

Understanding Suicide

Each individual is on a trajectory through life. We have a past and face several possible futures. We exist in various environments that also influence our trajectory. As we travel through life, we also accumulate emotional reactions to our experiences, circumstances, and future possibilities. These reactions can range from the positive to the negative. Often it is the negative reactions that tend to make life seem hopeless. People can generally survive difficulties if they have hope that the future could be better.

One can come to consider suicide through obvious pain. However, can also come through quiet resignation. It can be quite mystifying to even those most close to the person who is suicidal. Despair, depression, and despondency are not always externally discernable. A person can be in the midst of the most difficult circumstances imaginable and still not be suicidal, while someone else could be in the midst of the most enviable circumstances and still be suicidal.

There are a number of factors in modern life that contribute to people coming to a point where suicide might seem attractive. A short discussion will be given on several of these factors. In addition to the diversity of people and their sensitivities, consideration has to be given to the diversity of circumstances and experiences that can bring a person to see no possibility of bettering their circumstances.

The person for whom suicide becomes increasingly attractive may not be in a position to figure out how to help himself. Some are able to manage. However, the friends and family of someone dealing with these thoughts might be able to offer assistance if they were more knowledgeable. People can be scared of the subject and inhibited from raising the subject such as asking, "Have you ever considered suicide". This simple question can open a door through which rays of light could pierce the darkness.

Any one situation is so unique that many different dynamics may have to be considered. For one person overcoming fear may be required. For another person cultivating new skills could prove useful. For still another person simply believing that change is possible might be a necessary first step. However, having the knowledge of how we can come to such a state of despair can help us understand some of the ways repairs could be made to a life fractured.

Time and the perception of time

There are two time elements that can bear on suicide. The first is some tragic event that produces overwhelming pain such as the death of a child or an unanticipated divorce. Initial pain can be so great that there can be little sense of hope. The second way time can be a factor is that prolonged painful circumstances can also make hope seem out of reach. Both sudden intense pain as well as prolonged pain can isolate us and make it seem that there is no hope.

Our perception of time is greatly altered by what life stage we are in. A three year old can be told that he can have a cookie tomorrow and be perplexed because he hears the word "yes" and "cookie" but has no cookie. His understanding of the world might extend five minutes into the past and future. When a child becomes a teenager his perception of time might extend a week or

two into the future or past. The same person in his 40s might see as much as ten years into the future or past as tangible.

This perception of time can influence something like the despair of a teenager because the shorter view of time can magnify the intensity of what is experienced or considered. It is not uncommon for the concerns of a teenager not to be fully appreciated by someone older because they have more life experiences for comparison as well as a view of time that allows painful events to be seen in contrast to a greater amount of time.

One can fear an event real or imagined of the exposure of some sin, being evicted, the due date of bills, or some other looming apprehension. If one constructs a potential calamity in one's mind as it approaches, one can be so focused that any resolution or alternative finds little room for consideration. Hope diminishes as focus makes calamity seem inevitable. A 60 Minutes reporter once asked a man if he wasn't afraid of going to jail. He answered that the first time you go to jail you are all nervous, but the second time you learn to bring a tooth brush. People with little experience surviving calamity can magnify what they anticipate way out of proportion.

Being in control

Some people approach life as a process of making decisions and acting upon them. Others can feel like life is something that happens to them. The feeling of lack of control is particularly acute with teenagers. Teenage girls in particular are vulnerable to cutting themselves. This is called self-harm, but is often a habit that develops perhaps in part in the boredom of a classroom. However, it is often a way to carve out a little feeling of control as a balm against an environment that is seen as alien, oppressive, or even hostile. One can even embroider the feelings of control with that of self-punishment.

One can extend self-harm to include eating disorders and even alcohol and drug abuse. In a way behaviors can become as addictive as substances. Giving oneself a way to feel disconnected from the world around one can be a relief or even a pleasurable escape. Sadly, an environment that is not controlled often worsens to the point where even neglecting it with various escape tactics no longer is able to give relief.

