age) by Ethnicity in 1981  
*Page 109*

**Figure 9.6**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (20–59 Years of Age) by Ethnicity in 2003  
*Page 110*

**Figure 9.7**  
Rate of Adult Suicide (20–59 Years of Age) and Gender and Ethnicity in 2003  
*Page 110*

**Figure 10.1**  
Rate of Older Adult Suicide (60–85+ Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003)  
*Page 121*

**Figure 10.2**  
Rate of Older Adult Suicide (60–85+ Years of Age) by Year (1981–2003) and Gender  
*Page 121*

**Figure 10.3**  
Rate of Older Adult Suicide (60–85+ Years of Age) by Ethnicity in 1981  
*Page 122*

**Figure 10.4**  
Rate of Older Adult Suicide (60–85+ Years of Age) by Ethnicity in 2003  
*Page 122*

**Figure 10.5**  
Rate of Older Adult Suicide (60–85+ Years of Age) and Gender and Ethnicity in 2003  
*Page 123*

**Figure 15.1**  
An Illustration of the Three-Dimensional Cube Model of Supervision and Suicide  
*Page 183*

**Figure 15.2**  
A Visual Representation of a Single Block in the Three-Dimensional Cube Model of Supervision and Suicide  
*Page 183*

**Figure 15.3**  
A Detailed Illustration of the Three-Dimensional Cube Model of Supervision and Suicide  
*Page 184*
Preface

Working with suicidal clients is typically one of the most fear-provoking aspects of mental health-care. Many books present information on what suicide prevention and treatment is, but none describe how to prevent and treat suicide. Working with suicidal clients takes more than knowledge; there are specific skills needed for effective practice. Also, instructors typically do not have formal training in suicide prevention and treatment and lack a contextual framework to convey the skills needed for working with suicidal clients.

I am writing this book because I am personally and professionally invested in the assessment, prevention, and treatment of suicide. Prior to writing this book, I devoted over 15 years training volunteers and graduate students to work with suicidal clients. I worked directly with suicidal clients on suicide prevention hotlines, community counseling agencies, hospitals, and hostage negotiation settings. I have also consulted for a variety of agencies and K–12 schools on suicide prevention strategies. In my experience, effective assessment, prevention, and treatment of suicidal clients are based in the art of clinical skill development.

The writing in this book is basic and practical. It will make complex concepts easy to understand for individuals with little knowledge of the mental health profession. Actual case illustrations and discussion questions will help to contextualize concepts in a meaningful and personalized manner. This book has an expansive range of suicide prevention and treatment topics. A highlight of this book is that it will provide emerging clinicians with skills and research-based knowledge to work with suicidal clients.

This book is both elementary and advanced. It is elementary in writing, style, and scope because it is focused toward beginning mental health clinicians. However, it is advanced because it deals with a topical area (suicide) in which advanced-level clinicians work. Hence, this book could be used by clinicians in an entry-level counseling course or an internship toward the end of their undergraduate or graduate program.

This book does not require memorization; rather the knowledge and skill development will result from understanding. In addition, it blends cutting-edge research and existing knowledge in suicide prevention and treatment in a basic and practical manner.

The intent of this book is to serve both undergraduate and graduate students in community or mental health counseling, school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, marriage and family counseling, psychology, and social work. The following courses could benefit from using this book:

- Practica (undergraduate and graduate),
- Internships (undergraduate and graduate),
- Crisis counseling (undergraduate and graduate),
- Advanced skill building (undergraduate and graduate),
- Diagnosis and assessment courses (graduate), and
- Basic skill building (graduate).
Preface

Instructors could adopt this book for the following reasons:

- It is student friendly in that it provides basic and easy-to-follow skill development. It also provides information on a difficult and frequently scary topic in an approachable manner.
- It provides measurable activities and role-plays that appropriately monitor student development.
- Portions of the book focus on skill development and provide individual and group activities to increase knowledge and practice of such skills.
- Educators must train and prepare students for working with suicidal clients at an earlier stage in their education. This book provides practical knowledge and skill development for beginning students.

In addition to educational settings, there are also three secondary markets for this book. First, hotlines that deal with suicide, crisis, teen issues, and other related areas could train their staff by using this book. Second, mental health facilities (community agencies, residential facilities, and hospitals) could use this book in continuing education programming for new staff or as a refresher for senior staff. Third, clergy and those in the ministry could use this book to prepare themselves to work with suicidal individuals or people contemplating suicide.

One of the key highlights of this book is that it is presented in a developmental fashion. The first chapters (1–7) provide basic clinical skills and knowledge that contextualize suicide prevention and treatment. The next chapters (8–11) begin developing the necessary skills and knowledge for working with differing populations of suicidal clients. Chapters 12–16 focus on the skills and knowledge needed for practice and client follow-up (e.g., supervision, documentation, taking care of the clinician, etc.). Lastly, Chapter 17 provides stories of reflection and growth from clinicians who have worked with suicidal clients that in turn can provide the reader with inspiration for working with this population. Therefore, the book helps develop clinical skills at a gradual pace. In addition, each chapter is geared to learning in a developmental manner. Each chapter has the following format:

- **Overview:** A brief introduction to the chapter that presents a context and understanding for the information being presented.
- **Chapter Content:** The actual content or information being learned is discussed.
- **Activities:** Several activities will be presented in each chapter. These activities will help the instructor monitor skill development and understanding of the chapter content. In many cases a series of questions will be presented for either class discussion or individual contemplation that help in skill development and case conceptualization.
- **Chapter Highlights:** A series of bulleted points that are the key elements for students to remember about the chapter. If the student does not read the chapter (even though he or she should), these are the things to remember.

