



# THE TEN POINT THREAT LEVEL ASSESSMENT MODEL

*Disclaimer: Remember that no single point can carry a prediction of violence and not all high-risk cases will contain the entire ten points. However, the 10 Point Model will assist you in conducting a threat assessment while maintaining key elements in an investigation and evaluation of the propensity of violence. For qualified professionals, please consider risk assessment instruments such as the HCR-20 Assessing Risk for Violence Version II, and the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (SARA), among other actuarial and clinical instruments for an in-depth evaluation of the perpetrator.*

## 10. NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS AND AGGRESSION

It is possible that the individual may be experiencing some form of neurological malfunctioning influencing violent behavior. In order to diagnose this factor, a neuro-psychologist is recommended.

## 09. THE IMMEDIATE MEANS AND THE CONFIDENCE TO BELIEVE THAT ONE CAN DELIVER THE VIOLENCE

Firearms account for approximately 60% of all suicides. Many experts believe that the single best way to prevent a suicide is to remove all lethal means. Having a lethal weapon in the nearby vicinity when the perpetrator feels homicidal can create the same outcome of suicide-death. If all of the elements are in place and the perpetrator believes that he can fulfill his mission, the risk increases. Also, it is critical to remove the access to destabilizers.

## 08. IMPULSIVITY

Can this person remain calm under pressure? Does this person over-react to real and imagined insults and disappointments? Barratt (1994) has led a productive program of research on impulsivity, which demonstrates its link to violence. In the 1960's, an impulse-control test using marshmallows was implemented. Four-year-olds were given a choice to either wait until the proctor arrived, at which time they would be rewarded with two marshmallows each, or if they could not wait until the proctor returned, they would receive only one marshmallow each. They tracked the behaviors of these children. Fourteen years later, the study concluded that the children who were able to maintain control were more socially adjusted.

## 07. IDENTIFIES WITH PERPETRATORS AND ACTS OF VIOLENCE

The individual is attracted to violence, violent individuals, previous perpetrators of workplace shootings, and other acts of violence.

## 06. HOPELESSNESS

Violence can take the form of suicide or homicide/suicide; therefore, suicidal thoughts or threats should be taken seriously. When an individual feels hopeless, the probability of violence risk will increase. Hopeless people are tortured souls. Their inner dialogue is filled with degrading and derisive content to self and others.

## 01. FEAR, ANGER, RAGE AND HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

**a. Fear:** Blood rushes to the large skeletal muscles (i.e. the legs, making it easier to maneuver swiftly). Either real or imagined, the fear of being attacked can escalate the rate of becoming violent.

**b. Anger:** Blood rushes to the hands, making it easier to engage with a weapon or fight an opponent. The rush of adrenaline triggers an action stance. Anger gives the person a feeling of energy and power. It is seductive and euphoric therefore, making it very difficult to keep under control.

**c. Rage:** The person engages in negative self-talk, precipitating the anger to a level of rage. Once the person is in "rage," the window of opportunity for defusing is almost impossible. At this

point, the person becomes incapable of rationalizing. The amygdala (located in the front temporal lobe of the brain) appears to be the source of the "rage" emotion. However, without an amygdala, recognition of feelings and passion would be absent.

**d. Violence:** Be cautious relying solely on a checklist to conduct a threat assessment. A checklist would be a dangerous approach. Keep in mind that the responsibility rests on the assessor to be aware and observant of significant factors when determining the dangerousness of a person. **Note:** One of the most important factors in determining future violent behavior is past violent behavior.

## 02. MAJOR MENTAL ILLNESS, PERSONALITY DISORDERS AND PSYCHOPATHY

**a.** Although mental illness, primarily, is not an indicator that an individual will resort to violence, a 1990 epidemiological study by Jeff Swanson revealed that individuals with a diagnosis of major mental disorder do report more violence (i.e., bipolar disorder, major depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia, etc.) **Note:** Only a licensed mental care health provider is capable of making a diagnosis. Refrain from using diagnostic terms in your report unless you are licensed to do so. Instead, concentrate on documenting the individual's behavior.

