

Speaker: Shawn Christopher Shea, M.D.

**Uncovering Suicidal Intent:  
the Crux of the Matter  
(A 2-Part Presentation)**

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Speaker: Shawn Christopher Shea, M.D.

**Part 1: Innovative Interviewing  
Techniques for Uncovering  
Sensitive and Taboo Material**

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**About the Speaker**

Shawn Christopher Shea, MD  
Director, Training Institute for Suicide Assessment  
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(603) 763-0536

*Commercial Associations*

- Publishers: Elsevier, Mental Health Presses
- Pharmaceutical Companies: None

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**Over-arching Goal of this Session**

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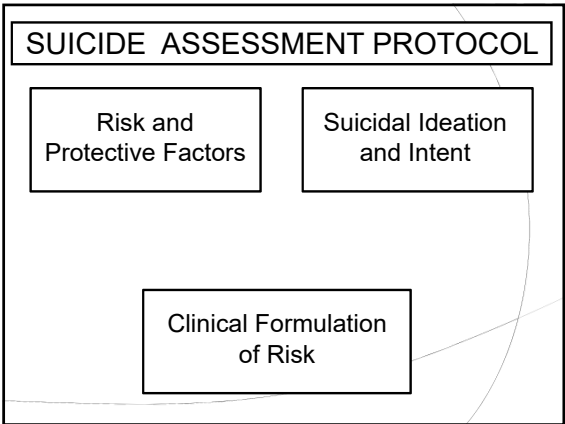
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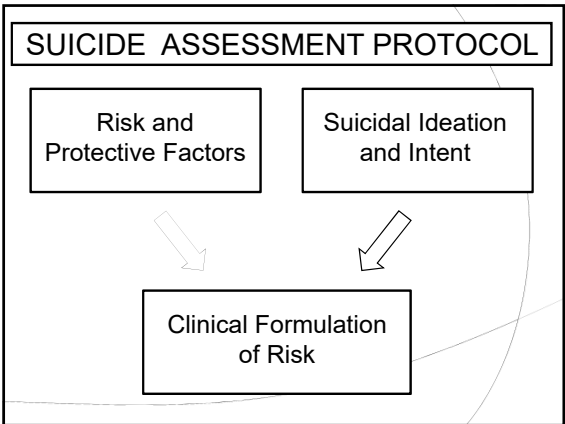
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Equation of Suicidal Intent

**Real Intent = Stated Intent + Reflected Intent + Withheld Intent**

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VALIDITY

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7 Validity Techniques

- 1) Normalization
- 2) Shame Attenuation
- 3) Behavioral Incident
- 4) Gentle Assumption
- 5) Denial of the Specific
- 6) Catch-All Question
- 7) Symptom Amplification

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## Evolution of Interviewing Training

Interviewing principles



Interviewing techniques



Interviewing strategies

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## Illustration of an Interviewing Principle

Before you raise a sensitive or a taboo topic, meta-communicate to the client that it is okay to talk about the topic.

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## Validity Techniques for Raising a Sensitive Topic

