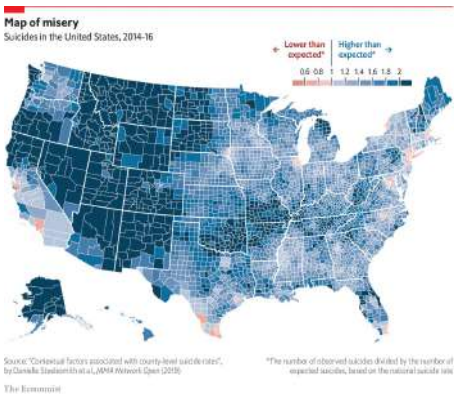




SUICIDES

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In this lesson, we talk about suicides and depression. Unfortunately, both these situations are fairly common in the United States. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention states that on average, there are 132 suicides per day. A CDC survey states that 0.5 percent of adults have made at least one suicide attempt, and this translates to about 1.4 million adults.

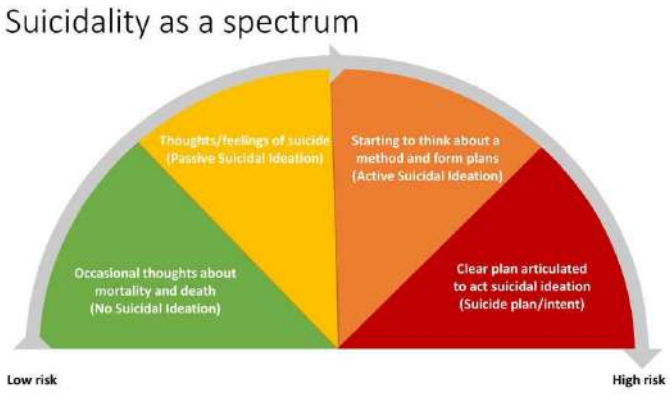
These numbers are sure to give you an idea of the frequency of suicides. And this is why we will discuss ways to identify if a person is suicidal and what you can do to help prevent it.

Good Studying.

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About Suicide – Definitions

- Suicide
- Suicide Attempt
- Suicidal Ideation



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Let's start with some definitions of suicide. According to the National Institute of Mental Health

- Suicide is defined as death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.
- A suicide attempt is a non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt might not result in injury.
- Suicidal ideation refers to thinking about, considering, or planning suicide.

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CAUSE OF SUICIDE – DEPRESSION

- Depression is one of the two most common causes of suicide
- Complex condition caused by abuse, medications, conflict, death of loved one, genetics, life-changing events, serious illness, personal problems, and substance abuse.
- Chemical imbalance



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The two most common causes of suicide are depression and bipolar disorder.

Depression is a broad mental illness that affects more than 18 million people in the United States. Though the exact cause of the illness is not known, it is considered to be an extremely complex condition that could be causes by one or more of the following.

- Abuse
- Medications
- Conflict
- Death or loss of a loved one

- Genetics
- Major life-changing events
- Serious illness
- Personal problems
- And substance abuse

From a pathophysiological standpoint, depression occurs when messages are not transmitted properly between nerves due to changes in chemicals such as serotonin and norepinephrine. This chemical imbalance can cause people to act as if there are no options available for them in the future. In other words, the person believes that this state is permanent, and hence choose to commit suicide, because of the perceived lack of options.

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How to Handle Patients with Depression

- Look for signs and symptoms
- Evaluate for the possibility of suicide
- Nearest hospital with mental care services
- Provide transportation
- Document



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As an EMT, you are sure to find many people with depression who may also be suicidal. Look for signs and symptoms of depression like prolonged sadness or loneliness, financial problems, abuse, loss of loved ones, and other factors. Also evaluate if the person is suicidal, and if so, talk to them about it. Refer them to the nearest hospital that has mental care services to reduce the chances of suicide.

Provide transportation if necessary. Document everything.

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Cause of Suicide – Bipolar Depression

- Bipolar I – manic and depressive episode
- Bipolar II – Hypomanic with one or more major depressive episodes
- Mood swings
- Talk to family and friends
- Be ready for aggressive behavior in the manic phase
- Delusions and thought disturbances are common



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Bipolar disorder is another possible cause of suicide. It is associated with episodes of mood swings ranging from depressive lows to manic highs. The exact cause of the bipolar disorder isn't known, but a combination of genetics, environment, and altered brain structure and chemistry may play a role.

There are many variations in bipolar, and out of these, two forms are considered to be suicidal.

The first is bipolar 1, which is characterized by one or more mixed emotions that include a manic and depressive episode. The second variation is bipolar 2,

which is characterized by at least one hypomanic and one or more major depressive episodes.

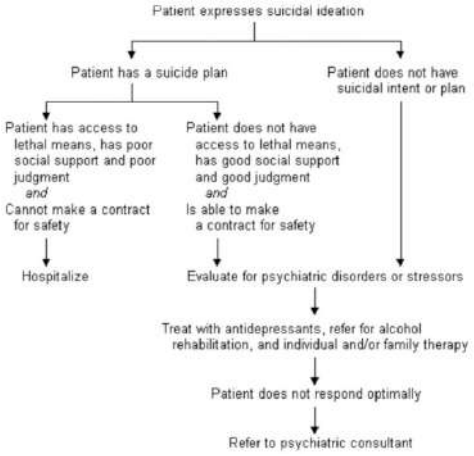
Though the exact reason for bipolar disorder is not known, you can identify this condition by analyzing the patient's mood swings. If it alternates between excitement and depression, you should consider that the person is suffering from bipolar disorder. Talking to family friends and caregivers can give a better idea of this condition. Such patients are known for reckless behavior, especially in the manic phase. Delusions and thought disturbances that extend for a few days are common. And this will likely be followed by many days of depression where the patient can get into a silent mode.

