Psychological Dimension of Suicide

- Many have history of mental illness
- Factors of particularly high risk
  - Depression
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Schizophrenia
  - Eating disorders
  - Some anxiety and personality disorders
  - Substance abuse
- Depression & hopelessness
  - Psychological states most strongly associated with suicide
    - Even mild depression increases risk
    - Limited energy associated with severe depression make suicide less likely
  - Psychache: intolerable pain created from an absence of joy
    - Strongly associated with suicidal ideation
- Alcohol consumption
  - Strong correlation to successful attempts
  - As many as 70% of suicide attempts involve alcohol
  - May lower inhibitions related to fear of death
  - Alcohol-induced myopia: focusing thoughts on the negative aspects of personal situations

Social Dimension of Suicide

- Many suicides are interpersonal in nature and occur following relationship conflicts
- Disconnection from family, a religious institution, or community increased susceptibility to suicide
- Factors in children who consider suicide
  - Loss of significant parenting figure before age 12
  - Abuse, and unpredictable traumatic events
- Joiner: 2 social factors strongly associated with suicide attempts
  - Perceived burdensomeness
  - Thwarted belongingness
- 3rd factor: acquired capacity for suicide
  - reduction in fear of taking one’s own life
  - repeated exposure to traumatic life events may lower this fear
- Marital status
  - Stable marriage or relationship makes suicide less likely
  - For women, having children decreases suicide risk
  - People who are divorced, separated, or widowed have higher suicide rates than married people
  - Death of a spouse associated with 50% higher suicide rate for men