

Risk Assessment as a Process

Nursing

Why structured assessment guides care rather than predicting who will act.

A collaborative clinical conversation, documented — not a checklist with a threshold.

1

Ask directly and calmly

Asking about suicidal thoughts does not plant the idea or increase risk.

2

Understand the experience

Thoughts, intent, plans, means, what has kept the person safe.

3

Consider the whole picture

History, current stressors, supports, substance use, recent change.

4

Plan with the person

Agree what helps, who to contact, and how means can be made safer.

5

Document and escalate

Record reasoning and actions; involve the team under local policy.

6

Review

Risk changes; reassessment is scheduled, not left to chance.

Educational reference. Risk tools do not reliably predict individual outcomes and never replace clinical judgement or local policy.