

## Generic Distress Intervention Guidelines

- A calm and nonjudgmental approach - take them seriously
- Use age-appropriate language
- Involve parents/caregivers in the process
- Explain your role
- Empathy & Validation
  - ✓ It is not comfortable to be in crisis
  - ✓ There's Ambivalence
  - ✓ Good for you for talking about it
  - ✓ There are positive ways out, let's find it
- Encourage social support to reduce isolation, motivate in problem resolution & distraction
- Provide crisis information & Education
  - ✓ Crisis happens to everyone
  - ✓ A signal that something needs to be taken care of
  - ✓ It will take time
  - ✓ Opportunity to learn new ways
- Give lifestyle advice as you would with any other patients, congruent with their actual state. Insisting on the well known link between physical & mental & mood (Healthy body, Healthy mind!).
  - ✓ exercise,
  - ✓ meditation & mindfulness,
  - ✓ nutrition,
  - ✓ sleep,
  - ✓ etc.
- Promote Mental Health (and other) resources in the region to help on specific issues: Referral is good but in a crisis situation, a **safe and caring transfer** is better, meaning :
  - ✓ Stay involved with the patient until they are connected with the appropriate resource,
  - ✓ Provide the Resource with a letter outlining your concerns and how you can be contacted (cc your patient).



## Suicide Thoughts / Plan

☞ Have you ever wished you were dead? OR Have you ever thought things were so bad that life wasn't worth living?

**AND**

☞ Are you thinking of suicide? OR Have you been thinking of killing yourself?

**IF YES...**

- How often do you think about suicide (weekly, daily or hourly) ?
- Have you been planning to end your life? (What (How), Where, When):
  - ☞ Do you have a timeline in mind?
  - ☞ Are you making preparations?
  - ☞ Have you ever rehearsed a plan (in your head or for real)?

### RED FLAG

- Frequent (every day) thoughts of suicide

- Advise to make a safe house (guns, etc.) and limit pills in prescription (not to provide any means)
- Encourage connection to community resources
- Create a safety plan including actions toward solutions, an agreement to call crisis lines AND come back see you if the situation worsens

### RED FLAGS

- Plan (Where, **when**, with what) organized/ prepared
- Access to a mean (or in possession)

- Share your worries & that you will help
- Do not let the patient go home
- Safe and caring transfer to emergency services

### 24/7 Crisis Lines:

- (under 18) Pathstone Crisis Services 1-800-263-4944
- (16 and up) COAST Niagara 1-866-550-5205 x 1
- (all ages) Distress Centre Niagara 905-688-3711

- Walk-in Counseling
- Hospital ER (Form 1)
- 911

**If Suicide (thoughts and plan) is not a worry in the short term, it is still important to explore the following elements that, alone or combined, could have an impact on triggering a suicidal act**



## Changes in functioning

☞ Do you believe things can/will get better?

☞ How is your \_\_\_\_\_ lately?

- Sleep
- Emotions & moods
- Social life
- Appetite
- Self-care
- Concentration/memory
- Work/school attendance & performance

☞ How different from your usual self is this?

### RED FLAG

- HOPELESSNESS

- Share your worries & that you will help
- See for immediate follow-up; Do not let the patient go home without an appointment with resource (Safe and caring transfer to Mental Health Services)

### RED FLAGS

- Depression
- Severe anxiety
- Significant changes in usual self; over a significant period of time

- Medications & psychotherapy
- Encouragement to involve significant others in support
- Follow-up appointment

### Connect to Mental Health Services :

- (18 and under) Contact Niagara 905-684-3407
- Mental Health & Addictions Access Line 1-866-550-5205 x 2 (24/7)



## Impulsivity

☞ Are you more impulsive recently?

☞ Do you find that you are making decisions on the spur of the moment that you regret later?

☞ Do you ever do things without thinking them through?

☞ Do you fear that you could lose control?

☞ Do you feel irritable? Angry?

☞ What do you do when you are...?

### RED FLAGS

- Aggressive
- No self control (very impulsive)

- Reflect negative impact in life and relationships
- With suicidal thoughts – Safe and caring transfer to Emergency or Mental Health services

### RED FLAG

- Hallucination (Telling to kill oneself or others)

- Share your worries & that you will help
- Do not let the patient go home
- Safe and caring transfer to emergency services

### Emergency

- 911
- Psychiatric ER (Form 1)

### Mental Health Services :

- (18 and under) Contact Niagara 905-684-3407
- Mental Health & Addictions Access Line 1-866-550-5205 x 2 (24/7)



## Past attempt(s)

☞ Have you ever tried to kill yourself or intentionally harm yourself?

☞ Did you go to the hospital?

☞ When did that happen?

☞ What do you think about it now? and how do you feel compared with then?

☞ What was the trigger then?

### RED FLAGS

- Recent (in the last 6 months)
- Disappointed to be alive
- Similarities with current situation

- Share your worries & that you will help
- See for immediate follow-up; Do not let the patient go home without an appointment with resource (Warm and safe transfer to Mental Health Services or emergency services)

### 24/7 Crisis Lines: (see # above)

- Pathstone Crisis Services
- COAST Niagara
- Distress Centre Niagara

### Mental Health Services: (see # above)

- Contact Niagara
- Mental Health & Addictions Access Line



## Substance Use

☞ How do you describe your alcohol/drug use? (amount, frequency)

☞ Have you been using drugs or alcohol more than you usually do?

☞ How would someone close to you describe it?

☞ Do you find your thoughts of suicide increase when you are using alcohol or drugs (during or not long after)?

### RED FLAGS

- Current intoxication
- Increase of consumption
- Relapse (spec. with consequences)

- Share your worries & that you will help
- See for immediate follow-up
- Safe and caring transfer to emergency services

### RED FLAG

- Lack of concern for wellbeing or safety

- Compare with Suicidal Thoughts answers and review if needed

### Connect to Addictions Services:

- Mental Health & Addictions Access Line 1-866-550-5205 x 2 (24/7)
- Community Addictions Services of Niagara (CASON) 905-684-1183