

**Lethality of method**—The method of choice gives some indication as to the level of seriousness or desire to die. Obviously a gun can do far more irreversible damage than a bottle of aspirin. A slit throat is potentially far more serious than a slit wrist. Historically men have chosen more violent methods than women, but recent reports indicate an increase in violent methods among women. At times the method of choice is simply governed by what's available. I've known kids so intent on dying that they mangled their arms with a plastic picnic knife because it was all they could get.

**Availability of method**—Is the method of choice available? How available is it? The person who's fascinated by ending his or her life with a gun may be less of a risk than someone who's decided to use a less violent means—but has it available. In deciding level of risk we must consider both the method of choice and availability.

**Proximity to help**—The young girl who decides to overdose in an abandoned barn some distance from home or friends should be considered of higher risk than a guy who cuts his wrist in the kitchen when Mom and Dad are in an adjoining room. If a method of choice involves some distance from helping resources (possibility or probability of being discovered), it's of a higher risk.

Although no cry for help should be ignored, the SLAP series of questions should give you a more informed sense of the level of seriousness. You're now prepared to make more intelligent decisions for how you should proceed. The young person who's had a fleeting thought of suicide but has gone no further with it presents far less threat than one who has a clearly imagined plan and intention to die.

The high-risk person shouldn't be left alone even for a brief period of time while you summon help. Contact a doctor or hospital emergency room personnel for help in critical situations.