When you encounter such patients, assess the chances for suicide, and decide on transport if needed.

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Assessing Suicidal Patients

- Connect emotionally and engage in verbal de-escalation
- Reassure that help is available
- If a person has an unsuccessful suicide attempt, they are likely to repeat it, unless the root cause is identified
- Evaluate mental state
- Check for vitals



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In general, if a person talks about committing suicide and has already planned for it, your best option is to connect with that person at an emotional level and engage in verbal de-escalation. While doing this, keep a calm tone, and reassure them that help is available right away.

Follow these basic 5 steps to assess a patient with a mood disorder that may be suicidal:

1. Identify safety threats;
2. Establish a rapport;
3. Rule out medical causes of symptoms;

4. Determine whether the patient has any suicidal or homicidal thoughts, and
5. Establish the patient's decision-making capacity.

One aspect to keep in mind is that if someone has already attempted suicide, they are likely to do it again unless they have been treated for depression. According to the American Association of Suicidology, 30 to 40 percent of individuals who have killed themselves, have attempted suicide in the past.

The circumstances of each case may vary greatly, so evaluate a person's physical condition and mental state to determine if that person is suicidal and needs help or emergency transport.

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TEEN SUICIDES

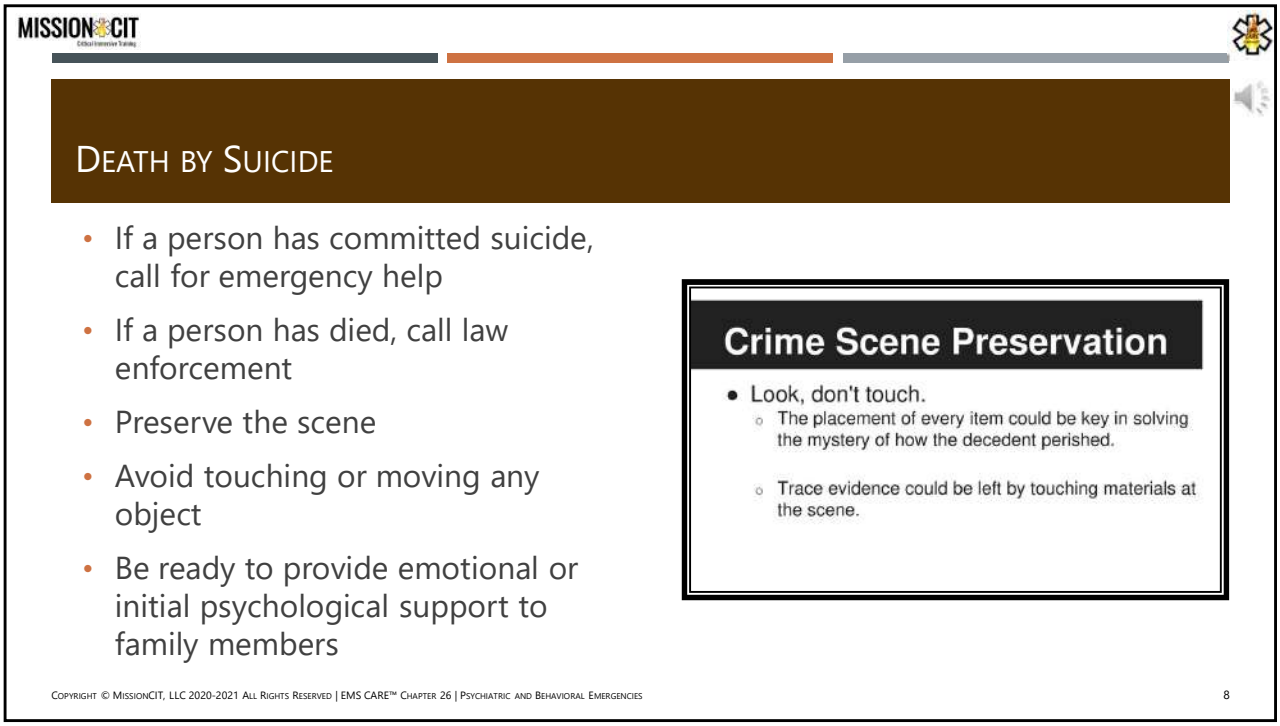
- Look for the presence of alcohol and drugs
- Check vitals to decide emergency transport
- Tend to respond well when you express sincere concern
- Respect privacy
- Talk about patient's feelings
- Be empathetic and create trust
- Apprise parents and caregivers



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Suicide is the third common cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 24. It can happen due to a number of reasons.When you walk in to handle a suicidal teenager, look for the presence of alcohol and drugs. Check the patient's vitals and decide if transportation is necessary. Gently talk to the teenager and transport the patient to the hospital for psychological care. Most adolescents with behavioral issues tend to respond well to people who express sincere and genuine concern. While doing so, ask appropriate questions and respect their privacy. Allow the patient to talk about their

feelings as this usually steers them away from suicidal thoughts. Be empathetic to the situation, and create a feeling of trust. Apprise parents and caregivers of the situation, and encourage them to watch out for suicidal signs, and to provide the necessary help for the teenager.



Sometimes, a person may have already committed suicide before you reach the scene. In that case, call for emergency help right away and inform law enforcement.

Preserve the scene and avoid touching or moving any object. If you have identified the apparent object or mechanism of suicide, ask the law enforcement officer if you should transport the object along with the patient. For example, if a patient has committed suicide by drug overdose, transport the opened pill bottle with the patient, so the coroner may better establish the cause of death during their toxicology workup.

Also, be ready to provide emotional or initial psychological support to family members.

With this, we have come to the end of this lesson. Next, Missah will take you through the lesson reviews to recap on all that we have learned so far.

Good studying.