

Appendix D: Practical 10A

Role-play 2: Initial session with John Macara

Participant's Briefing Instructions

Instructions for Role-play Volunteer (John Macara)

These are the instructions for the person helping the student with the role-play by acting in the role of the client. You must use the following information to assist you in your interactions with the student during the role-play. The role-play will consist of you acting in the role of a client in crisis and the student conducting a self-harm/suicide risk assessment with you. While you are encouraged to use your creativity and judgement during the role-play, you must also follow all the instructions provided.

Please note that the volunteer's gender doesn't need to match the gender of the character they will be playing as long as the volunteer can accurately portray the character as described in the following instructions.

Please note: This role-play focuses on issues of self-harm and suicide. Please consider your suitability for participating in this role-play before continuing. If you require support, a helpline is available from Lifeline (13 11 14), and support can be provided by counsellors and other mental health professionals.

Background Character Information

You are John Macara, a 28-year-old man who is struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts. You recently experienced a significant loss due to the end of your long-term relationship with Marissa, whom you met in high school, which has left you feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. You have a history of depression and have previously attempted suicide. You have reached out to the Wellness Counseling Centre seeking support and assistance to help you overcome suicidal thoughts and manage your depression.

Role-Play Scenario:

In this counselling session, you are to assume the role of John Macara. You should embody the emotional turmoil and distress that John is experiencing due to his recent break-up and ongoing battle with depression and suicidal thoughts. Be prepared to express feelings of overwhelm, hopelessness, and despair, reflecting John's mental state.

During the session, you will engage with the counsellor (the interviewer) and discuss your struggles with depression and suicidal ideation. Share your feelings about the break-up

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with Marissa and how it has impacted your mental health. Explain that Marissa was the one who asked you to go to counselling as she can't cope with your depression anymore. She has indicated that she loves you and is happy to return once you 'sort your stuff out'. This has inspired you to get help as you want her to return.

Emphasise the severity of your suicidal thoughts and the urgency of needing support to overcome them. Be honest about your past suicide attempt and the fear of reaching that point again. Express your desire to find hope and regain control over your mental health, even though it feels daunting.

Throughout the role-play, remain authentic to John's experiences and emotions. Provide insights into how depression and suicidal thoughts have affected your daily life, relationships, and overall well-being. Be open to receiving support and guidance from the counsellor, demonstrating a willingness to engage in therapeutic interventions and strategies to address your mental health concerns.

Remember to engage actively with the counsellor, respond to their prompts and inquiries, and be receptive to their suggestions and recommendations for treatment and support. This role-play is an opportunity to convey the depth of John's struggles and the importance of seeking help to overcome them.

During the role-play:

Some specific instructions about things you must say/do during the role-play:

- During the role-play, embody the persona of John Macara, a person in distress seeking help and support.
- When the student starts the counselling conversation and asks how you are, you should respond by saying, "My life is horrible. Everything is wrong". When the student questions you further, you should use the information provided in the 'background character information' to respond to the student's questions and prompts. Respond in a way that comes to you naturally based on the questions asked while using the background information. **Note:** don't simply read this information out – instead, respond in a manner that makes sense to the conversation you are having with the student.
- If the student asks you whether you have had any thoughts of harming yourself/suicide, you should indicate that it is something that you have thought about "a lot lately but are battling to stop those thoughts". Use the following information to respond to any further questions that the student has:

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- You have been thinking about it, but 'Marissa was the one who told me to go to counselling. She said if I could work out my stuff, she would come back. That's why I am here.'
- You have attempted suicide once before when your mother passed.
- You don't want to hurt yourself; you want to be back with Marissa, so you need help in getting these negative thoughts out of your head.
- Your only motivation at the moment is the thought of Marissa returning.

Note: Don't simply read out this information – instead, use this information to respond to any questions the student asks you.

- If the student asks you about the support you have, you should indicate that you are very close to your best friend and know that you should talk to them because it will help but you can't bring yourself to do it. If the student further questions why, you should respond that you are scared that if you tell them how you feel, they will also not want to be around you. If the student questions these beliefs, you should acknowledge that they are unrealistic and that you know your friend will support you, but you don't know how to go about telling them.
- If the student asks you to think about ways in which you might be able to talk about the break-up with your best friend, you should brainstorm options to get the support you need from them. Discuss anything that comes to mind. For example, you might suggest inviting them over to talk about it. Listen to any suggestions that the student has and decide on whichever option sounds best to you. Work with the student to develop a clear picture of the steps that you will take to gain the emotional support you need from your friend.
- You should respond to any further questions or prompts in a manner that seems natural to you based upon the 'background character information' and your discussion with the student during the role-play. Be receptive to the counsellor's guidance and suggestions, actively participating in developing strategies to cope with your crisis.

Thank you for assisting the student with the role-play!