Potential Suicide Risk in Adolescents Checklist

Behavioral Indications

____ Sudden Changes in Behavior: withdrawal, apathy, too much sleep or too little sleep, dramatic drop in academic grades or performance.

____ Recent Losses: divorce, separation from family members, loss of self-esteem, loss of a relationship (boyfriend, girlfriend), loss of status (exclusion from peer group, not making grades).

____ Moody or Irritable: excessive fighting or abusive behavior, changes in behavior lasting more than two weeks, overnight feelings of happiness after long bouts of depression (frequently exhibited by teenagers who have decided to kill themselves and are now feeling the calm or peace of mind that follows the decision to die.)

____ Giving Away Personal Possessions: The child begins to give away personal possessions

____ Preoccupation with Dying: i.e. questions about dying, life after death, poetry with morbid themes, statements like, "Everyone would be better off without me", or more direct like, “I feel like killing myself”.

You should also be aware of the criteria that could determine the lethality of the suicidal threat.

____ Desire to be Rescued: Teenagers who plan suicide attempts in areas with little or no chance of interruption have the greatest chance of success. When a teenager reports this to someone, the risk should be considered very serious. Many suicide attempts are made with the knowledge, because of routine, of someone coming home and hopefully insuring a rescue. However, many deaths have occurred when such a plan has not materialized, i.e. parent stopping off at a neighbor's house before coming home.

____ The Time of the Attempt: The chance of a suicide attempt increases dramatically whenever a teenager expresses the time he/she would "do it". According to statistics, most teenagers will attempt suicide in their homes between mid-afternoon and midnight.

____ Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs: Whenever a teenager is talking suicide and under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, the suicide risk is very high. Such factors greatly reduce controls and AD/HD to the teenager’s impulsivity.
___ PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS: Any teenager is a very high risk if they have had previous attempts.

___ A SUICIDAL NOTE OR PLAN: Teenagers who write a note to parents, friends or others indicating the possibility and manner of hurting themselves, will have a greater likelihood of attempting suicide.

___ ILLNESS OR LONG STANDING EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS: When a chronic illness or long term emotional stress is present, the teenager is more of a risk for suicide.

___ LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS: The chances for suicide are greatest when a teenagers have few peer support systems and/or little parental involvement or support.

AVAILABILITY OF OPTIONS: Teenagers who threaten to hurt themselves a certain way, and have the availability of that method are at a higher risk; i.e. a plan to use their father's gun.

If you observe such behaviors contact the school psychologist immediately to discuss your concerns and observations. Never make a diagnosis of emotional disturbance or give an opinion since this is something that is only allowed by a psychologist, psychiatrist or mental health clinic.