- 1) Normalization
- 2) Shame Attenuation

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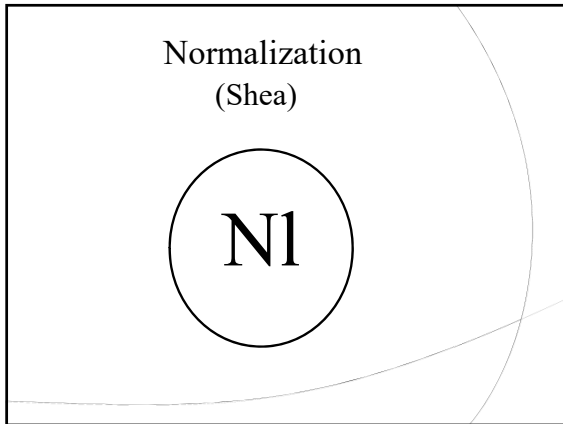
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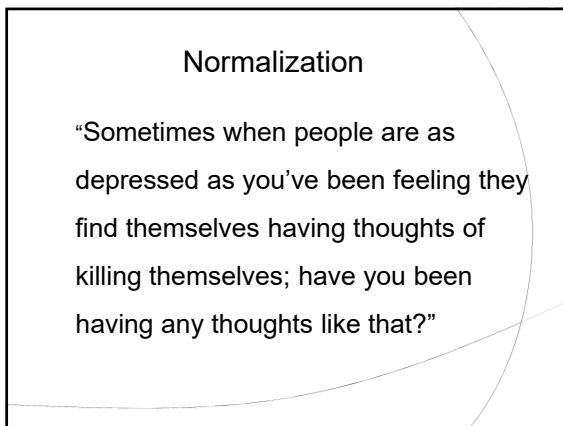
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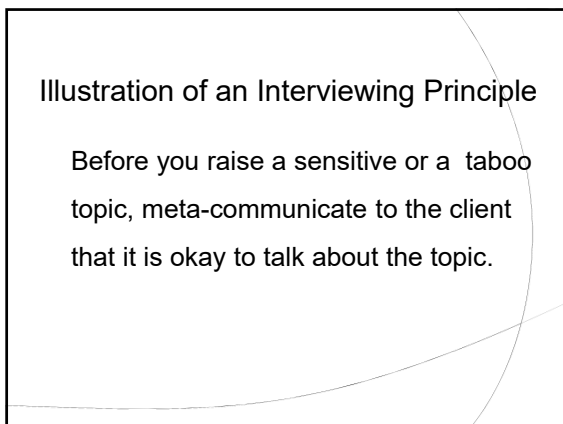
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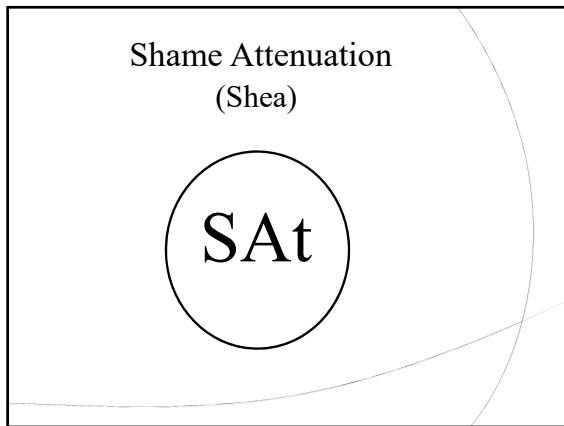
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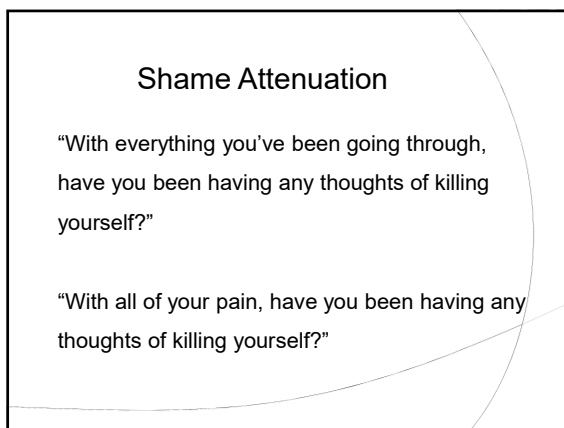
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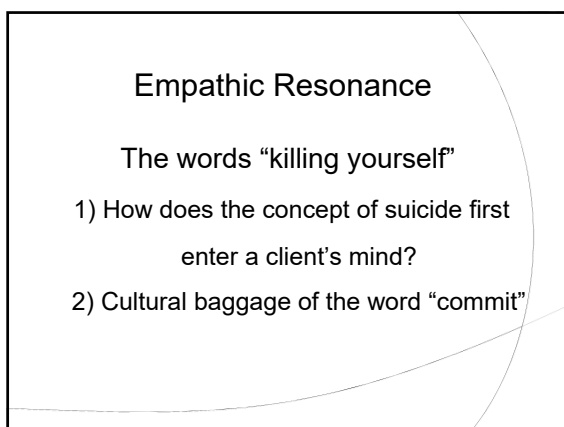
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### Second Style of Shame Attenuation with Rationalization: Used When Uncovering Antisocial Material

- 1) Intuit client's rationalization
- 2) Frame question through the eyes of the client

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### Evolution of Interviewing Training

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### Validity Techniques for Exploring Sensitive Topics Once Raised

- 1) Behavioral Incident
- 2) Gentle Assumption
- 3) Denial of the Specific
- 4) Catch-All Question
- 5) Symptom Amplification

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Behavioral Incident  
(Gerald Pascal)

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2 Styles of Behavioral Incidents

- 1) Fact-finding behavioral incident
- 2) Sequencing behavioral incident

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Gentle Assumption  
(Pomeroy)

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Gentle Assumption

“What other ways have you thought of killing yourself?”

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Denial of the Specific  
(Shea)

DS

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Denial of the Specific Used for  
Uncovering Suicidal Plans

- 1) “Have you been having any thoughts of shooting yourself?”
- 2) “Have you been having any thoughts of jumping off a bridge or a building?”
- 3) “Have you been having any thoughts of overdosing?”

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Technical Tip: Avoid Cannon Questions

“Have you been having any thoughts of shooting yourself, jumping off a bridge or building, or overdosing?”

