

# Developing Clinical Skills in Suicide Assessment, Prevention, and Treatment

By Jason McGlothlin

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Having supervised, taught and counseled clinicians and clinicians-in-training around the issue of suicide, I was eager to review Dr. Jason McGlothlin's new text *Developing Clinical Skills in Suicide Assessment, Prevention, and Treatment*. To his credit, McGlothlin focuses on making subject matter, which is often emotionally overwhelming and complex for new clinicians quite accessible and applicable. The content of the book is arranged effectively, and it covers numerous relevant issues related to counseling suicidal clients including: malpractice and documentation, specific considerations in assessment across the lifespan, working with clients' families, longer-term work with clients, supervision issues, and concerns related to a death by suicide.

While many clinicians could learn something from reviewing this text, it will be most helpful to mental health clinicians-in-training and new professionals. It appears to be an introductory text to clinical work with suicide, and this book is easily integrated into the classroom setting. While the book is well tailored to the academic environment, there is one specific shortcoming of this book that this writer would address before integrating it into my curriculum, which is the disconcerting emphasis that McGlothlin places on "No-Harm Contracts" as a component of suggested intervention. Leading suicidologists and representative organizations have almost uniformly argued against the utility of these contracts when working with suicidal clients. In addition, the treatment plan that is advocated and included in an appendix is so thorough it becomes cumbersome and unrealistic for use in a suicide assessment.

The book succinctly summarizes many of the overall demographic statistics pertaining to suicide but does not fully address working with clients who are from non-dominant cultures. I would encourage future editions of the book to be expanded to more thoroughly encourage an awareness of potential systemic issues and triggers related to suicide, and include examples of culture-specific considerations around suicide prevention, assessment, and intervention.

Overall, McGlothlin weaves the empirical and academic with the clinical and hands-on in *Developing Clinical Skills in Suicide Assessment, Prevention, and Treatment*. Although the emphasis that the author places on No-Harm Contracts is a significant barrier to the book's utility, it is the accessibility of the subject matter which is this text's strength.