

Uniform Definitions

Definitions

Self-directed violence (analogous to self-injurious behavior)

Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself.

This does not include behaviors such as parachuting, gambling, substance abuse, tobacco use or other risk taking activities, such as excessive speeding in motor vehicles. These are complex behaviors some of which are risk factors for SDV but are defined as behavior that while likely to be life-threatening is not recognized by the individual as behavior intended to destroy or injure the self. (Farberow, N. L. (Ed.) (1980). *The Many Faces of Suicide*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company). These behaviors may have a high probability of injury or death as an outcome but the injury or death is usually considered unintentional. Hanzlick R, Hunsaker JC, Davis GJ. *Guide for Manner of Death Classification*. National Association of Medical Examiners. Available at: <http://www.charlydmiller.com/LIB03/2002NAMEmannerofdeath.pdf>. Accessed 1 Sept 2009.

Self-directed violence is categorized into the following:

Non-suicidal (as defined below)

Suicidal (as defined below).

Non-suicidal self-directed violence

Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself.

There is no evidence, whether implicit or explicit, of suicidal intent. Please see appendix for definition of implicit and explicit.

Suicidal self-directed violence

Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself.

There is evidence, whether implicit or explicit, of suicidal intent.

Undetermined self-directed violence

Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself.

Suicidal intent is unclear based on the available evidence.

Suicide attempt

A non-fatal self-directed potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.

Interrupted self-directed violence – by self or by other

By other - A person takes steps to injure self but is stopped by another person prior to fatal injury. The interruption can occur at any point during the act such as after the initial thought or after onset of behavior.

By self (in other documents may be termed “aborted” suicidal behavior) - A person takes steps to injure self but is stopped by self prior to fatal injury.

Source: Posner K, Oquendo MA, Gould M, Stanley B, Davies M. Columbia Classification Algorithm of Suicide Assessment (C-CASA): Classification of Suicidal Events in the FDA’s Pediatric Suicidal Risk Analysis of Antidepressants. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2007; 164:1035-1043. <http://cssrs.columbia.edu/>

Other suicidal behavior including preparatory acts

Acts or preparation towards making a suicide attempt, but before potential for harm has begun. This can include anything beyond a verbalization or thought, such as assembling a method (e.g., buying a gun, collecting pills) or preparing for one's death by suicide (e.g., writing a suicide note, giving things away). Posner et al, 2007.

Suicide

Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Unacceptable Terms

The panel felt the following terms are unacceptable for describing self-directed violence:

- Completed suicide - This terminology implies achieving a desired outcome whereas those involved in the mission of "reducing disease, premature death, and discomfort and disability" (J. Last, Dictionary of Epidemiology 1988) would view this event as undesirable. Alternate term: suicide
- Failed attempt - This terminology gives a negative impression of the person's action, implying an unsuccessful effort aimed at achieving death. Alternate terms: suicide attempt or suicidal self-directed violence.
- Nonfatal suicide – This terminology portrays a contradiction. "Suicide" indicates a death while "nonfatal" indicates that no death occurred. Alternate term: suicide attempt
- Parasuicide – Formally used to refer to a person's self-directed violence whether or not the individual had an intent to die. However, the World Health Organization is now favoring the term suicide attempt. Alternate terms: non-suicidal self-directed violence or suicidal self-directed violence.
- Successful suicide – This term also implies achieving a desired outcome whereas those involved in the mission of "reducing disease, premature death, and discomfort and disability" would view this event as undesirable. Alternate term: suicide.
- Suicidality - This terminology is often used to refer simultaneously to suicidal thoughts and suicidal behavior. These phenomena are vastly different in occurrence, associated factors, consequences and interventions so should be addressed separately. Alternate terms: suicidal thoughts and suicidal behavior.
- Suicide gesture, Manipulative act, and Suicide threat – Each of these terms gives a value judgment with a pejorative or negative impression of the person's intent. They are usually used to describe an episode of nonfatal, self-directed violence. A more objective description of the event is preferable such as non-suicidal self-directed violence or suicidal self-directed violence.