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# Suicidality in Teens

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## Disclosures

- Dr. Dunne is a Partnership Access Line consultant at Seattle Children's and the consulting child and adolescent psychiatry at the PeaceHealth Pediatric Clinic, Bellingham
- He has no financial conflicts of interest to report

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## Scope of the Problem in Adolescents

- Non-suicidal self injury (NSSI) in US
- Approximately 15% of teens have had NSSI at least once; girls (17%)>boys
- To punish myself (50%), obtain relief, express desperation, test other's love
- Suicide attempts in past 12 months
- Seriously considered suicide (13.3%)
- Made a plan (10.1 %)
- Attempted suicide (8.0%)
- Needed medical attention (3.7%)
- Suicide deaths
- Approximately 1/1000 attempts (0.005 % for 10-19 y/o)
- 50% had no prior attempts
- Strangulation (hanging) and firearms caused ~90%
- Overdoses caused ~7%
- Other means caused ~3%
- Per Youth Risk Behavioral Survey by CDC 2013

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### Developmental Perspective

- Drive for social acceptance; vulnerability to rejection and harassment (e.g. cyber-bullying)
- Poorly developed self-identity
- Weak concept of future goals
- Immature cognitive defenses, including a weak realization of the finality of death
- Vulnerability to suggestion/contagion effects, e.g., "13 Reasons"



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### Psychological Perspective

- Avoidance; escape from distress
- Sense of hopelessness, helplessness
- Plea for help, external reassurance
- Grandiose attempt at revenge
- Self-loathing
- Psychological defenses become overwhelmed



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### Routine Screening

- Interview questions during routine check ups
- Patient Health Questionnaire, Adolescent version (PHQ-A) (attached to handout)
- Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ) (attached to handout)



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### Assessment of Adolescents Expressing Suicidal Ideation

- Assess onset and precipitating factors
- Duration and intensity
- Degree of planning
- Urge to act on plan
- Accessibility of lethal means
- History of previous attempts or NSSI
- Presence of protective factors



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### Assessment Continued: Risk Factors

- Depressive disorders
- Anxiety disorders, especially panic disorder
- ADHD/Hx of impulsive behavior
- Substance abuse
- Psychosis
- Agitation
- LGBTQ sexual minorities
- Personality disorders, particularly histrionic and borderline PD
- Male gender
- Access to guns or lethal medications
- Rejection or harassment by peers
- Family discord or lacking family support
- Hx of suicide in family, acquaintances or on-line friends
- Hx of NSSI



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### Protective Factors

- A supportive adult and/or family
- Willingness to be open with thoughts and feelings with supportive adults
- Stable group of prosocial friends
- Future goals
- Regular exercise



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### Interventions

- Develop a safety plan with the adolescent
- Ensure that all firearms and lethal medications are either secured or removed
- Caution patient and family about the disinhibiting effects of alcohol and drugs
- Treat underlying psychiatric disorders (if any)
- Refer for counseling
- Focus on increasing behavioral strategies for coping with distress
- Supportive psychotherapy is ineffective
- Promote social activities with prosocial peers
- Help parents avoid becoming "helicopter" parents
- Continue to maintain close contact and monitoring (PHQ-A 9 or SMFQ) of the patient




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### Useful Resources

- Patient Safety Plan form
- PHQ-A form and scoring sheet
- SMFQ form
- Crisis Hotline Washington, text Connect 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-8255
- www.thetrevorproject.org: resources for LGBT youth
- Columbia Suicide Prevention Program, www.teenscreen.org
- www.aacap.org: AACAP Practice Parameters for the Assessment and Treatment of Children and Adolescents With Suicidal Behavior, July 2001




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### Safety Plan

**Patient Safety Plan Template**

1. Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Location: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Referring Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Referring Provider's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Referring Provider's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Referring Provider's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Referring Provider's Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Referring Provider's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Referring Provider's Home: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Referring Provider's Work: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Referring Provider's Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Referring Provider's Title: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Referring Provider's Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Referring Provider's License: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Referring Provider's Board: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Referring Provider's Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

18. Referring Provider's Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Referring Provider's Department: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Referring Provider's Division: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Referring Provider's Office: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Referring Provider's Room: \_\_\_\_\_

23. Referring Provider's Suite: \_\_\_\_\_

24. Referring Provider's Floor: \_\_\_\_\_

25. Referring Provider's Building: \_\_\_\_\_

26. Referring Provider's Campus: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Referring Provider's City: \_\_\_\_\_

28. Referring Provider's State: \_\_\_\_\_

29. Referring Provider's Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

30. Referring Provider's Country: \_\_\_\_\_

31. Referring Provider's Continent: \_\_\_\_\_

32. Referring Provider's Hemisphere: \_\_\_\_\_

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50. Referring Provider's Hemisphere: \_\_\_\_\_




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