**b.** Psychopathy increases risk for violence. Psychopaths are more violent than non-psychopathic criminals. Some of the characteristics of a psychopath are: glibness/superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, pathological lying, conning/manipulative, lack of remorse or guilt, shallow affect, lack of empathy, and impulsive. *For more information, please refer to the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (CL-R) developed by Robert Hare, Ph. D.*

**c.** Paranoia: A paranoid person will always appear angry at the world. They distrust people and feel that they are susceptible to being deceived. This type of individual will predominantly be on the defensive, ready to encounter the perceived enemy.

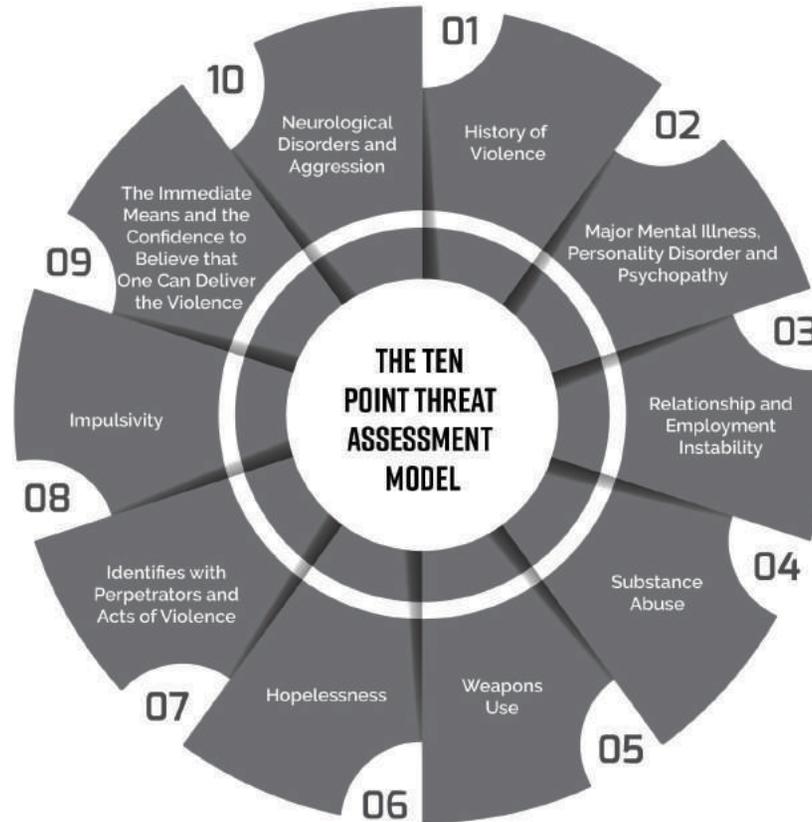
## 03. RELATIONSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT STABILITY

**a.** Interacting with a social support group can guard against the tendency for a person to be violent. Isolation, on the other hand, increases the probability of violence. **Note:** Men who are abusive within their relationships are at elevated risks to being violent outside of relationships. There is also a link between being unmarried and being violent.

**b.** There is a link between low income and general recidivism.

## 04. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

It appears that psycho-stimulants such as cocaine or amphetamines can increase the risk of violence. In addition, alcohol decreases the chemical, serotonin, neurotransmitter that helps maintain a sense of overall peacefulness. Marvin Wolfgang, conducted research in Philadelphia that focused on a majority of homicides-involved alcohol findings. His research concluded that alcohol appears to be the chemical that is most related to violence.



## 05. WEAPONS USE

There is a significant increase in lethality risk if a weapon is used in a violent encounter. Take in consideration that weapon-use alone does not create a violent situation. There are many responsible weapon users who are peaceful and non-violent. However, a person who talks about weapons at inappropriate times uses it as a tool for manipulation.