

Table 1: Assessment of young people at risk of suicide

During the interview with the young person, investigate each of the areas in the column on the left and categorise the response as low, moderate or high risk. In investigating any suicide plan (No 4 below), it is important to use direct questions as the young person is likely to be reluctant to volunteer the information. Direct questioning will not aggravate the risk of suicide but failure to fully investigate, categorise the risk and respond appropriately may result in a suicide that could have been avoided. Finally, on the basis of the young person's responses, determine which of the three risk levels, low, moderate or high, best describes the situation and proceed with the management plan for that level of risk.

AREAS TO CONSIDER	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
1. Evaluation of personal difficulties			
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate reaction to loss and environmental changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe reaction to loss or environmental change Many recent social/personal crises
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild; feels slightly down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate; some moodiness, sadness, irritability, loneliness and decrease of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overwhelmed with hopelessness, sadness and anger (verbal/physical) feelings of worthlessness Extreme mood changes
Coping Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional thoughts about suicide Daily activities continue as usual with little change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than one suicidal thought per day Some daily activities disrupted; disturbance in eating, sleeping, school work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May resist help Constant suicidal thoughts Significant disturbances in daily functioning Delusions, paranoia, lost touch with reality Participation in high risk behaviours (ie alcohol and drug abuse, potential for accidents etc)
2. Positive Resources			
Family and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help available; significant others concerned and willing to help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family and friends available but unwilling to help consistently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family and friends not available or hostile, exhausted, injurious Significant self neglect
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct expression of feelings and suicidal thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpersonalised suicide goal ("They'll be sorry", "I'll show them", "I don't deserve to live" or "I want to be with someone who has died") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very indirect or non-verbal expression of internalised suicide goal (guilt, worthlessness)
Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable relationships, personality and school performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent acting out behaviour and substance abuse Acute suicidal behaviour in stable personality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suicidal behaviour in unstable personality; emotional disturbance; repeated difficulty with peers, family and teachers
3. Previous suicide attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None or one of low lethality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple of low lethality or one of medium lethality; history of repeated threats Suicide attempts amongst family and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of high or multiple of moderate lethality Several attempts over past weeks and/or suicide or suicide attempts by family or friends
4. Suicide Plan			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details Availability of means Time Lethality of method Chance of intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vague Not available, will have to get the means No specific time or in the future Pills, self mutilation Others are present most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some specifics Available, has close by Within a few hours Drugs & alcohol, motor vehicle accidents Others available if called upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well thought out; knows when, where, how Has the means in hand Immediately Gun, hanging, jumping, carbon monoxide No one nearby; isolated
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