Decision Tree Interview


Assess History of Suicidal Behavior:
1. Past suicidal behavior: Have you attempted suicide in the past? How many times? Methods used? What happened (e.g., went to hospital?).
2. Do you have a history of non-suicidal self-injury? (e.g., burning, cutting, etc.)

Assess Suicidal Desire and Ideation:
3. Have you been having thoughts or images of suicide?
4. Do you ever think about wanting to be dead?
5. Frequency of ideation: How often do you think about suicide?
6. What reasons do you have for dying? What reasons do you have to continue living?

Assess Resolved Plans and Preparations:
7. Duration [look for pre-occupation]: When you have these thoughts, how long do they last?
8. Intensity: How strong is your intent to kill yourself? (0 = not intense at all, 10 = very intense)
9. Specified plan [look for vividness, detail]: Do you have a plan for how you would kill yourself?
10. Means and opportunity: Do you have [the pills, a gun, etc.]? Do you think you’ll have an opportunity to do this?
11. Have you made preparations for a suicide attempt? [e.g., buying pills]
12. Do you know when you expect to use your plan?
13. Courage & competence: How scared do you feel about making an attempt? How courageous do you feel about making an attempt? How able do you feel to make an attempt?

Assess Other Significant Findings:
14. Precipitant stressors: Has anything especially stressful happened to you recently?
15. Hopelessness: Do you feel hopeless?
16. Impulsivity: When you’re feeling badly, how do you cope? Sometimes when people feel badly, they do impulsive things to feel better. Has this ever happened to you? [e.g., drinking alcohol, running away, binge eating]
17. Has anyone in your family made a suicide attempt or died by suicide? Relationship to you? Thoughts and feelings about this?
18. Presence of psychopathology (rated by interviewer)
19. Thwarted belongingness: Do you feel connected to other people? Do you live alone? Do you have someone you can call when you’re feeling badly? [are supportive relationships completely absent?]
20. Perceived burdensomeness: Sometimes people think: “The people in my life would be better off if I were gone.” Do you think that? In what ways do you feel like you contribute meaningfully to those around you? (e.g., at work, at home, in the community)

Protective Factors:
21. Adequate social support (use responses to item 19 to assess this)
22. Responsibility to others (use responses to item 20 to assess this)
23. Good problem-solving ability: When you are experiencing distress, what do you do to resolve it? When you encounter something difficult, do you sometimes feel like you have no idea what to do to get through it?
24. Cultural and religious beliefs against suicide