

Risk Factors for Suicide

Risk factors are stressful events, situations, or conditions that exist in a person's life that may increase the likelihood of attempting or dying by suicide. There is no predictive list of a particular set of risk factors that spells imminent danger of suicide. *It is important to understand that risk factors DO NOT cause suicide.*

Risk factors most strongly associated with suicidal behavior include:

Individual

- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- Suicidal threats; homicidal ideation
- A suicide plan
- Fantasy concept/preoccupation with death
- Mental disorders, particularly depression, mood disorder, personality disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety or psychosis lasting over two weeks
- Alcohol or other substance use disorders
- Major physical illness
- Hopeless, helpless, very unhappy
- Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
- Low self-esteem
- Learning Disabilities
- Changes and worsening in self-injuring behavior
- Access to lethal means (firearms, poisons, prescription medications, alcohol or other substances)
- Stressors related to sexual orientation

Peer/Family

- History of interpersonal violence, conflict, trauma, or abuse
- Social isolation, alienation from family members, friends
- Moving/being new to a school
- Family dysfunction or changes (illnesses, parental/marital conflict, absentee parent)
- Stigma or barriers associated with help-seeking behavior
- Exposure to suicidal behavior of a family member or close friend

Community

- Multiple losses (job, financial, relationship, social)
- “Loss of face” or disrespect from peers
- Recent disappointment/rejection
- Lack of social support
- Barriers to health care and mental health care
- Portrayal of suicide in the media (movies, news, or music)
- Perceived pressure to succeed by self or others

Society

- Certain cultural/religious beliefs that accept suicide as a solution
- Loss of connection to spiritual/religious beliefs
- Cultural values and attitudes