Particularly for teens, failing to learn effective control skills can amplify a feeling of hopelessness. Teens also have the difficulty of not having had the experience of accomplishment that can bolster a sense of hope in the future. We are all born helpless, ignorant, and selfish. When children are warehoused in school and their room until they will be thrown into the world, there is a possibility that apprehensions can grow. Children need increasing opportunities to have responsibilities and opportunities to exercise control such that they can feel more confident in their transition to adulthood.

Military Suicides

Sometimes people will look at the statistics for active duty military suicides and consider that military service is more harmful than other occupations. However, the police and even nursing

also have higher suicide rates than average. Perhaps the rate of alcoholism for WWII combat veterans could be considered a sort of self-medicating slow suicide. There are people such as those with ASD who may find social isolation preferable. However, most people derive a sense of normalcy from fitting in with others and observing common social currents.

People can find the disruption of what they consider “normal” such as going into or coming out of military service so stressful that they can feel that the comfort they had previously is now no longer achievable. Refugees may also feel a similar sense of hopelessness about ever being able to adapt to an alien environment.

There can be a degree of comfort knowing that where you go and what you do has already been determined. Getting out of the military can produce anxiety in some who may be ill equipped to take more full control of their life. Military service (like being a cop or even a nurse) can give one experiences that others may find un-relatable. This can accentuate feelings of isolation and a sense of hopelessness that “normalcy” can ever be achieved.

Combat veterans can have an additional burden of reflecting on what they have done when they were younger. One vet once complained about nightmares he had related to his shooting the knees and elbows off old people for fun when he was in combat zones. Not every combat veteran is a war criminal, but many can have regrets about what they did when they were younger.

Even without combat, military experience can leave one with changed perspectives that can create a barrier for them after military service with others who have not had that experience.

Being Different

Up until 125 years ago most everyone on earth grew up, lived, and died where they were born. Large families meant that one’s social life was with siblings and cousins. Differences were generally accepted as each person was known intimately from birth. While not every personality meshed with every other personality, there were generally enough people to find connections that would last a lifetime.

In today’s world mobility, smaller and disconnected families, and career trajectories greatly increase freedom at the price of isolation. Social groups and group dynamics usually form in the school yard and these dynamics usually recoil from anything that is distinct or different. Thus those who are too fat or skinny, too tall or short, or those that are too smart or dumb can be targeted for rejection.

A man once observed how difficult it was to train dogs of a certain breed. He found Sheep dogs to be difficult because they had little body sensitivity so that a corrective tug on a leash had little effect. At the other end of the spectrum were Afghans which had such high sensitivity that a corrective tug on a leash might cause them heart failure. Similarly humans can have a spectrum of sensitivity, such as with artistic types, for whom the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune can take a greater toll.

Being different can have an impact in several different ways. One can be bullied by an individual, rejected by a group, self-isolate as a result of not knowing how to participate, or experience repeated failures to find group or individual acceptance. A family whose members are mostly occupied with their own interests can magnify a feeling of isolation as well.

Usually the influence of group dynamics are beginning to diminish in the teen years as one on one relationships begin to become more important. Modern life makes finding friendship or romance difficult because we have not grown up with others as intimately as in the past. Because of a lack of deeper information most people are selected for relationship potential for superficial reasons such as attractiveness, popularity, or wealth. It usually takes time to perceive character qualities such as honesty, reliability, humor, forbearance, and morality.

One advantage of being different is that one is not often bothered by the superficial. A lack of group integration also can produce a social skill deficiency. This is not as permanently crippling as it can seem in the teen years. Attempting to connect socially as a young adult can be awkward, but experimentation usually brings adequate skills fairly quickly. An often unappreciated aspect of delayed skill development is that early group disconnection often reduces the chances of group dependence that can cause many to get involved in gang culture or inhibited self-reliance.

Isolation

Modern society inserts children into isolation to a much greater degree than throughout most of human history. People can soothe the anxiety such isolation can cause by escaping into the worlds of TV, books, and movies. Drugs and alcohol can also be used. Social media can seem to be a way to connect, but it can turn nasty and even at its best is obviously superficial.

Isolation can hit hard in early adolescence. The developing ability in early adolescence to deal in abstract thought opens a deep inner world. If you tell an eight year old, "You stink", the insult might roll off his back. If the same thing is said to a thirteen year old, he begins to ask himself if he does stink or why the speaker was trying to insult him. Trying to navigate a complex world with no information and a lot of uncertainty can cause a withdrawal into an inner world where one tries to sort things out.

