JORDAN SCRIPT WITH ADLERIAN APPROACH:

Age: *22*
Presenting Concern:
Three weeks ago, his partner ended a two-year relationship. Since then, he has become increasingly withdrawn and hopeless.

Counselor: Hi Jordan. I'm glad you came in today. I know things have been difficult recently. Tell me what has been happening from your perspective.

Jordan: Ever since my girlfriend broke up with me, everything has fallen apart.

Counselor: It sounds like that relationship was very important to you. What do you feel you've lost because of the breakup?

Jordan: I lost the person I spent all my time with. I feel alone now.

Counselor: Feeling disconnected from someone who mattered so much can be painful. What has that loneliness been like for you?

Jordan: I mostly stay in my apartment. I don't really talk to anyone anymore.

Counselor: So not only did you lose the relationship, but you've also pulled away from other connections that were part of your life.

Jordan: Yeah. I don't see much point.

Counselor: When you say you don't see much point, what are you telling yourself about what this breakup means?

Jordan: That I wasn't good enough. If I was, she wouldn't have left.

Counselor: It sounds like you've connected the end of the relationship to your value as a person.

Jordan: I guess so.

Counselor: Adler believed that people need to feel they belong and matter. Right now, it sounds like your sense of belonging has been shaken.

Jordan: That's exactly how it feels.

Counselor: When people feel disconnected and hopeless, they sometimes have thoughts of ending their life. Have you had thoughts about suicide?

Jordan: Yeah, I've thought about it.

Counselor: Thank you for trusting me with that. What do those thoughts look like?

Jordan: Sometimes I think it would be easier if I wasn't here.

Counselor: Have you thought about how you might end your life?

Jordan: I've thought about taking a bunch of pills.

Counselor: Do you have access to those pills?

Jordan: Yes.

Counselor: Have you taken any steps toward acting on those thoughts?

Jordan: No.

Counselor: On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely do you feel you are to act on those thoughts today?

Jordan: Maybe a 3.

Counselor: What helps keep that number from being higher?

Jordan: My little sister.

Counselor: Tell me about her.

Jordan: She looks up to me. I'd hate to hurt her.

Counselor: That relationship sounds like an important source of connection and purpose. Even in the middle of all this pain, part of you still feels responsible for someone you care about.

Jordan: Yeah.

Counselor: That tells me there is still a part of you that wants connection and wants to contribute to others. Those are important strengths.

Jordan: I haven't thought about it that way.

Counselor: Right now, it seems the breakup has convinced you that you don't belong or matter. Yet I'm hearing evidence that you do matter—to your sister, your family, and others. I wonder if we can begin exploring ways to reconnect with people and activities that help you feel valued again.

Jordan: I'd like that.

Counselor: Before we finish today, I'd like us to create a plan to help keep you safe when suicidal thoughts come up. Then we can continue working on rebuilding connection, purpose, and hope. Does that sound okay?

Jordan: Yeah, it does.

MARIA SCRIPT WITH ADLERIAN APPROACH:

Age: *41*

Presenting Concerns: *Maria is a single parent of two children. Three months ago, her work hours were reduced. Since then, she has fallen behind on bills and is worried about losing her apartment. She is exhausted, irritable, and ashamed about needing help. She came to counseling because her sister insisted. She does not immediately mention suicidal thoughts. She is guarded and frustrated.*

Counselor: Maria, I'm glad you came in today. What brought you here?

Maria: Honestly, my sister made me come.

Counselor: She was concerned about you?

Maria: Apparently.

Counselor: What would you like me to know about what's been going on?

Maria: Everything is falling apart.

Counselor: Tell me more about that.

Maria: My hours got cut at work a few months ago. Bills keep piling up. I don't know how I'm supposed to keep everything together.

Counselor: That sounds overwhelming.

Maria: It is.

Counselor: What has all of this been like for you?

Maria: Exhausting. I feel like I'm failing.

Counselor: Failing whom?

Maria: My kids. Everybody.

Counselor: You care deeply about being a good parent.

Maria: Of course I do.

Counselor: What tells you that you're failing?

Maria: I can't provide what they need. I can't keep up with the bills. I don't know what I'm doing anymore.

Counselor: That sounds like a heavy burden to carry.

Maria: It is.

Counselor: Who has been supporting you through all of this?

Maria: My sister tries.

Counselor: How do you respond when she reaches out?

Maria: Usually I tell her I'm fine.

Counselor: What keeps you from telling her how difficult things have been?

Maria: I don't want to be a burden.

Counselor: So you've been carrying most of this by yourself.

Maria: Pretty much.

Counselor: When you think about the future, what comes to mind?

Maria: Honestly, I don't see a way out.

Counselor: Tell me more about that.

Maria: Nothing I do seems to make a difference.

Counselor: That sounds very discouraging.

Maria: It is.

Counselor: When people feel overwhelmed, trapped, and hopeless, they sometimes have thoughts about death or wishing they could escape. Have you had thoughts like that?

Maria: Sometimes.

Counselor: Can you tell me more about those thoughts?

Maria: Sometimes I wish I could just disappear.

Counselor: Have you had thoughts about ending your life?

Maria: Sometimes.

Counselor: How often do those thoughts happen?

Maria: Mostly at night. A few times a week.

Counselor: Have you thought about how you might do it?

Maria: I've thought about driving my car into something.

Counselor: Do you drive regularly?

Maria: Every day.

Counselor: Have you ever taken steps toward acting on those thoughts?

Maria: No.

Counselor: How likely do you feel you are to act on them right now?

Maria: I don't think I would.

Counselor: What keeps you from acting on them?

Maria: My kids.

Counselor: Tell me about them.

Maria: They need me.

Counselor: What else keeps you going?

Maria: My sister checks on me all the time.

Counselor: Anyone else?

Maria: Part of me still hopes things can get better.

Counselor: I'm glad you shared that with me. I hear someone who is carrying a tremendous amount of stress and responsibility. I also hear someone who cares deeply about her children and has not given up hope completely.

Maria: Maybe.

Counselor: Even coming here today took courage.

Maria: I guess.

Counselor: Because you've been having suicidal thoughts and have thought about a way you might harm yourself, I'd like us to create a safety plan together. Would that be okay?

Maria: Yes.

Counselor: Let's identify warning signs, coping strategies, people you can contact, and ways to stay safe if those thoughts become stronger.

Maria: Okay.

Counselor: Who is the first person you would reach out to if you started feeling overwhelmed tonight?

Maria: My sister.

Counselor: Excellent. Let's start there and build a plan together.

From an Adlerian perspective, the suicidal thoughts are understood not simply as symptoms of depression, but as expressions of profound discouragement, diminished belonging, and a temporary loss of hope and perceived significance. The counselor's task is to assess safety while helping Maria reconnect with her strengths, relationships, and sense of contribution.

Observer Checklist

Mark each skill demonstrated:

☐ Built rapport
☐ Demonstrated empathy
☐ Asked directly about suicide
☐ Assessed frequency of thoughts
☐ Assessed plan
☐ Assessed means/access
☐ Assessed intent
☐ Assessed previous attempts
☐ Explored protective factors
☐ Discussed safety planning
☐ Maintained a calm, nonjudgmental tone

Strengths Observed

Opportunities for Growth

Debrief Questions

1. What warning signs were present before suicide was discussed?
2. How did the counselor transition into asking about suicide?
3. What responses communicated empathy effectively?
4. What additional assessment questions might have been useful?
5. Based on the information provided, what level of risk would you consider and why?

This scenario is particularly useful because many counselors are comfortable recognizing sadness but less comfortable recognizing suicide risk when it presents as stress, anger, shame, or burnout.