

Section 1

To the person role-playing the distressed person:

This first section is information that the person in distress is relatively comfortable in sharing and will easily volunteer. You may state any or all of the information in this section in the initial conversation without prodding from the gatekeeper.

Role-play (15 year old)

To the distressed person

(Note: risk factors are underlined, protective factors in *italics*)

You are a 15-year-old high school student. You have never done well academically, but people seem to like you. Until last month you were doing well, but all of sudden you have been feeling very sad and seem to be having trouble sleeping, concentrating, and eating too much (possible onset of depression). You've stopped caring about school and just wish you could stay home and watch TV. Your mother works and your father left the family last year and only called once to wish you a happy birthday. He lives in another state now (loss of significant other). The boyfriend (girlfriend) you thought you had has stopped calling or emailing you, and you wonder if your bummer mood and recent weight gain caused him/her to pull away (relationship loss). Yesterday you saw him/her with someone you thought you could trust not to hurt you. To make things worse, your gym teacher told you "lose some weight" in front of some other kids. And that night your mother said you needed to find a part time job because your father stopped paying child support. You feel a burden everyone and for the last several nights you've been going to sleep wishing you would never wake up. Nothing you try seems to work (hopelessness). You came in to see the school nurse/counselor/advisor because your mother has her own problems with depression and wouldn't understand (*help-seeking behavior*).

After you have explained your situation, you say, "I'd just like to go to sleep and never wake up. Then I wouldn't be such a burden to everyone."

What you also know that the gatekeeper doesn't:

- You saved up a bunch of pills from your parent's medicine cabinet (means available).
- You found a web site on the internet with all the instructions on how to kill yourself (planning suicide attempt).
- You'd be willing to accept help, but someone has to show you how to get it (willingness to get help).
- Down deep you know you are good person, and your pet dog (Barky) loves and needs you (*responsibility and duty to another*).
- Your grandmother would help you in heartbeat if she knew you were in trouble (*social support*).

Remember, the gatekeeper's job is only to learn if you are thinking about suicide and to persuade you to get help and refer you, not to conduct a suicide risk assessment. You may reveal as much or little about yourself as you chose in the role-play.

Role-play (17 year old)

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To distressed person

(Note: risk factors are underlined, protective factors in *italics*)

You are a 17-year-old high school student. You were very active in school sports before your grades begin to drop and you started skipping school. You really miss school but you are thinking maybe you should learn a trade, drop out, and start working. You are having problems at home with your alcoholic father, who is always fighting with your mother. You wonder if he hasn't hit her (**parents in conflict**) Your boyfriend (girlfriend) recently moved to another state (**relationship loss**), and he/she wants to see other people. You've felt very **depressed** since he/she left and you are feeling under extreme pressure to get your life back together. To top it off you just found out that you just flunked English and that if you are graduate at all, you will have to retake the course You feel that all of your dreams are slipping away (**hopelessness**). You came in to see the school nurse/counselor/advisor because you can't go to your parents (***help-seeking behavior***).

After you have explained your situation, you say, "*I have lost everything, I don't think I can handle this anymore. I just want to away forever.*"

What you also know that the gatekeeper doesn't:

- You have been **sexually abused** by you father at age 12 and have told no one, not even your mother.
- You took an overdose of your mother's medication when the abuse started but woke up the next morning, told no one, and went to school (**previous attempt**).
- Your older sister ran away from home and died by suicide 2 years ago (**family history of suicide**).
- You have been considering killing yourself by cutting your wrist this weekend when your parents go out for dinner and a movie (**suicide plan**)
- At one level you know you have been through tough times before and gotten through it (***resilience and sense of worth/confidence***).
- Your pastor/priest/rabbi is very support of you and has helped you in the past. You go to church regularly (***spiritual and social support***).

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Role-play (22 year old)

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To the distressed person

(Note: risk factors are underlined, protective factors in *italics*)

You are an 22-year-old old from a rural area of the state and just transferred into this college/university from a smaller school. You have never lived outside of your parents home before and this is only the second time you have been to a large city, and the first time you have been away from home(relationship/social loss - life stressor). Although you started out excited about getting away from home, now that you have been in the dorm for a month you are becoming depressed. You're waking up early in the morning and having trouble concentrating. Classes are a lot harder than you thought they would be. Your roommate dropped out the second week of the semester and now you are living alone. He was the only person you knew on campus (isolation). If you don't start getting better grades you could flunk out (academic problems/potential loss of self-esteem). You come from a solid, helpful family, but you are no longer a child and don't what to tell them how miserable you feel. You saw the phone number of the local "Hot Line" and you have called, but you are not sure why(*help-seeking behavior*).

At some point in the interview you say, "I don't know why I called, nobody can really help me. My life is over." (Hopelessness)

What you also know that your interviewer doesn't:

- **You have been thinking about suicide everyday for a month (ideations)**
- **Another reason you are feeling isolated and alone is that, while you are not sure, you think you may be gay (distress about sexual orientation)**
- **You always drank a little on weekends at home but now you are drinking every night (substance abuse disorder)**
- **In your hometown, you were the student that everybody else came to in high school because you always seemed to know what to do and were involved in the Peer Counseling Program for special students (*good coping skills*)**

Remember, the gatekeeper's job is only to learn if you are thinking about suicide and to persuade you to get help and refer you, not to conduct a suicide risk assessment. You may reveal as much or little about yourself as you chose in the role-play.

Role-play (19-year-old)

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To the distressed person

(Note: risk factors are underlined, protective factors in *italics*)

You are a 19-year-old living by yourself in a cheap off-campus apartment. You got into college on your brains alone (high SAT score), but really have no way to support yourself now that you are here. You are eating Top Ramen™ and barely getting by. The one thing you can afford is inexpensive wine, which you buy and drink by the gallon (**alcohol abuse**). You're not sleeping and lost 15 pounds in two months (**clinical depression**). You don't talk to your parents because your father physically beat you and said you would never amount to anything (**physical and psychological abuse**). If you don't succeed in college, you will be the failure your father predicted. The professor who befriended you and has been willing to talk to you after class announced he has taken another job and will be leaving the campus next semester (**loss of important relationship**). You have a single other friend, the barista at the campus coffee shop. He/she is someone you can really unload to (*helpful relationship/social support*). Last week you ran completely out of money and rather go hungry or without wine, you actually stooped to look in a garbage can for something to eat. Because your grades are suddenly slipping, you've been called in by your department's academic advisor for a status review.

At sometime in the interview you say, "You can't help me, nobody can." (**Hopelessness**)

What you also know that your interviewer doesn't:

- You contacted hepatitis C two years ago (**chronic physical illness**).
- Your uncle and "best friend" died by suicide last spring (**exposure to suicidal behavior in a family member**).
- You've been drinking wine since seventh grade (**substance abuse disorder**).
- The pistol you took from your father when you left for college is hidden in your apartment (**access to a gun**).
- You have a younger brother still at home that you care a deal for and with whom you exchange emails weekly. You are worried what would happen to him if you weren't there to take care of him when he leaves home (*responsibility for a sibling*).
- You've been reading about alcoholism on the internet and wonder if you are not already alcoholic and maybe should stop drinking (*ambivalence about substance abuse, readiness for change*).

Remember, the gatekeeper's job is only to learn if you are thinking about suicide and to persuade you to get help and refer you, not to conduct a suicide risk assessment. You may reveal as much or little about yourself as you chose in the role-play.