

Assessment and Management of Suicidal Ideation:

A Structured and Experiential Approach to

Clinical Decision Making and Client Safety



Participant Workbook

Instructions for Activities

Complete each Brave Play activity, reflection, processing question, and selected knowledge check when the corresponding slide appears.

Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Learning Objectives: Use this workbook to support developmentally appropriate screening, risk stratification, clinical decision making, safety planning, crisis coping strategies, crisis response, experiential practice, and clinician self-regulation.

What do you want to learn from this video?

Part 1: Foundations of Suicide Risk and Clinical Presence

Brave Play Kit Activity: Choose 2-3 atoms to represent your initial reactions when a client discloses suicidal ideation. Atoms (which items did you choose):

What do these atoms represent about your initial reactions?

PHILOSOPHY OF SUICIDE RISK MANAGEMENT

True or False: In suicide prevention and suicide risk management, “slowing down vs. reactive care” refers to a shift from crisis-driven, liability-focused intervention toward deliberate, collaborative clinical engagement. ■ True ■ False

SLOWING DOWN VS REACTIVE CARE

Fill in the blank: “Slowing Down” includes regulating clinicians _____ and collaborating transparently with the patient.

NOTICE YOUR INTERNAL RESPONSE

Instructions for Activity : Reflect on your internal responses to the suicidal scenario. Notice somatic responses, body sensations, thoughts, and impulses.

Ayana scenario: Ayana is 23 and lives alone. After unexpectedly encountering a man who sexually abused her at age 12, she became afraid to go out, struggled with sleep and panic attacks, missed work, lost her job, and texted a friend that she could not deal with the panic attacks anymore and wanted it all to be over.

1. What somatic responses did you notice?
2. How does the clinician's state impact decision making?
3. How would a client respond to calm/empathic versus panicked, fast-talking, disbelieving, or dismissive responses?

Part 2: Suicide Risk Screening Across Development

Brave Play Activity: Select a Brave Play atom to represent each developmental stage you work with: Child, Adolescent, Adult, Older Adult. Place them in order from most to least confident in assessing for suicide risk. Child: _____ Adolescent: _____ Adult: _____ Older Adult: _____

List atoms from **most** confident to **least** confident:

Which developmental stage do you feel the most confident assessing for suicide risk? What factors help you feel confident?

Which developmental stage presents the greatest challenge? Which factors present the greatest challenge?

Counselor's Delivery

True or False: Match your language to your client's age and maturity level, slow down and speak clearly, and use questions in a natural conversational way. ■ True ■ False

SAFE

Fill in the blank: SAFE is a structured approach that promotes clarity and _____.

Brave Play Activity: Choose the Child or Adult screener. First move through the questions in order. Next, identify how you would use the screener questions in a natural relational dialogue.

1. What differences might arise when transitioning from a structured approach to a more natural, relational dialogue? How could this impact the client's comfort level, pacing, tone, or responses?

2. Are there situations in which you might prioritize completing the screener over establishing a genuine connection?

Part 3: Risk Stratification and Decision Making

Brave Play Activity: Select 2-3 atoms that represent risk factors for suicide you have personally encountered in your clinical work. Atoms (which items did you choose):

1. What risk factors do your selected atoms represent?
2. Which risk factors are most likely to shift your clinical stance from assessment to intervention?
3. Which risk factors carry the most urgency?

Action to Take: Depending on the Risk

True or False: High risk may require sending the client to the local hospital for evaluation. ■ True ■ False

Decision Making Framework

What are the Four core questions of PACK?

Brave Play Experiential - Exercise: "Decision Mapping"

Instructions for Activity: Review all three case scenarios, assess risk and protective factors, evaluate ability to maintain safety, and map your clinical reasoning for outpatient versus hospitalization.

Scenario #1

Jordan, 16, reports passive suicidal ideation: "Sometimes I think everyone would be better off without me," but denies a specific plan, intent, identified means, or prior attempts.

Risk/protective factors and recommendation:

Scenario #2

Marcus is more shut down than usual and reports thinking about ending his life using a firearm he keeps at home. He has picked a time - that evening - and has been thinking through the details for several days. He does not want to go to the hospital on his own.

Risk/protective factors and recommendation:

Scenario #3

Evelyn, 52, is seen eight months after her husband died. She gives the counselor a wrapped item and says she has been thinking about who should have the things that matter to her. Tearfully, she says she is "getting things in order" and "won't be needing it." She denies suicidal ideation but becomes avoidant of eye contact.

Risk/protective factors and recommendation:

1. Did you notice anxiety, urgency, fear, uncertainty, or confidence in your decision making?
2. Were there moments where you hesitated before choosing hospitalization or outpatient care?
3. Which scenario did you feel most comfortable assessing?

Part 4: Safety Planning and Structured Tools

Brave Play Activity: Pick an atom that symbolizes what makes safety planning feel challenging for you as a counselor. Atoms (which item did you choose):

What does this reveal about your approach to safety planning?

Can you think of a time when you didn't experience this challenge while developing a safety plan? What was different?

Safety Rating Scale

True or False: This is a powerful tool to increase client's awareness and manage the intensity of suicidal ideation. ■ True ■ False

Safety Rating Scale helps counselors to identify:

Brave Play Experiential Exercise: Build a Safety Plan That Works

Instructions for Activity: Create a simplified, realistic safety plan. Use only 2-5 coping strategies that align with protocol principles.

Warning signs:

2-5 coping strategies:

Supports/environmental safety:

Would the client realistically be able to use this safety plan during intense emotional distress at 11 p.m.? Why or why not?

What makes safety plans usable vs overwhelming?

Part 5: Crisis Intervention and Regulation Skills

Brave Play Activity: Choose 2-3 atoms to express what emotions initially come up for you during crisis intervention and how you regulate yourself during the session. Atoms (which items did you choose):

Why did you choose these atoms?

Coping Strategies When Clients Are In Crisis

Fill in the blank: The goal of distraction is creating _____ from suicidal thoughts, not problem-solving.

Self-Soothing Techniques for SI

Fill in the blank: Self soothing helps someone tolerate and move through the _____ intensity of a situation.

Crisis Survival Skills for SI

True or False: Crisis survival skills are designed for short-term stabilization by rapidly downshifting physiological arousal. ■ True ■ False

Brave Play Activity

Instructions for Activity: You will complete each of the three stations before answering the questions below.

1: Describe a new insight gained and how you will integrate it into your work.

2: What was the most challenging part, and what skill or mindset was strengthened?

3: Which strategies are most accessible under stress?

Part 6: Real-World Application and Crisis Response

Brave Play Activity

Instructions for Activity: Pick an atom to represent your reaction to a client or their parent/guardian appearing hesitant to seek outside resources during a crisis. Atoms (which items did you choose):

What does this reveal about your confidence level as a clinician in managing clients reactions in a crisis situation?

Responding to Crisis Calls (Admin)

Fill in the blank: If a caller is in immediate danger, tell them to call _____.

True or False: Always notify the Practice Manager and complete full documentation the same day.

■ True ■ False

Brave Play Experiential- Role Play Activity

Instructions for Activity: For each scenario, imagine each situation in detail and write out how you would respond: a caller in distress; a parent calling about their child; and a resistant client. Practice calm, clear language and quick decision making. Pay attention to tone, clarity, and your own emotional regulation.

1. Caller in distress:

2. Parent call:

3. Resistant client:

Which situation would you anticipate requiring the most careful management of your own emotional regulation and why?