In addition to social isolation and internal isolation one can find isolation as a result of circumstances such as within the modern family (each with their own interests and activities), living in suburbia with superficial social connections, or working in an environment where there is little time to connect with others.

Isolation can feed on itself such that one is fearful to engage with someone else in conversation as a result of not having much previous contact. One can experiment with store clerks at check out to try out conversational skills such as, "Since you are working twice as hard, it is a good thing they are paying you twice as much." keeping it short and humorous.

Hardship can be beneficial

On December 8th 1941 military recruiting offices has lines around the block with young men wanting to enlist. After September 11th 2001 recruiting offices did not even get an increase in phone calls. This is perhaps a fair indicator of a generation having come out of the depression willing to put their lives on the line as opposed to a generation so invested in their own selfish pleasures that there would be little interest in doing something for someone else.

When times are hard, people need each other more. This external pressure can force people to tolerate and even be friendly to each other. Isolation is so pronounced in today's society, that many do not have others they can rely on or that need them. Hardship in isolation can still be beneficial if it pushes one to develop skills and make changes to meet challenges. For example, losing a job or getting evicted can push one to contact social service agencies or churches to discover what resources may be available.

Historically whenever there has been prosperity and peace, people regressed into self-indulgence to the point of delusion. This weakness often led to invasion and chaos. In families some children grow up in adverse situations and become resourceful and self-reliant. However, some can also become broken and adrift. Ironically children that grow up in luxury and indulgence can also find a variety of outcomes such as becoming dependant and self seeking while others can be relatively unscathed.

Children that grow up in adversity often use the skills that they have developed to transition into adult life more easily. Children for whom life offered few challenges may see adult life as perplexing, abstract, and even menacing. Pioneer children grew up understanding that their labor was necessary for family survival. While their childhood was more difficult, their transition to adult life was easier. The children of today are largely left to play time and thus it is more difficult for them to transition into adult life.

Mental Health

It had been reported that the upper caste in India (Brahmin) showed much lower incidence of mental illness until modern life began to place burdens of schedules and commerce such that the stress of life that was more familiar to the other castes resulted in similar occurrences. This would indicate that stress can aggravate a deterioration of mental health.

In the 1950s people would get into fist fights over politics or religion because they felt that what was right, true, and good was the highest social good. The fighting was not necessarily good, but it did reflect what was important to people. Today such a world can seem incomprehensible. Today the highest social good is to feel good.

Along with a greater emphasis on feelings came an expanded medical therapeutic industry to classify all sorts of things as behavior disorders such as ADHD, BPD, ASD, OCD, LD, MDD, and ODD. Perhaps unappreciated is the effect produced by the collectivization of society, declining family size and birth rates, and the isolating effects of public school. These societal changes can produce significant stresses on the individual and blaming the victims as being "disordered" seems unnecessarily cruel.

Our daily routines have little of the physical labor of years gone by. Our diets consist of foods grown in fields long ago depleted on the micronutrients we need for optimum functioning. Regions with deficient soil Lithium were recognized for having higher rates of incarceration and mental illness. These changes can also impact mental health as diet and exercise can influence neurology.

Those who are more intelligent, artistic, or have a neurology that otherwise is more sensitive than average may be more vulnerable to such influences as diet, exercise, circumstances, culture, relationships, and even thoughts that can trigger feelings of apprehension, anxiety, fear, anger, or despair. Depression may result from or be the cause of excessive self-focus.

The influence of thoughts on one's mental health are also often not fully appreciated. One can sort of self-program themselves with values and then reinforce those values such that they resonate with or are opposed to various things. One can use their imagination to create all sorts of scenarios some of which can grow to be taken as reality. The transgender phenomena might be seen in this light. Half of transgenders will attempt suicide. A person may play with an imagination which can grow to an addictive delusion which when confronted with reality at some point can create anguish.

A life guided by truth can avoid much of the pain that a life guided by emotion may encounter.

A life in isolation.

A person may end up alone with their thoughts as a result of many different circumstances. Some might withdraw from an abusive environment. Some might feel unable or unwilling to connect with others. Some might be inhibited by shame and guilt. Some might feel driven to seek their own pleasures. Regardless of what drives someone into isolation, there are dangers to be aware of.

