



Suicide Assessment

Warning Signs:

Warning signs should be attended to and not be ignored or perceived as an attention getter. These warning signs are a way to reach out and ask for help. Common warning signs for suicide assessment include the following signs/symptoms:

A. Verbal

DIRECT: "I am going to kill myself."

INDIRECT: "You are all going to be sorry, when I am no longer here."
"My life is not worth living anymore."

B. Psychological

- long term depression
- feeling helpless
- feeling hopeless
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling sad

C. Emotional

- pre-occupation with death
- lack of appetite/overeating
- sleep disturbances
- poor concentration
- isolation
- crying

D. Behavioral

- low self esteem
- inability to perform daily tasks
- previous suicide attempts
- suicide note
- engaging in risky or impulsive behavior
- sudden poor school or job performance
- giving away important things
- lack of interest in things previously enjoyed
- sudden refraining from activities with family and friends
- sudden unexplained recovery from depression, sudden positive outlook- like the person is fine

E. Situational

- school or career problems
- loss of job/career
- death of a loved one or peer
- suicide of a loved one or peer
- relationship break-up/separation/divorce
- multiple losses
- terminal illness

Things you should ask and do:

- Are you thinking of hurting yourself (committing suicide)?
- How long have you been thinking about suicide (frequency, intensity, duration)?
- Do you have a plan? Get specific information if there is a plan.
- Do you have the means to carry out the plan (accessibility of a weapon, pills, drugs, etc.)?
- Have you attempted suicide in the past?
- Has someone in your family committed suicide?
- Is there anything or anyone to stop you (religious beliefs, children left behind, pets, etc.)?
- Depending on the responses:
 - Set up a suicide contract
 - Provide the client with emergency/crisis numbers
 - Explore what resources are available, e.g. family support, friends, etc.
 - Develop a plan to deal with potential weapons, medications, drugs, etc
 - Increase frequency of counseling sessions, possible phone check-ins
 - Assess the need for getting the client assessed for medications
 - Assess the need to contact the “crisis team” if available at your agency
 - Get the client hospitalized if necessary

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