

# Suicide Prevention

## Similarities Across The Life Span

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# Goal

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**To Teach People  
How To Develop A Toolkit**

**For**

**Preventing Suicide**

**And**

**Effectively Managing Suicide Attempts  
Should They Occur**

# Principle #1

## Suicide Can Be Prevented

### Suicide Is Not Inevitable !!!

1. It Is Only One Possible Outcome Of A *Process* Causing Hopelessness & Despair
2. It Occurs When A *Combination Of Factors* Come Together At One Point In Time That:
  - Makes Suicide Seem Like The Most Desirable Solution To A Problem
  - Provides The Means & Opportunity To Act

# Principle #2

## Suicidal Ideation Can Be Identified

Look for the following:

1. Suicidal ideation, intent, or plans
2. Access to lethal means of self-harm
3. Psychotic symptoms, command hallucinations, severe depression or anxiety
4. Alcohol use, substance use, or withdrawal
5. History of prior suicide attempts
6. Family history of suicide
7. Recent exposure to suicide

# Suicide Evaluation Questions

1. Do you sometimes feel that life isn't worth living?
2. Do you sometimes feel that you would be better off dead?
3. Have you ever thought about killing yourself?
4. Do you have a plan for killing yourself?
5. Do you have the means to carry out the plan?
6. Have you tried to kill yourself in the past?
7. Do you think you might try to kill yourself in the future?
8. Do you have a compelling reason to stay alive?

# Principle #3

## Suicidal Plans Can Be Stopped

To Stop A Planned Suicide:

1. Identify & remove the means of suicide
2. Involve responsible adults & train them in protective actions
3. Develop an adequately protective environment around the suicidal person.

# Principle #4

## Suicide Is A Process, Not An Event

### 1. An Event

- A Situation Locked In Time & Space
- Apparently Unrelated To Other Things
- That Seems Inevitable Or Unchangeable

### 2. A Process

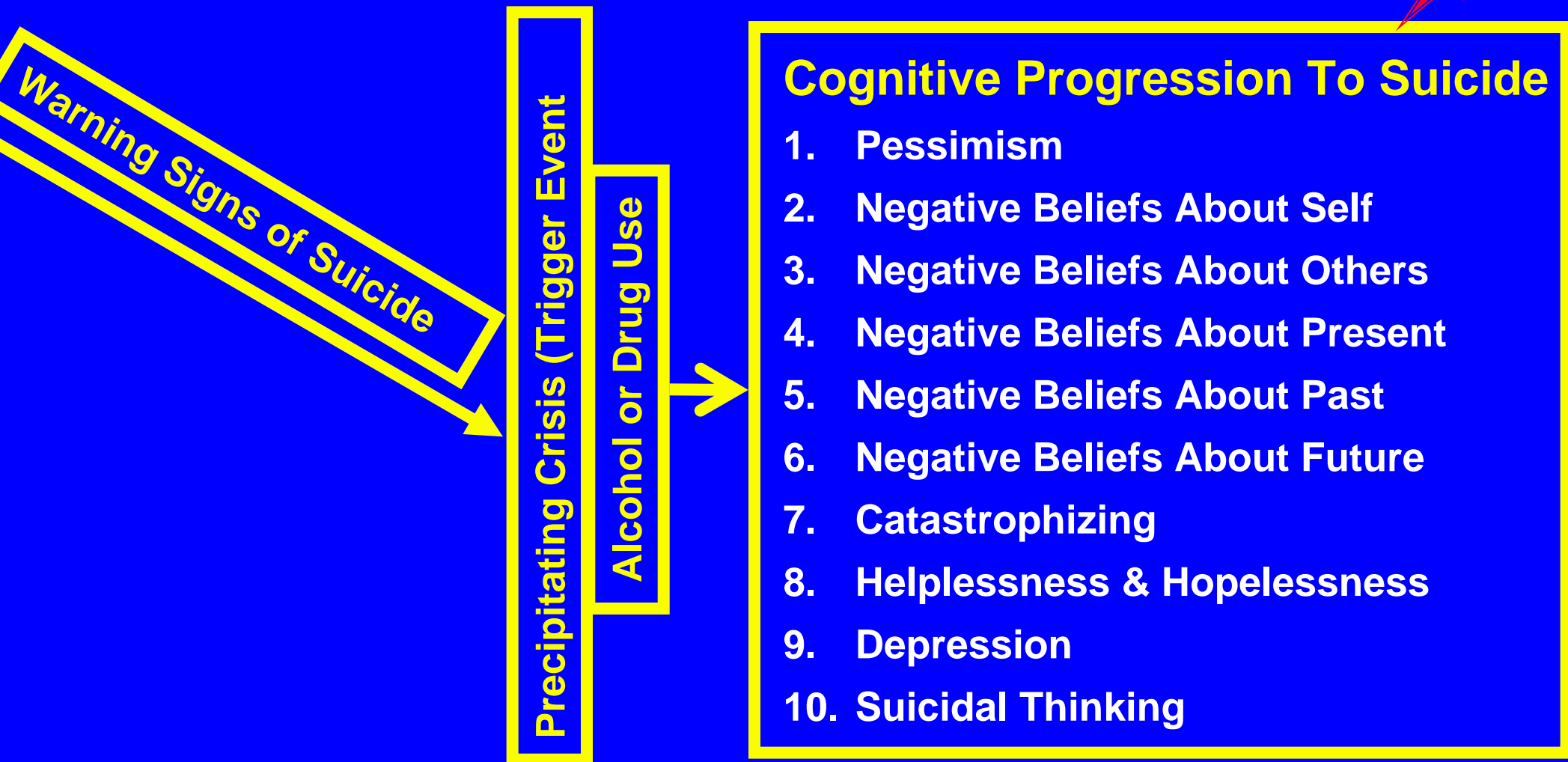
- Ongoing In Time
- Can Be Altered As It Unfolds