At a basic level one might see life in terms of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. The Greeks called pleasure seeking Hedonism. They also saw the value of limiting pleasures somewhat as they could be enjoyed for a longer period of time. This was called Epicureanism. The pursuit of pleasure can be narcotic in the sense that more frequent or more intense stimulation is often needed to produce the same effect. This can lead to extremes that can cause a painful life. Those who use alcohol and drugs can find their path ends with painful consequences. However, those that seek money, fame, and power can also find their ambition leads not to pleasure but to pain.

The consumptive life is a life lived for self. If followed to its end, it often produces painful results. Even if a person fights back to repair the damage done, he might simply encounter boredom which can lead one to turn again to the pleasures that do not satisfy. The way out of the cycle of which boredom is the high point is to begin to see others as an opportunity to escape the prison of self-focus.

In the natural course of human life marriage is often the first step in confronting one's natural selfishness. One has to make adjustments to accommodate someone else. This process is further advanced with parenthood. This more than anything else draws one out of himself so that the

needs of others can be addressed. Being drawn out of self is essential to good mental health. Those who are not married or parents can find that volunteer work or simply making positive investment of themselves in the lives of others can be a useful way to avoid a negative spiral that self-focus can create.

Inadequate parenting

Since we are all born helpless, ignorant, and selfish, we depend on our parents to help us learn how to navigate this world. This is made difficult if our parents themselves have not learned how to do this. Many assume that what is needed in life is to be learned in school. Sadly, most of what is taught in school is not needed or remembered. This often leaves children to try to make sense of the world and to try to learn on their own. Frequently the grandparents generation is absent from a home and whatever wisdom and advice that may have moderated or benefited parents is absent.

Character qualities that will be useful to a child and throughout his life are honesty, discernment, reliability, forbearance, kindness, humor, thoughtfulness, resilience, steadfastness, and self-discipline. Many parents are deficient in these qualities themselves and ignorant of how to help their children to develop them.

Occasionally parental deficiencies result in children experiencing abuse leading to even greater difficulty learning how to chart a course through life. One destructive element of human nature is self-indulgence. The ability to resist this influence is sometimes called delayed gratification. The person who is able to resist his own self-destructive tendencies has made a lot of progress in mastering survival skills.

Blaming parents may make a person feel better, but does little to actually solve problems. Going into the military used to be a way children from dysfunctional homes were able to relocate somewhere else with no money when they were old enough. Whenever one can find a way to build a life on their own, they can begin to repair whatever negative things they have acquired and experiment with ways to develop that in which they are deficient.

Media

Many people grow up expecting life to be as presented in books, movies, and TV programs. It can be useful to understand that these portrayals are devised to be appealing and thus can be deceptive. The more people that read or view the material, the more money is made. If this is the only frame of reference one has to understand life, one can feel that the reality of their existence is a failure because the people on TV seem loving and kind (except for the bad guys).

In all fairness few would tune in to a show that was realistic because in comparison to what is usually on it would be boring or unpleasant. Those who are influenced to draw from media their understanding of the world can see themselves as not fitting in. Often people are sad that they do not have the romance, friends, and success they see on TV. They seldom ask how a character like an office worker gets to drive a \$60,000 car or live in a \$750,000 home.

Even the news that is reported is usually biased in favor of socialism in all its forms. The idea that the government should run everything is attractive to media people. The diminishment of the family and religion often leave people dependant upon what they see on TV to know as ‘true’. People who are not able to question and be skeptical about what they are told can be taken in by those they come to trust.

Sources of information are necessary, but without skepticism and questioning, we can come to see the world and ourselves as others would have us. This is not too distant from slavery. In an isolated society it is all too easy to see ourselves as misfits with no hope of the warm loving relationships portrayed on TV. The media usually approaches us as consumers to attract our attention to sell to their advertisers. However, seeing ourselves in the images they present can be dangerous. It is often unsatisfying because we were created to desire the deep relationships that are so rare today. Consumerism seldom satisfies these desires..

