



Q&A: Suicide Assessment: The Tough Questions

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Learning objectives

- Attendees will learn methods to develop a safe space for suicide assessment to occur
- Attendees will learn three (3) methods for suicide assessment
- Attendees will identify no less than three (3) aspects of counter transference that can impact the therapeutic relationship

Disclaimer

- Sometimes talking about the topic of suicide can bring up several emotions
- For some, the emotions can include anger, sadness, irritation and even frustration
- It is important to consider your own personal feelings of suicide as part of your own self reflection



- **Suicide** is defined as an act or instance of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally
- **Suicide Attempt** is a non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with an intent to die as a result of the behavior; might not result in injury
- **Suicidal Ideation** is thinking about or planning a suicide attempt. This can range from fleeting thoughts to a detailed plan

Definitions

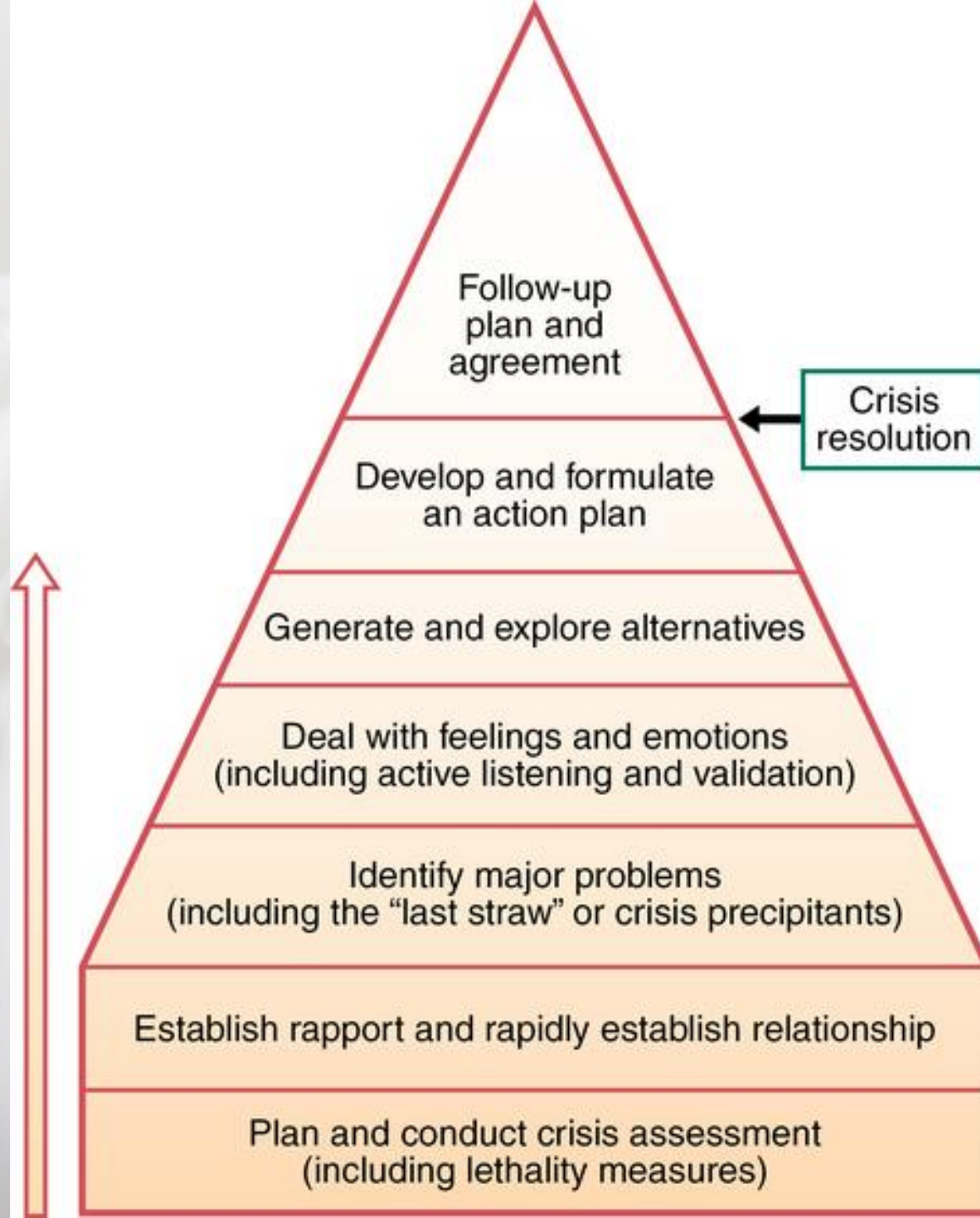
Video: Suicidal Thoughts



Assessment: Warning Signs of a Crisis

- Abusive behavior to self and others, including substance use or self-harm (cutting)
- Isolation from school, work, family, friends
- Loses touch with reality (psychosis) - unable to recognize family or friends, confused, strange ideas, thinks they're someone they're not, doesn't understand what people are saying, hears voices, sees things that aren't there
- Paranoia





Robert's Seven Stages of Intervention

Lethality assessment

- Rather than grilling the client for assessment information, use an artful interviewing style that allows this information to emerge as the client's story unfolds.
- A good assessment is likely to have occurred if the clinician has a solid understanding of the client's situation



- “Do you want to kill yourself?”
- “Are you thinking about suicide?”
- “Do you have a plan?”
- “Is there anyone that helps you when you don't feel great?”
- “Would it be ok if I sit with you for a little bit”
- “Can I come back/call you tomorrow and check in?”



What can I say?

Video: Self-Care & Compassion



Wrap up

- Suicide can feel like one of the scariest and challenging things to talk about.
- Many survivors of suicide attempts often cite that if even one person had asked if they were ok, they would not have made the attempt.

