

# Risk Factors for Suicide and Suicidal Behaviors

<b>Chronic Risk Factors</b> (If present, these increase risk over one's lifetime.)
<b>A. Perpetuating Risk Factors – permanent and non-modifiable</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics: White, American Indian, Male, Older Age (review current rates<sup>1</sup>), Separation or Divorce, Early Widowhood</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Suicide Attempts – especially if repeated</li> <li>• Prior Suicide Ideation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Self-Harm Behavior</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Suicide or Suicidal Behavior in Family</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental History of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Violence</li> <li>- Substance Abuse (Drugs or Alcohol)</li> <li>- Hospitalization for Major Psychiatric Disorder</li> <li>- Divorce</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Trauma or Abuse (Physical or Sexual)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Psychiatric Hospitalization</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Frequent Mobility</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Violent Behaviors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Impulsive/Reckless Behaviors</li> </ul>
<b>Predisposing and Potentially Modifiable Risk Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major Axis I Psychiatric Disorder, especially:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mood disorder,</li> <li>- Anxiety Disorder</li> <li>- Schizophrenia</li> <li>- Substance Use Disorder (Alcohol Abuse or Drug Abuse/Dependence)</li> <li>- Eating Disorders</li> <li>- Body Dysmorphic Disorder</li> <li>- Conduct Disorder...</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Axis II Personality Disorder, especially Cluster B</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Axis III Medical Disorder, especially if involves functional impairment and/or chronic pain)</li> <li>• Traumatic Brain Injury</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-morbidity of Axis I Disorders (especially depression and alcohol misuse), of Axis I and Axis II (especially if Axis II Disorder is Antisocial PD or Borderline PD), of Axis I and Axis III Disorders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Self-esteem/High Self-hate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tolerant/Accepting Attitude Toward Suicide</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to Another's Death by Suicide</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Self or Familial Acceptance of Sexual Orientation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perfectionism (especially in context of depression)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Available from <http://webapp.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate.html>

## Risk Factors for Suicide and Suicidal Behaviors II.

Adapted from American Association of Suicidology, Translating Research into Practice

<b><i>Contributory Risk Factors</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firearm Ownership or Easy Accessibility</li> <li>• Acute or Enduring Unemployment</li> <li>• Stress (job, marriage, school, relationship...)</li> </ul>
<b>Acute Risk Factors (If present, these increase risk in the near-term)</b>
• Demographics: Recently Divorced or Separated with Feelings of Victimization or Rage
• Suicide Ideation (Threatened, Communicated, planned, or Prepared for);
• Current Self-Harm Behavior
• Recent Suicide Attempt
• Excessive or Increased Use of Substances (alcohol or drugs)
• Psychological Pain (acute distress in response to loss, defeat, rejection, etc.)
• Recent Discharge from psychiatric hospitalization
• Anger, Rage, Seeking Revenge
• Aggressive Behavior
• Withdrawal from Usual Activities, Supports, Interests, School or Work; Isolation (e.g. lives alone)
• Anhedonia
• Anxiety, Panic
• Agitation
• Insomnia
• Persistent Nightmares
• Suspiciousness, Paranoia (ideas of persecution or reference)
• Severe feelings of confusion or disorganization
• Command Hallucinations Urging Suicide
• Intense affect states (e.g. desperation, intolerable aloneness, self-hate...)
• Dramatic Mood Changes
• Hopelessness, Poor Problem-solving, Cognitive Constriction (thinking in black and white terms, not able to see gray areas, alternatives...), Rumination, Few Reasons for Living, Inability to Imagine Possibly Positive Future Events
• Perceived Burdensomeness
• Recent diagnosis of terminal condition
• Feeling Trapped, Like There is No Way Out (other than death); Poor Problem-Solving
• Sense of Purposelessness or Loss of Meaning; No Reasons for living
• Negative or mixed attitude toward help-receiving
• Negative or mixed attitude by potential caregiver to individual
• Recklessness or Excessive Risk-Taking Behavior, Especially if Out of Character or Seemingly Without Thinking of Consequences, Tendency toward Impulsivity
<b><i>Precipitating or Triggering Stimuli (Heighten Period of Risk if Vulnerable to Suicide)</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any Real or Anticipated Event Causing or Threatening:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shame, Guilt, Despair, Humiliation, Unacceptable Loss of Face or Status</li> <li>- Legal Problems (loss of freedom), Financial Problems, Feelings of Rejection/Abandonment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recent Exposure to Another's Suicide (of friend or acquaintance, of celebrity through media...)</li> </ul>