Relationships

It has been said, “It is better to live alone than with a mistake”. Often as a result of media young people get involved with a hookup culture otherwise known as casual fornication. The term “falling” in love is used to describe a combination of emotional forces such as lust, attraction, expectation, and anticipation. A lengthy relationship might last six months. In a society mostly driven by feelings it should be expected that feelings change in response to new emotional sensations.

The traditional marriage based on prior chastity allows two people to spend their first years together in exploration and discovery often with humor, kindness, and patience. This allows a special bond of intimacy to be built that can last a lifetime. Having a relationship built on a solid foundation is a better investment than the accumulation of experiences that ultimately lack satisfying fulfillment.

Relationships can mean more than romantic relationships. Family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances can also define our relationships. The people with whom we have invested ourselves with might define our relationships. When considering our natural selfishness, it is easy to see how these relationships can become difficult and even toxic.

Our primary relationships used to be defined by growing up in a large extended family. With much fewer children being born or people even bothering to marry, most people grow up without a rich family life. Mobility can also mean seldom making relational connections of any depth.

People can deal with other people by avoiding them, being in competition with them, using them, learning from them, tolerating them, cooperating with them, helping them, or being used by them. Our interactions with others start in our family. However school soon thrusts us into a social milieu similar to prison. It should not be surprising that some of these relationships go awry.

Hook up Culture

One might examine older media such as TV shows and movies to see how the idea of casual fornication was advanced in society. With the introduction of oral contraception, this activity could advance without the most common consequence of the past, pregnancy. It has been said that the cure for the “disease” of adolescence had always been parenthood. However, with a lower risk of pregnancy, many never had to grow up.

The song lyric “Sha na na na na ...live for today, and don’t worry about tomorrow” seems to be a more appropriate guiding philosophy today than the planning for a marriage, family, and future that had been traditional. Many young people today find themselves trying to navigate a world where transient “relationships” are common and assumed the way people relate to each other.

Trading the intensity of the moment for the security of the future is often a not fully appreciated aspect of this approach to life. In addition to the “scars” one can accumulate from disease and abortions, there can be an emotional price to pay for falling into and out of “love”. This sort of “love” is simply the emotional sensations of the moment. Real love has elements of self-sacrifice that spouses make for each other and their children.

Drugs and Alcohol

Sometimes people can get into their own sensations as a diversion or even as an attempt to sooth discomfort. However, this can actually create more of a barrier with others as the pursuit of that which satisfies self can be alienating to others and destroy relationships.

The use of drugs and alcohol can seem even festive at first. There can be an additional attraction if they seem to dull the pain of difficult circumstances. However, sometimes difficult circumstances need our attention or they can worsen. Additionally, the self-focus that self-stimulation amplifies can cause us to neglect our circumstances and relationships such that our situation can even worsen.

Many people are unmotivated to make changes even after their life spirals down and they are left homeless. However, there are many that at various points come to seek help in trying to repair their lives. Sadly, there are a few that upon beginning to see their lives in ruin, despair of ever being able to set things right.

Self-focus

It has been said that no one thinks about us as much about us as we think about ourselves. While it is understandable that we think more about ourselves than others, there is a point where thinking too much about ourselves can be unhealthy. This can magnify things out of proportion and even distort our perception of reality to the point of emotional pain.

Sometimes experimenting with activities like exercise can draw one a little out of self focus. Making a schedule with hobbies, classes, and indulgences such as a favorite book or movie can be a way to also push back against a gathering gloom.

In the Army running with full field gear especially through sand can be wearying. One can shout out encouragement to the person next to you and find that it helps you to continue as well. This is an example of how making an investment (even a brief one) in others can take you out of yourself enough to discover hidden reserves.

Especially in a consumer culture one's self-focus can result in anger and frustration that life is not going the way one would like. Instead of a frame of reference that includes what one can do to control and direct one's life, an inclination can form to see life as what circumstance or others do to them. This can feed anger, powerlessness, and despair.

Nihilism

Perhaps more common among the over educated who have often shed any religious background, Seeing a purposelessness to life is not uncommon. This can be a major reason for considering suicide as seeing life without purpose makes it difficult to consider persevering in difficulty.

One can come to a nihilistic perspective without college or even being aware that this condition has a name. The person who lives for pleasure often finds that pleasures seldom lasts and when reaching the end of a consumptive "rope" one can see little left to live for as well.