Beyond the information, skill development, and practical techniques you gain from this book, above all, I hope you learn to love life and love the lives of others! I hope you gain lessons from your clients, as I have, about the meaning and struggles of life. I always tell my students that being a counselor is the best profession in the world because you not only help people but also get to know and learn from them.
About the Author

Jason M. McGlothlin is currently a tenured associate professor in the Counseling and Human Development Services (CHDS) program at Kent State University (KSU). He teaches in the Community Counseling and School Counseling master’s degree programs and the CHDS doctoral program. He also serves as the program coordinator of the two CHDS master’s degree programs.

His primary areas of teaching at the graduate level include basic and advanced assessment/appraisal techniques, assessment of psychopathology, and diagnosis of mental and emotional disorders. Dr. McGlothlin’s published works in the area of suicide focus on suicide assessment, the supervision of counselors who work with suicidal clients, and treating families that experience suicide. He has presented at the national, state, and local levels on suicide assessment and treatment over 40 times and has consulted with numerous school districts and mental health agencies on the implementation of suicide prevention practices.

Prior to joining the KSU faculty in 2001, he worked in community mental health and private practice settings primarily treating clients with severe mental and emotional disorders. Dr. McGlothlin has also worked extensively with suicidal clients at the Franklin County Suicide Prevention Services in Columbus, Ohio, and has formal training and work experience as a hostage negotiator.

Dr. McGlothlin is currently a licensed Professional Clinical Counselor with a supervisory endorsement in Ohio. He earned his PhD in counselor education from The Ohio University (Athens, Ohio); his MSEd in community agency counseling from the University of Dayton (Dayton, Ohio); and his BA in psychology from Otterbein College (Westerville, Ohio).
About the Contributors

Scott C. Baker, PhD, PC, earned his doctorate in counselor education and supervision from Kent State University. His counseling experience includes mobile and hotline crisis counseling, emergency medical services on a psychiatric ambulance, case management, family stabilization, and group, family, and individual counseling with adults and children in community mental health settings. His human services experience also includes HIV outreach services and residential, recreation, respite, and habilitation services for people with mental retardation and/or developmental disabilities.

Mary Brennen-Hofmann, MA, earned her master’s degree in education from St. Louis University. Since 1989, she has worked as an administrator at Franklin County Suicide Prevention Services in Columbus, Ohio.

Laura Bruneau, PhD, PCC, is currently an assistant professor at Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado. She earned her doctorate in counselor education and supervision and her master’s degree in community counseling from Kent State University. She is a licensed Professional Clinical Counselor in Ohio and has over 8 years of clinical experience. She currently works as a clinician at a nonprofit mental health agency counseling children, adolescents, adults, and families.

Rachel M. Hoffman, MSEd, PC, is a licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Ohio and is currently a doctoral student in the Counseling and Human Development Services program at Kent State University. Her clinical experience has focused on helping children and families in crisis situations. She is currently working at a child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric unit.

Adam P. Iarussi, MS, is currently working toward his PhD in counselor education and supervision at Kent State University. He completed his master of science in psychology at The Loyola College in Maryland and his bachelor of science in psychology at Ashland University. In the past he has done clinical work as a psychiatric counseling associate in an inpatient treatment facility and as a crisis intervention specialist intern at Franklin Square Hospital’s Emergency Department.

Jason L. Miller, PhD, PC, is currently the director of the Counseling and Human Development Center (CHDC) at Kent State University. Before becoming director of the CHDC, he earned his doctorate in counselor education from the University of New Orleans. He taught at Mississippi State University. He has counseling experience in various mental health agencies, schools, and assisted living facilities as well as administrative and counseling experience in university-based counseling clinics.
About the Contributors

Vicki Montesano, EdS, PCC, ICDC, is currently a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Human Development Services program at Kent State University. She is dually licensed as a Professional Clinical Counselor and an Independent Chemical Dependency Counselor by the State of Ohio. She specializes in co-occurring disorders and has worked with individuals with severe mental illness and substance use in both inpatient and outpatient settings. She currently works at a community mental health center as both the Quality Improvement Chair and the Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment (IDDT) team leader.

Thomas Newman, MAEd, PCC, is currently a doctoral student in the Counseling and Human Development Services program at Kent State University and is a licensed Professional Clinical Counselor in Ohio. Prior to coming to Kent State, he worked in home-based treatment at the Crisis Intervention Center of Stark County for 4 years and treated at-risk youths for Barberton City Schools, both in Ohio.

John S. (Steve) Rainey, PhD, earned his doctorate in counseling from Texas A&M University–Commerce in 2001. Following 6 years as a school counselor in the Dallas, Texas area, he was an assistant professor (Ad Interim) at Texas A&M University–Commerce. He is now an assistant professor in the Counseling and Human Development Services program at Kent State University.