# The Process Of Suicide

1. Predisposing Factors
2. Trigger Events
3. Internal Conflicted Suicidal Ideation
4. External Indicators of Hopelessness
5. Warning Behaviors (*Guarded Cries for Help*)
6. Suicide Attempt
  - Response To Unsuccessful Attempt
  - Response To Suicide Attempt Ending In Death

# Suicide Dynamic – The Total Picture

**New**



# The Possibility Of Intervention

1. The Suicide Process Can Be Stopped At Each Step of The Process
2. If People Are ...
  - Aware Of What Is Happening
  - Have The Tools To Intervene

# Principle #5

## Suicide Is Related To Depression

### A Biopsychosocial Mental Disorder

1. **Bio** = Biological
  - Brain Chemistry Imbalances
2. **Psycho** = Psychological
  - How We Think, Feel, and Behave
3. **Social** = Relationships
  - How We Interact With People, Societal Processes, & Social Institutions

# Depression Can Be Primary Or Secondary

## 1. Primary Depression

- The Initial Cause of Suicidal Process
- Depression Prevents Effective Coping With & Breaking Free From The Suicidal Process

## 2. Secondary Depression

- Results From Suicidal Process
- Poor Coping Resulting In A Series of Progressive Problems Leading To The Belief That Suicide Is The Best Solution

# Treatment of Depression

## 1. Psychotherapy

- Effectiveness comparable to medication in mild to moderate cases (65% response)

## 2. Medication (Antidepressants)

- Single antidepressants (65% response)
- Switching, combination, and augmentation strategies can increase effectiveness
- Delayed onset of action (4-8 weeks)

## 3. Psychotherapy & Medication

- Most effective strategy for severe depression

Schatzberg, AF and CB Nemeroff, eds., Textbook of Psychopharmacology (Second Edition), Washington, DC, 1998

# Depression/Suicide Cycle

**Biological**



**Social**

**Psychological**

# Tools

For Preventing & Managing

# Suicide

# Tool #1

## Listen, Understand, & Clarify

1. Listen to the pain and problems.
2. Write down each problem and the thoughts and feelings that accompany it.
3. Ask: “What do you believe suicide will accomplish for you in terms of these problems?”
4. Ask: “Do you think there might be another way of dealing with these problems without killing yourself?”

# Tool #2

## Challenge Suicide As Solution

1. Suicide will not work!
2. Suicide is not a solution to these problems!
3. It's not OK for you to commit suicide!
4. If you commit suicide it will hurt other people.
5. You are capable of better than that!
6. Once you suicide, you can't change your mind!

# Tool #3

## Find Compelling Reasons To Live

### Find Personally Compelling Reasons To Live In Spite of the Pain & Problems

1. You owe yourself a better legacy than suicide.
2. You have people who love and need you.
3. They will suffer unnecessarily if you commit suicide!
3. You are capable of solving these problems without killing yourself.

# Tool #4

## Start Building A Belief In Solution

1. Ask: “If you could find other ways to deal with the pain and problems, will you give up your suicidal plans & work at new solutions?”
2. Explore Personal Strengths That Will Help.
3. Identify Skills, Tools, & Support Systems That Can Manage The Pain and Problems.

# Tool #5

## Systematic Problem Solving

1. Develop A Prioritized Problem List
2. Identify The First Problem To Work On
3. Set A Goal (*What will it look like when this problem is effectively managed or solved?*)
4. Identify Alternative Solutions
5. Make A Decision
6. Take Action
7. Evaluate & Monitor The Result

# Depressive & Suicidal Thinking (Beck, et al, 1979)

## 1. Pessimism

- *“Nothing I do ever works!”*
- *“I have bad luck that keeps me from getting what I want and need.”*

## 2. Negative Beliefs About Self

- *“I’m no good”*
- *“I can’t do anything right!”*
- *“I’m defective as a human being”*

## 3. Negative Beliefs About Others

- *“They don’t care about me or my problems”*
- *They can’t help me!*
- *Even if they could help me they won’t try”*