A person trapped in a bad marriage may think there is no hope for improvement especially if they have no experience working out problems, negotiating differences, or building something worthwhile. A lack of skills and experience can make the future seem pointless. While one might acknowledge a theoretical potential for improvement, it usually is not sufficient source of hope that some success can produce.

Magical Thinking

Generally the more difficult life is, the less likely one is to have his imagination take him on flights of fancy. A man once had his ears and nose surgically removed and his head tattooed so that he could indulge his fantasy that he was a dragon. Throughout history amongst the wealthy, there have been individuals who have indulged themselves with such delusions.

The transexual phenomena is similar and militant. One might start with the idea that they are of the opposite sex and progress to think they actually are. The initial ideation can become associated with the sensations of pleasure and intensify such that this mental construct seems real. When reality becomes inescapable half of those who go down this road will attempt suicide.

The occult practice of Theosophy put forth the idea that one could project by mental power one's desires from the Astral plane through the Etheric plane into the material world whatever one

wanted and they could get it. This construct has been presented in many ways over history, but regardless of if it is called witchcraft or positive thinking it is the desire to get what one wants.

When these desires are allowed to grow to such proportions that one alters their perception of reality one can start to neglect the real world and discover over time that a neglected life can accumulate difficulties in the real world. When the “dream” ends, it can be difficult to pick up the pieces. In a similar way many of the people in Los Angeles that came with expectations of stardom come to a point where they have to start living real lives.

Looking through a Lens

An optimist is often said to look at the world through rose colored glasses. This is usually taken to mean that someone prefers not to consider the unpleasant things in life. One might come to see that their understanding of the world is not as complete as they had previously thought such as when a suburbanite finds himself in a high crime area downtown..

A person can look at the world through a pessimistic lens as well. This can incline one to miss opportunities and dismiss them because they are evaluated as being not worth the effort or unlikely to be effective. This perspective can feed on itself such that a downward spiral is created that sort of makes a prisoner of the person holding it.

In the 1960s when the James Bond movies first came out many high school boys saw in the cars, clothes, and women a life they saw as desirable and started to emulate it. That is was imaginary didn't matter. Ten years later they would be reading Playboy magazine (yes, for the articles) to learn how upwardly mobile young men should conduct themselves. This is more than a simple lens, this is the adoption of a persona. In a way people can mold themselves into the image they find desirable. Their imagination can create a desire for the “rewards” they hope to reap from their adoption of a role, costume, and script.

Creating a role out of a lens is like leaving the audience for the stage. It can leave someone at a loss if other people do not buy into the performance. This is a problem with most addictions in that the heightened sense of self tends to shut out relationships and increase isolation. Just as an actor is at risk of becoming “lost in the role”, one who fosters self-delusion can accumulate life difficulties. A departure from reality can allow real life to be neglected such that problems accumulate.

The consumptive life

Perhaps accelerated with the baby boom generation, the indulgence of children reached unhealthy proportions. The single child policy in China, in addition to aborting of millions of baby girls, gave rise to the descriptive phrase “Little Emperor” to describe children who were spoiled and demanding. Children raised in less advantageous circumstances often learn how to navigate through life by learning how to exchange their labor for payment and how to accumulate resources to provide for themselves. The child raised to see his indulgences as a first priority may not learn how to transition to adulthood responsibilities.

If one consumes more than he produces, he will eventually run out of resources. The person without humility might starve to death waiting for others to recognize his greatness and bestow on him all that his greatness demands. Children who were indulged too much can end up in some ways similar to ones who were abused in that they may lack the skills and experience to take control of their lives.

Excessive consumption often results in excessive ignorance. Those who overcome difficulties and exercise increasing control over their lives are less likely to see making themselves feel good as their first priority. The excessively consumptive often grow to depend on systems and others to provide for them and if there should be a problem with those systems and others, it can be as if the rug had been pulled out from under them.

Alcoholism is perhaps a good model for considering the consumptive life. Unchecked, it tends to worsen as dosages need to be more frequent and more intense to achieve the same effect. It tends to isolate as others begin to see one as more and more into his own sensations, it tends to dampen relationships.

