Suicide: Acute Warning Signs

Acute Warning Signs of Suicidality

- **Verbal**
  - Preoccupation with themes of death or suicide
  - Expressions of unworthiness or failure
  - Lack of interest or hope for the future
  - Statements of suicidal plan or intent to carry it out

- **Behavioral**
  - Giving away cherished possessions or making a will
  - Canceling future plans as if there will be no future for the person
  - Stockpiling pills or acquiring a weapon
  - Sending cryptic emails that suggest wish to harm self, feelings of hopelessness

Sometimes out of a cry for help or ambivalence about acting on suicidal thoughts, **indirect statements** will be made:

- **Hopelessness**
  - ?I?m not sure any of this is worth it anymore.?

- **Wishes for Escape**
  - ?I?d like this all to go away.?

- **Death Allusions**
  - ?I wish I could sleep and never wake up.?

- **Burdening Others**
  - ?It would be better for everyone if I were gone.?

- **Not Belonging**
  - ?No one would miss me anyway.?

**Acute Risk Factors**
Risk for self harm increases when the above warning signs and risk factors below are both present.

- Expression of specific plans with active intent to harm self
- Prior suicide attempts
- Recent discharge from a psychiatric hospitalization
• Chronic feelings of hopelessness and suicidal thinking

**Protective Factors**

• Effective clinical care for mental, physical, and substance abuse disorders
• Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help seeking
• Family and community support
• Support from ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
• Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent handling of disputes
• Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation instincts

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