# Depressive & Suicidal Thinking *(Cont)*

## 4. Negative Beliefs About the Present

*“This is a horrible & terrible time to be alive!”*

*“Nothing good is happening!”*

*“Everything going on around me is awful & terrible!”*

## 5. Negative Beliefs About the Past

- *“It’s always been this bad or worse!”*

- *“There’s never been a good time to be alive!”*

## 6. Negative Beliefs About the Future

- *“Things will never get better!”*

- *“I can’t do anything that will make me feel better or fix my problems!”*

- *“Things will just keep getting worse!”*

# Depressive & Suicidal Thinking *(Cont)*

## 7. Catastrophizing:

- *“Things are terrible & awful!”*
- *“Things are worse than they should be!”*
- *Things are worse than they ever could be!”*

## 8. Helplessness

- *“There’s nothing I can do!”*
- *“I’ve tried everything there is nothing has worked!”*
- *There’s no way I can ever get out!”*

## 9. Hopelessness

- *“There is nothing anyone can do to make things better!”*
- *“I am trapped in this awful place forever!”*

# Depressive & Suicidal Thinking *(Cont)*

## 10. Suicidal Thinking

- (1) Life isn't worth living!
- (2) I'd be better off dead!
- (3) Killing myself would take away my pain and solve my problems!
- (4) Sometimes I think about killing myself!
- (5) I have a plan for how to kill myself?
- (6) I've assembled the things I need to kill myself"
- (7) I know exactly how bad things will have to get for me to kill myself!
- (8) I have no compelling reason to stay alive!

# Tool #6: Cognitive Structuring

**Problem Title:**

**Problem Description:** *The Primary Problem I am working on is ...*

**Alternative Solution:** *One Possible way of solving or managing this problem is ...*

**Psych Skills**

**Old Suicidal:**

**New Life Affirming:**

**T = Thinking**

**F = Feeling**

**U = Urges**

**A = Actions**

**R = Reactions**

# Factors Related To Prevention

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1. Relationships With Emotionally Stable & Caring Adults
  - The Primary Suicide Preventative
2. Relationships With Adults Determine
  - A. Risk Factors
    - Characteristics that increase the likelihood of depression & suicide
  - B. Protective Factors
    - Characteristics that decrease the likelihood of depression & suicide

# Chrematistics Of Helpful Adults

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1. Recognize Warning Signs of Suicide
2. Ask About What Is Going On
3. Listen To & Understand
4. Take What Is Said Seriously
5. Affirm Problems & Strength To Cope
6. Protect From Immediate Risk
7. Offer Other Alternatives

# Individual Protective Factors

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## 1. Core Beliefs About Depression & Suicide

- Depression is not normal. Suicidal is a socially & personally unacceptable way to deal with pain & problems.

2.

3.

# Individual Protective Factors

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1. Core Beliefs About Depression & Suicide
2. Core Beliefs About Self
  - I am capable, significant, and able to influence my circumstances
- 3.

# **Core Beliefs About Self**

## **That Protect Against Depression & Suicide**

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### **1. I Am Capable!**

- I Can Take Care Of Myself And Meet My Responsibilities In Life!

### **2. I Am Significant!**

- I Can Contribute In Meaningful Ways And I Am Genuinely Needed!

### **3. I Can Influence What Happens To Me!**

- I Have Personal Power And I Am Capable Of Using It!

# Individual Protective Factors

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- 1. Core Beliefs About Depression & Suicide**
- 2. Core Beliefs About Self**
- 3. Critical Life skills**
  - I have the skills I need to manage myself, deal with others, manage situations, & use good judgment

# Critical Life Skills

## That Protect Against Depression & Suicide

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1. Seven Critical Skills Or Abilities
2. Needed To Operate Effectively In The World
3. Make Good Decisions That Will ...
  - Promote Mental Health
  - Guard Against Depression & Suicide

# Critical Life Skills

That Protect Against Depression & Suicide

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## 1. Thought Management Skills

- *Knowing How to Think Clearly, Logically, And Rationally*

## 2. Feeling Management Skills

- *Knowing How to Recognize, Label, & Communicate Feelings*

## 3. Behavior Management Skills

- *Knowing How to Self-Regulate Behavior and the Urges That Motivate Behavior*

# Critical Life Skills

That Protect Against Depression & Suicide

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## 4. People Management Skills

- The Ability To Develop Collaborative Work, Social, And Intimate Relationships

## 5. System Management Skills

- The Ability To Get Things By Adapting To The Limits And Responsibilities Of Life While Maintaining Personal Integrity

# Critical Life Skills

That Protect Against Depression & Suicide

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## 6. Systemic Skills

- The Ability To Respond To The Limits And Responsibilities Of Day To Day Life With Adaptability, Flexibility, And Integrity

## 7. Judgmental Skills

- The Ability To Evaluate Situations In Accordance With Appropriate Values
- The Ability To Predict Logical Consequences Of Behavior

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