

RECOGNIZING SUICIDE LETHALITY (RSL)

Holmes & Howard (1980)

Thirteen Questions on Successful Suicide

Holmes, C.B., Howard, M.E., 1980. Recognition of suicide lethality factors by physicians, mental health professionals, ministers, and college students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 48(3), pp. 383-387.

When answering the following questions please make your responses to individual questions in the context that a person is presenting signs of high suicide lethality. Please circle the letter indicating the answer that is most correct for each question.

Persons who are most likely to succeed in committing suicide are:

1. female and under 50 years of age
2. female and over 50 years of age
3. male and between the age of 15-25 or over 65 years of age
4. Black male and over 50 years of age

Successful suicides are most often characterized by:

1. depression, hopelessness and helplessness, but not anxiety symptoms such as sleep disturbance
2. depression, hopelessness and helplessness, as well as anxiety symptoms such as sleep disturbance
3. no visible signs of either depression or anxiety
4. anxiety symptoms, but very seldom showing signs of depression

A great percentage of successful suicides involve persons who are:

1. married
2. single
3. widowed, separated or divorced
4. any of the above categories, since there is not significant difference in marital relationships.

In regard to current pressures affecting persons at the time they make a suicide attempt:

1. Persons under the effects of an innmediate stress are most likely to succeed.
2. persons under an innmediate stress are not likely at that time to succeed
3. the factor of immediate stress is not critical in determining the lethality of a suicide attempt
4. none ofthe above are correct

Regarding the onset of suicidal symptoms in a person's behaviour:

1. a gradually developing group of symptoms indicates that the person is more likely to commit suicide
2. a relatively quick onset of symptoms is the most dangerous sign of a successful suicide attempt
3. very little evidence has been found to indicate any correlation between onset of symptoms and suicide lethality
4. both gradual and quick onset of symptoms of suicide are equally dangerous for successful suicide

A potentially suicidal individual is more likely to succeed in the attempt if that person:

1. has no idea how he or she will actually do it
2. is afraid to think of how the actual attempt will be made.
3. has a definite plan of how it will be done.
4. appears very confused about actually how it will be done

Likelihood of successful suicide is geater when:

1. a person continues social contacts as if nothing is wrong
2. a person is very gregarious with a variety of social contacts

3. a person is socially isolated from friends and relatives
4. a person keeps in contact with relatives but is isolated from friends and recent acquaintances.

With regard to alcoholics and gay/lesbian people the suicide rate is:

1. higher than the national average
2. lower than the national average
3. the same as the national average
4. higher for alcoholics and lower for homosexuals compared to the national average

A person has the highest potential for successful suicide if:

1. there is no previous history of suicide attempts
2. there is a history of previous suicide attempts
3. there is no history of previous attempts but some suicidal thoughts have been present
4. the person has never contemplated suicide

The most dangerously suicidal individual with regard to medical history is an individual who:

1. has never had physical complaints or seen a doctor
2. has a long history of chronic illness but doesn't believe in doctors
3. has a long history of chronic illness and many visits to physicians during this period
4. has had no physical complaints but sees a doctor occasionally for checkups with rigid regularity

If relatives exist, a dangerously suicidal person would likely:

1. not be in communication with them
2. see them often, trying to communicate with them
3. keep in communication with them but only from a distance, like writing or calling them on the phone
4. none of the above, since there is no significant difference

An individual would be more likely to be an imminent suicide victim if:

1. there is a significant other person who was extremely important to that individual and who was trying in vain to help
2. there is a significant other person who rejects the individual
3. the month is February
4. none of the above is statistically significant

A critical factor in determining the lethality of a potentially suicidal person is if that person:

1. has never seen a physician
2. is a member of the middle socioeconomic class
3. is a young Caucasian female
4. has seen a physician within the last six months