Suicide Risk Assessment: The SBQ-R Test

by John Lee
Editor

Here's a grim and saddening fact: today, an American is more likely to die from suicide than from a motor vehicle accident.1

So just as you take precautions to stay safe on the roads (you buy cars with airbags, you buckle up, etc.) you should also take precautions to protect yourself, and those you love, from an even greater risk of death: You make mental health a priority, you get help when it’s needed and you never ignore the warning signs of self harm or suicide.

As a starting point, ask yourself: are you or a loved one deemed ‘at risk’ of suicide?

Probably not something you'd know offhand; fortunately, you can find out by answering the following 4 questions as truthfully as you can.

4-Questions: The SBQ-R Suicide Risk Assessment2

The SBQ-R is an abbreviated name for The Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire – Revised. It is a clinically valid and reliable test that is used to quickly identify people who are at increased risk to commit suicide.3

Instructions

Answer each question as honestly as you can. Circle one answer only for each question.

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Question 1. Have you ever thought about or attempted to kill yourself?

(circle one only)

- 1 = Never
- 2 = It was just a brief passing thought
- 3a = I have had a plan at least once to kill myself but did not try to do it
Question 2. How often have you thought about killing yourself in the past year?
(circle one only)

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely (1 time)
- 3 = Sometimes (2 times)
- 4 = Often (3-4 times)
- 5 = Very Often (5 or more times)

Question 3. Have you ever told someone that you were going to commit suicide, or that you might do it?
(circle one only)

- 1 = No
- 2a = Yes, at one time, but did not really want to die
- 2b = Yes, at one time, and really wanted to die
- 3a = Yes, more than once, but did not want to do it
- 3b = Yes, more than once, and really wanted to do it

Question 4. How likely is it that you will attempt suicide someday?
(circle one only)

- 0 = Never
- 1 = No chance at all
- 2 = Rather unlikely
- 3 = Unlikely
- 4 = Likely
- 5 = Rather likely
- 6 = Very likely

Scoring

You circled one answer for each question. Each answer you circled has a number beside it, such as 1, or 2, or 2a or 2b etc. To add up your total score, simply add up the 4 numbers beside your answers.

For example:

(Question 1 = 3a) + (Question 2 = 2) + (Question 3 = 2b) + (Question 4 = 3)

Total score 3+2+2+3 = 10

Are you at risk? - Interpreting Scores
- **For adults in the general population:** People with a score of **7 or greater** are considered at risk of suicide

- **For adults in a psychiatric inpatient program:** People with a score of **8 or greater** are considered at risk of suicide

**References**

1. Suicide among Adults Aged 35–64 Years — United States, 1999–2010
2. SAMHSA: The Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R) - Overview
3. The Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire--Revised (SBQ-R): Validation with Clinical and Nonclinical Samples

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