

THE SUICIDE FUNNEL

Think of the decision to commit suicide as falling within a funnel and chances are, most of the officers reading this have been inside that funnel at some time or another. But we're still here aren't we? So it's important to determine how deep into this funnel of suicide the officer is.

Up here, at the top of the funnel are the officers who have ever had some momentary and passing thought of what it would be like to get rid of our pain by letting go of the steering wheel, or taking a few too many pills, etc. These folks really haven't invested any real thought or energy into the idea. So ask, Have you ever thought about suicide? Or you can ask, have you ever been in so much pain that you've thought about ending it all? The next step deeper into this funnel is thinking about suicide recently as a way to solve current problems or to ease recent pain. So ask, have you thought about suicide lately? The next step is planning the suicide, so it's important to find out if the officer has thought about how they would commit suicide. Ask them, If you were going to commit suicide, have you thought about how you would do it? Ask them if they have thought about what it would take to make them do that. Find out if they have considered when they would do that or where they would do that. If they have thought of a plan, the next important step is to find out if they have thought about how to implement that plan. Where would they get the means to commit suicide, what would they say in the note? Ask them about their message they would leave behind. Ask them why and listen carefully to their reason. The next critical step deeper into the funnel is to actually take steps to implement some part of their plan, like buying the gun or hoarding their medication or writing a note. They're pretty deeply into this funnel when they've done this. They need help to get out of this funnel at this point, probably, as it's pretty tough to climb out alone. Suicide attempts are the next step. The more attempts, or the more serious and life-threatening the attempt, the deeper they've fallen into this funnel. It's really important to pay close attention to any suicide attempt. You see, this decision process can take years or moments. Most officers take some time in this decision process, and sometimes, we can catch them before they slip too deeply into the funnel. Each time they reenter the funnel, it's a little easier to slip farther into the funnel. There are many officers who have been at the top of the funnel. Not so many have been in the middle, planning stages of the funnel and very few have reached the bottom of the funnel. The ones who slip all the way through the funnel are those who commit the final act of suicide. The decision has been made, the plan implemented and their safety device has been released, like a parachutist leaving behind the chute and jumping into the blue sky, falling to his death.

Figure B
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