

PROTECTIVE FACTORS AGAINST SUICIDE IN YOUTH

Protective factors are supporting resources that can act as buffers against suicidal behavior (Gutierrez & Osman 2007). Factors identified that may be protective against suicide include individual, family and community based factors. It is important to note that there is relatively little research done on the role of protective factors in reducing suicidal behavior compared to what is known about risk factors leading to suicidal behavior.

The nature of protective factors builds on an understanding of resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to 'bounce back' and positively adapt in difficult times.

Factors that have been suggested as providing protection against suicidal behaviours

Individual attributes

- Adaptable temperament
- Good self esteem
- Good problem solving skills
- Good coping skills
- Satisfaction in life
- Purpose in life

Relationships

- Family support
- A good emotional relationship with at least one person in the family
- Stable family routine and activities

Community resources and opportunities

- Positive school experiences
- Good social support and social network
- Spiritual faith

Suggested factors contributing to recovery after a suicide attempt

- Seeking help from professional and peers
- Practical problem solving skills
- Thinking positively
- Having a will to live

Assessing protective factors can help in treatment planning by identifying strengths that can be built on.

References

1. Gutierrez, P M. (2007). *Adolescent Suicide: An integrated approach to the assessment of risk and protective factors*. Northern Illinois University Press, Illinois.
2. Beautrais A.L., Collings S.C.D., Ehrhardt P., et al. 2005. *Suicide Prevention: A review of evidence of risk and protective factors, and points of effective intervention*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.