

BSS

Directions:

Please carefully read each group of statements below. Mark the one statement in each group that **best** describes how you have been feeling for the **past week, including today**. Be sure to read all of the statements in each group before making a choice.

1. 0 I have a moderate to strong wish to live. 0
1 I have a weak wish to live. 1
2 I have no wish to live. 2
2. 0 I have no wish to die. 2
1 I have a weak wish to die. 1
2 I have a moderate to strong wish to die. 2
3. 0 My reasons for living outweigh my reasons for dying. 0
1 My reasons for living or dying are about equal. 1
2 My reasons for dying outweigh my reasons for living. 2
4. 0 I have no desire to kill myself. 0
1 I have a weak desire to kill myself. 1
2 I have a moderate to strong desire to kill myself. 2
5. 0 I would try to save my life if I found myself in a life-threatening situation. 0
1 I would take a chance on life or death if I found myself in a life-threatening situation. 1
2 I would not take the steps necessary to avoid death if I found myself in a life-threatening situation. 2

If you have marked the 0 choice in both statement groups 4 and 5, then skip down to statement 20. If you have marked a 1 or a 2 in either statement group 4 or 5, then go on to statement 6.

6. 0 I have brief periods of thinking about killing myself which pass quickly. 0
1 I have periods of thinking about killing myself which last for moderate amounts of time. 1
2 I have long periods of thinking about killing myself. 2
7. 0 I rarely or only occasionally think about killing myself. 0
1 I have frequent thoughts about killing myself. 1
2 I continuously think about killing myself. 2
8. 0 I do not accept the idea of killing myself. 0
1 I neither accept nor reject the idea of killing myself. 1
2 I accept the idea of killing myself. 2
9. 0 I can keep myself from committing suicide. 0
1 I am unsure that I can keep myself from committing suicide. 1
2 I cannot keep myself from committing suicide. 2
10. 0 I would not kill myself because of my family, friends, religion, possible injury from an unsuccessful attempt, etc. 0
1 I am somewhat concerned about killing myself because of my family, friends, religion, possible injury from an unsuccessful attempt, etc. 1
2 I am not or only a little concerned about killing myself because of my family, friends, religion, possible injury from an unsuccessful attempt, etc. 2

Go on to the next page.

11.	0	My reasons for wanting to commit suicide are primarily aimed at influencing other people, such as getting even with people, making people happier, making people pay attention to me, etc.	0		
	1	My reasons for wanting to commit suicide are not only aimed at influencing other people, but also represent a way of solving my problems.	1		
	2	My reasons for wanting to commit suicide are primarily based upon escaping from my problems.	2	1	0
12.	0	I have no specific plan about how to kill myself.	0		1
	1	I have considered ways of killing myself, but have not worked out the details.	1		2
	2	I have a specific plan for killing myself.	2	2	0
13.	0	I do not have access to a method or an opportunity to kill myself.	0		1
	1	The method that I would use for committing suicide takes time, and I really do not have a good opportunity to use this method.	1	3	0
	2	I have access or anticipate having access to the method that I would choose for killing myself and also have or shall have the opportunity to use it.	2		2
14.	0	I do not have the courage or the ability to commit suicide.	0		4
	1	I am unsure that I have the courage or the ability to commit suicide.	1		1
	2	I have the courage and the ability to commit suicide.	2		2
15.	0	I do not expect to make a suicide attempt.	0		5
	1	I am unsure that I shall make a suicide attempt.	1		1
	2	I am sure that I shall make a suicide attempt.	2		2
16.	0	I have made no preparations for committing suicide.	0		
	1	I have made some preparations for committing suicide.	1		
	2	I have almost finished or completed my preparations for committing suicide.	2		
17.	0	I have not written a suicide note.	0		
	1	I have thought about writing a suicide note or have started to write one, but have not completed it.	1	6	0
	2	I have completed a suicide note.	2		1
18.	0	I have made no arrangements for what will happen after I have committed suicide.	0		
	1	I have thought about making some arrangements for what will happen after I have committed suicide.	1	7	0
	2	I have made definite arrangements for what will happen after I have committed suicide.	2		1
19.	0	I have not hidden my desire to kill myself from people.	0		
	1	I have held back telling people about wanting to kill myself.	1	8	0
	2	I have attempted to hide, conceal, or lie about wanting to commit suicide.	2		1
20.	0	I have never attempted suicide.	0		
	1	I have attempted suicide once.	1	9	0
	2	I have attempted suicide two or more times.	2		1
If you have previously attempted suicide, please continue with the next statement group.					
21.	0	My wish to die during the last suicide attempt was low.	0		
	1	My wish to die during the last suicide attempt was moderate.	1		
	2	My wish to die during the last suicide attempt was high.	2		

want you to tell me the one statement that best describes how you have been feeling for the past week, including today.

After giving these instructions, the examiner should give a copy of the BSS to the respondent and say:

Here is a copy for you so that you can follow along as I read. You may notice that I shall skip some of the groups of statements depending upon your answers. This is usual.

Sometimes a respondent will take the initiative, reading the symptoms ahead of the examiner and responding to the statements. The examiner may allow a respondent who is alert and knowledgeable to proceed in this manner. If necessary, the examiner should tactfully encourage the respondent to reflect sufficiently before making a choice. At the end of testing, the examiner should carefully inspect all of the ratings to ensure that no items were omitted. He should ask the respondent to respond to any omitted items. If a respondent explains that he or she is unsure, the examiner should tell him or her to respond according to his or her first impression.

Response Sets

If a person gives the same rating to each item, then the examiner should say that a person is seldom alike with respect to every item and perhaps he or she might wish to reconsider some of the ratings.

Scoring

Guidelines

Detection. The first five BSS items serve as a screen for suicide ideation. If a respondent circles the zero statements in both Item 4 (indicating no active suicidal intention) and Item 5 (indicating avoidance of death if presented with a life-threatening situation), then he or she is instructed to skip the next 14 BSS items, which address specific information about the respondent's plans and attitudes. Otherwise, the respondent rates the next 14 BSS items. Every respondent is asked to rate Item 20, and any respondent who has previously attempted suicide is requested to rate Item 21.

Severity. For a suicide ideator (that is, a respondent who has rated all of the items), the severity of suicidal ideation is calculated by summing the ratings for the first 19 items. (Items 20 and 21 are not included in the score.) The total BSS score can range from 0 to 38 points.

Cutoff scores. There is no empirical evidence to support the use of a specific cutoff score with the BSS, but increasing scores do reflect increases in suicidal risk. Any **positive response** to any BSS item may reflect the presence of suicidal intention and should be investigated by the clinician. For example, a person may not admit to active (Item 4) or passive (Item 5) contemplation of suicide and thus may not complete Items 6 through 19. This same person, however, might respond positively (1 or 2 points) to Item 1 (no wish to live), Item 2 (moderate to strong wish to die), or Item 3 (reasons for dying outweigh reasons for living). Because suicidal intention is positively related to both wishing to die and to not wanting to live (Kovacs & Beck, 1977), this patient may be a suicide risk.