



Assessment to Determine Suicide Intent

The L. A. S. T. Acronym

When someone is hurting so badly that they are thinking and talking about suicide as an option for ending their pain, an officer needs to quickly assess their intent. Officers must establish trust with the person to ensure honest answers. Give eye contact, empathize with the person's predicament, acknowledge that they are in pain and assure them that the pain (if appropriate) is temporary. When trust is established the officer needs to ask some probing questions aimed at finding out to what extent the person has thought about suicide. You can begin to judge the intent by asking questions that uncover the person's thoughts in these four areas.

Lethality of chosen method

***Firearm vs. five Tylenol pills**

Availability of the proposed method

***Does the person actually possess the means to harm him/her self?
Actually owns a gun or has access to drugs vs. not owning a gun or having access to drugs.**

Specificity of the plan to kill self & History

***Specific details around time, method, etc. vs. vague ideas. Persons who report a family history of loved ones attempting/completing suicide are at greater risk. Persons with a history of gesturing or attempting suicide are at greater risk, especially if past attempt were injurious or potentially lethal and their last attempt was recent (less than a year). Mental Health symptoms and Alcohol/Drug use increase risk.**

Time

***Proximity of help, someone home at the time of attempt vs. someone in next room; secluded, private place vs. a place where a person would be found. If the person lives alone and is isolated vs. being surrounded by friends/family.**

If the officer is convinced there are no lethality issues, they should refer the person to a helping agency. If the officer is concerned, they should work with the person to identify and contact someone who can be with them. If the officer believes that lethality is an issue, then a call for a mental health screening should be made.



The L.A.S.T. method and the Lethality Continuum

	Low Risk of Death 0-----	Moderate Risk of Death -----5-----	High Risk of Death -----10
Lethality	<i>5 aspirin</i>	<i>Cut self with knife</i>	<i>Gun</i>
Availability	<i>24/7 supervision</i>	<i>Does not possess means</i>	<i>Posses means to kill self</i>
Specificity	<i>only expresses an intent to die</i>	<i>Some vague ideas around their thoughts of death</i>	<i>Details around method, time, and place of death</i>
Time	<i>Someone present while attempting</i>	<i>Done at a place and time where they expect to be found</i>	<i>Secluded place with little chance of help intervening</i>



Risk Factors and the Lethality Continuum

Low Risk
of Death
0-----

Moderate Risk
of Death
-----5-----

High Risk
of Death
-----10

a few risk factors

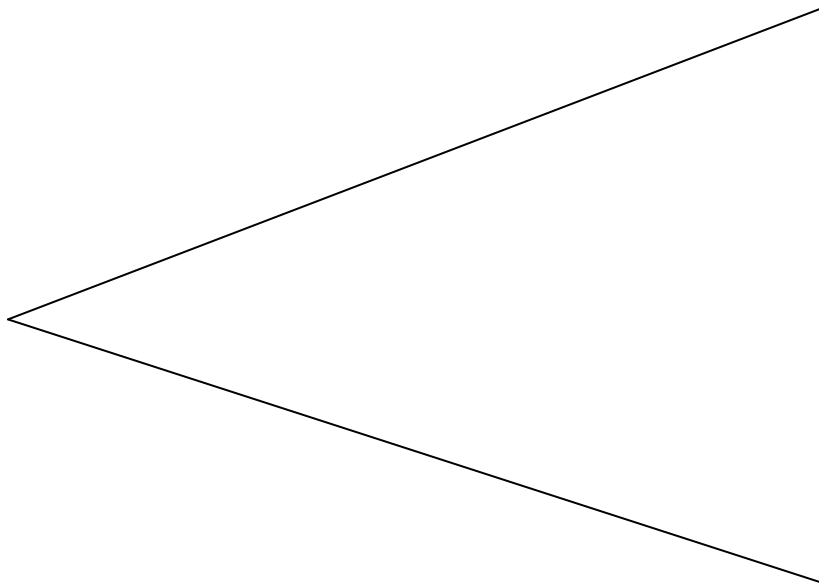
*A loss of a job or a loved one
Lack of social support*

several risk factors

*Alcohol/Drug use
Chronic health problems
Loss of a job or a loved one*

many risk factors

***Past suicide attempts**
Mood disorder
Recent Alcohol/Drug use
Loss of a job or a loved one
Lack of Social Support*



The more risk factors, the greater the risk!

Bolded items are very strong risk factors