

Assessment of Suicide Risk*

The patient and family need to partner with the provider to monitor safety in the depressed adolescent. When doing a risk assessment on a suicidal teen, there are several risk factors which should be taken into consideration. A mnemonic that can help with this assessment is “**SAD PERSONS**.” Risk factors are ranked with stars, ranging from 0-2, with 2 stars representing increased risk.

Adapted-SAD PERSONS Scale for Children and Youth

Sex (males are considered at increased risk)

Age (adolescents aged 15 and older are at greater risk than younger children)

Depression or affective disorder

Previous suicide attempt

Ethanol or drug abuse

Rational thinking loss (from physical or psychological disorder)

Social supports lacking

Organized plan

Negligent parenting, significant family stressors, or suicidal modeling by parents or siblings

School problems (aggressive behaviors or experiencing humiliation)

References:

1. Patterson W, Dohn H, Bird J, Patterson G. Psychosomatics, 1983, 24, 343-349
2. Juhnke, G.E. “SAD PERSONS scale review.” Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development, 1994, 27, 325-328
3. Juhnke, G.E. (“The adapted SAD PERSONS: As assessment scale designed for use with children” Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 1996, 252-258

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