ECHO IDAHO

Counseling Techniques for Substance Use Disorders

Developing Effective Safety Plans for SUD Clients

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Disclosures

- I do not have any disclosures to acknowledge

Learning Objectives

- Identify what a safety plan is
- Learn the components of a Suicide Safety Plan

Review

- Person-first language.
- Addiction vs physical dependence.
- Addiction is a treatable chronic medical disease.
- It involves complex interactions between neurobiology, genetics, environment, and life experience.
- It is defined as a “chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug-seeking and use despite adverse consequences”.
- Prevention and treatment approached are about as successful as methods for other chronic diseases.

Words are Important

Words to Use	Words to Avoid
Person with a substance use disorder	Addict/drug abuser
Person with alcohol use disorder	Alcoholic
Substance use disorder	Drug problem, drug habit
Drug misuse, harmful use	Drug abuse
Substance use	Substance abuse
Not actively using	Clean
Testing positive for substance use	A clean drug screen
Actively using	Dirty
Testing positive for substance use	A dirty drug screen
Person in recovery, person in long-term recovery	Former/reformed addict/alcoholic

What is a Suicide Safety Plan

- A checklist of personalized strategies to follow during an emotional crises
- A problem-solving tool
- A collaboratively developed strategy for managing acute periods of risk

Key Elements of Suicide Prevention

- Adherence by the suicidal person
- Emphasis on skills training
- Prioritization of self-management
- Easy access to crisis services

Functional Model of Suicide (Nock & Prinstein 2004)

	Reinforcement	
	Positive	Negative
Internal	Adding something desirable *I want to feel something*	Reducing tension or negative affect *I want to stop feeling bad*
Social External	Gaining something from others *I want other to know how I'm feeling*	Escape interpersonal task demand *I want to avoid doing something*

Common Reactions to Suicidal Individuals

FEAR	→	Helplessness Hopelessness
ANXIETY	→	Over-protectiveness Under-protectiveness
ANGER	→	Lack of Compassion Criticism

Goals for Safety Planning

YOU	TOGETHER	SUICIDAL INDIVIDUAL
Get Information		Stop Feeling bad
Create a plan	Solve Problem	End Suffering
Keep person alive		Not burden people

Necessity to Create Plan Together

- Individualized to the person
- Developed together

Ask the person to describe the chronology of the event(s) for the suicidal episode

"Let's talk about your suicide attempt/what's been going on lately?"

"Can you tell me the story of what happened?"

Ask about events, thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and behaviors

"What happened next?"

"And then what happened?"

"What were you saying to yourself at that point?"

"Did you notice any sensations in your body at that point?"

Introduce the Safety Plan

“I can see how you got to that point. If you could change one thing about what’s happening to you right now, what would it be?”

“What would you like to be different about what’s going on right now?”

“It sounds like things haven’t been going really well for you lately. Of all those issue and problems you described, which one would you say you want to change the most?”

Hand written

Use an index card or a small piece of paper

Avoid large or pre-printed forms

Ask individual to hand write their plan

* Evaluate the plan: Ask scaling question about how likely to use the plan

Safety Plan Components

A. Triggers/Warning Signs (thoughts, images, mood, situation, behavior) that a crisis may be developing:

B. Coping Skills/ Distraction Strategies – Things I can do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person (relaxation technique, physical activity):

C. Social Settings that provide distraction:

D. Supportive People whom I can ask for help (include phone numbers when possible):

E. Professionals who I can contact during a crisis including phone numbers:

F. Ways to make Safe Environments:

G. Reasons for Living: The one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is:

H. Action for if Still Not Feeling Safe:

Triggers/Warning Signs

When the Plan Should Be Used: This step will involve making yourself familiar with what types of situations, images, thoughts, feelings and behaviors might precede or accompany suicidal urges for you. List these warnings signs so that you can refer back to them when deciding whether to activate your plan.

Examples:

"When I feel suicidal, I tend to isolate myself and not take good care of my health."

"Suicidal thoughts are often triggered for me when I am reminded of my childhood abuse.“

Clarifications: “what are some of your indicators that things aren’t going so well and are getting out of control?” “What are some things you notice inside yourself during these situations?”

Coping Skills/ Distraction Strategies

What I Can Do to Calm/Comfort Myself If I Am Feeling Suicidal: Create a list for yourself of activities that are soothing to you when you are upset.

Examples: Taking a hot showers, listening to music, exercising

Clarifications: “When feeling upset or stressed, what are some things that help you to calm down or feel less stressed?” “What are some things you used to find helpful when stressed, even if you don’t do them anymore?”

Social Settings

How Can I Make My Environment Safe? Plan what steps you can take to make yourself safe. This may involve removing or securing any items that you are likely to use to hurt yourself or going to another location until the urges have passed. It may also involve getting another person involved to help you.

Examples: "When I am feeling suicidal, I will ask my peers to not let me isolate." Or "When I feel like hurting myself, I will go to a public place, like the lounge, counselor's office or outside with a peer to distract myself."

Supportive People

Who Can I Talk To? Keep a list of contacts you can talk to if you are unable to distract yourself with self-help measures. List names, phone numbers or other contact information and be sure to have backups in case your first choice is unavailable.

Examples: Your significant other, friends, relatives, pastor

Clarification: “When feeling stressed or upset, who helps to take your mind off of things or cheer you up?” “Who do you know who provides you with support during tough times?”

Professionals who I can contact

Who Can I Talk To If I Need Professional Assistance? Create a list of all professional resources available to you, along with their phone numbers, email addresses and other pertinent contact information.

Examples: Your counselor, your therapist, a crisis hotline, Sponsor, or accountability partner.

Reasons for Living

What Are My Reasons for Living? Create a list of your reasons for living. When you are feeling suicidal, it is very easy to get caught up in the pain you are feeling and forget the positives in your life. Your list will help you refocus your attention on the reasons to keep going until your suicidal thoughts and feelings pass.

Examples: My children, my spouse, my faith in God

Clarification: “What gives you a sense of purpose and meaning in life?” “What stands in the way of you killing yourself?”

Action for If Still Not Feeling Safe

What To Do If I Am Still Not Feeling Safe: If all other steps have failed to keep you feeling safe keep the name, address and directions to the hospital listed in your plan for easy access. If you do not feel that you can get to the hospital safely on your own, call 911.

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988

Go to the hospital emergency room or Crisis Center

References

- Strong Start Training / UT Health San Antonio

- Dr Craig Bryan, ABPP developer of CRP training
  - The Ohio State University – College of Medicine

- STRIVE – Suicide and Trauma Reduction Initiative for Veterans, First Responders and Their Families

Thank You

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