Always ask one DS at a time

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Typical Trigger to Initiate the Use of Denials of the Specific



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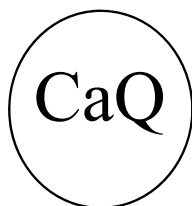
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Catch-All Question  
(Shea)



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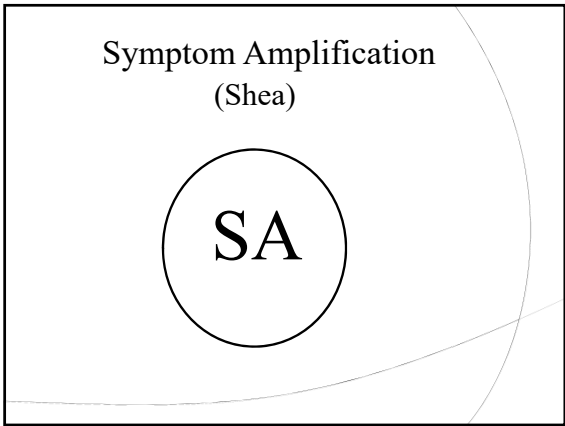
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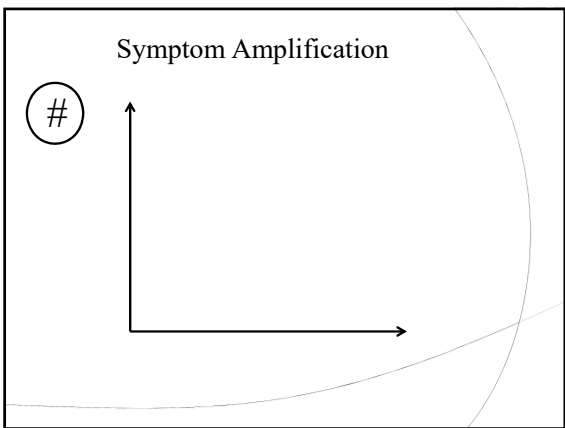
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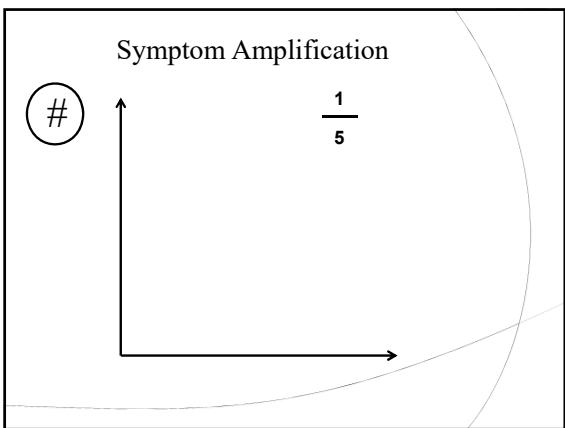
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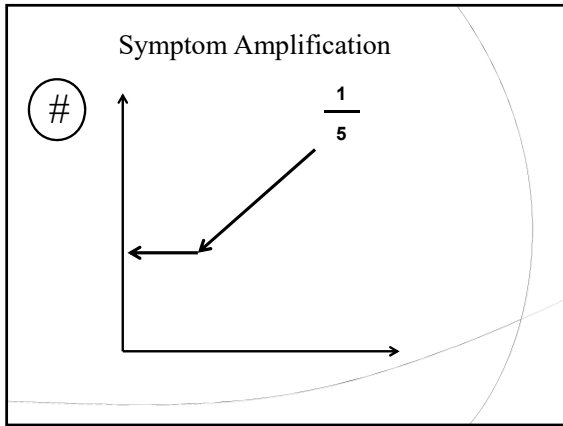
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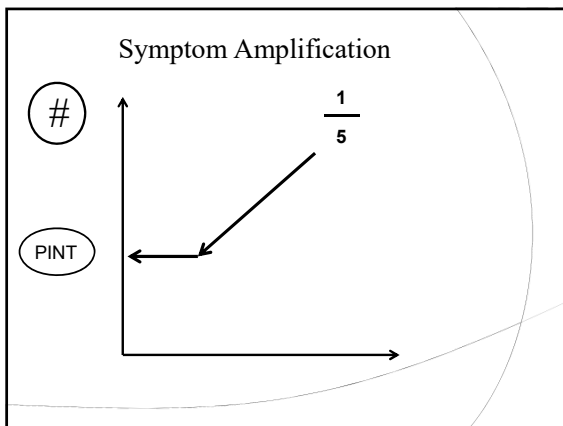
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**Symptom Amplification Used When Uncovering Suicidal Thought**

“On your very worst days, how much time do you spend thinking about killing yourself - 70% of your waking hours, 80% of your waking hours, 90%?”

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7 Validity Techniques

1) Normalization

2) Shame Attenuation

3) Behavioral Incident

4) Gentle Assumption

5) Denial of the Specific

6) Catch-All Question

7) Symptom Amplification

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Video  
Demonstration

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7 Validity Techniques

1) Normalization

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7) Symptom Amplification

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How frequently have bosses taken you aside, you know harped on you, complaining about your work?

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How frequently have bosses taken you aside, ~~you know~~ ~~harped on you~~, complaining about your work?

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How frequently have bosses taken you aside complaining about your work?

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Validity Techniques for Exploring Sensitive Topics Once Raised

1) Behavioral Incident

2) Gentle Assumption

3) Denial of the Specific

4) Catch-All Question

5) Symptom Amplification

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How frequently have bosses taken you aside, **you know harped on you**, complaining about your work?

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7 Validity Techniques

1) Normalization

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