The Attractiveness of Death

If one is being tortured or in great pain, death can look attractive. However, death can also look attractive if one has shaped it that way in their mind. Consider someone who is frustrated, disappointed, or even angry which how their life has turned out. They may begin at first to see death in a stylized way and it can grow to be seen as something desirable such that it comes to represent a solution.

Sometimes those unskilled, inexperienced, or even unwilling to make corrective changes in their lives can spend years lamenting the lack of improvement in their circumstances. The possibility of death can become attractive the longer one sees little improvement in his circumstances.

If a person has come to feel isolated or rejected, they may begin to see in suicide that which takes on the sense of a solution. One can even come to see in their death an opportunity to hurt someone they feel has hurt them. Much of the exaggeration with which one can see in death is a result from the distortion in thinking that can arise from excessive self-focus.

The Abuse Factor

There are many forms of childhood abuse such as physical, emotional, and even sexual. However there can also be abuses as adults from employers, religious leaders, salesmen, neighbors, spouses, and others. Abuse can be a single event, periodic, or ongoing. Children can be damaged in two ways, the inclusions of negative dynamics in their development as well as the absence of positive dynamics.

Even children who were raised in relative comfort might be called “abused” if their development leaves them naive and subject to abuse as adults because they are ignorant of how to protect

themselves. Some people end up so focused on the past that they are unable to respond in the present or prepare for the future. In this way the effects of abuse can continue even when the abuse or abuser has been left behind.

Abuse can come in different forms. Our reactions to abuse can also come in different forms. We can learn from it, survive it, and even come out stronger for it. However, it is possible to be scared, crippled, and even vulnerable to further abuse. One key to getting past abuse is to see it like a car accident. There may be lasting effects, but seeing it as an event or period in the past helps one disconnect from it so that one can begin to move forward.

Most people who consider suicide do not mention it to others. This can cut them off from those who care about them. The desire to avoid alarm or be seen as strange can be strong. In self-isolation not many retain the drive to figure things out or get a handle on this. As a result, many can sink into despair as the world around them seems to darken.

What do Others Think of Me?

In the world of the past one did not need to worry too much about what others thought. We were known intimately from birth and pretense was almost impossible. Today so much is superficial that many attempt to manage their image and reputation. In a way, it is possible to come to the vulnerable point that who he is solely exists in the minds of others.

A person might be fearful and anxious and tries to gain the favor of those around him while another is boastful and arrogant and just assumes those around him think favorably of him. The anxious and uncertain may be more inclined to suicide as they can lack a confidence in their social world. They may be convinced that they are held in low regard and they may actually be regarded poorly. Sadly, many do not appreciate how easy it is to build a new social network these days.

Advertisers prey upon women to sell products that are supposed to gain them greater acceptance and even admiration from their appearance. In a similar way many can come to fret about what others think about them. In a world that no longer has relationships built on deep intimate true knowledge, we are particularly vulnerable to what might be called theatrical or superficial knowledge.

In regard to suicide, we can imagine all sorts of things that are exaggerated or even not true that come to haunt us. Fear and anxiety can thrive in uncertainty. A gal once got into a bad marriage and moved to another state. After six months she had divorced and returned to her old job. She was fearful of what others were going to say. She did not appreciate that most people would be unaware that she even had been gone.

Shame and Guilt

There are things we do and experiences that can isolate us from even those we are closest to. Shame and guilt are natural reactions we have to what we have done wrong. We might be manipulated into it such as with sex abuse, however, the effects can be just as lasting. When we have done something wrong shame and guilt can be useful to try to repair damage and to motivate us to not continue or repeat what was wrong.

Sadly, shame and guilt can continue long after anything useful can be gotten from them. They can grow to paralyzing proportions such that we can cut ourselves off from others. This can be so profound that even people who deal with the shame and guilt of others such as cops who can limit their conversation with others so as not to alarm them about what they deal with.

Some people share too much while others take their secrets to the grave. There are those who have no shame or guilt because they do not have a functioning conscience. Most people can come to terms with the words and actions of their youth which can haunt them years later by understanding that foolishness and selfishness is often characteristic of youth.

A woman in her twenties may not understand that the sex abuse she experienced as a child harmed her in two ways. First, she had negative experiences that corrupted her developmental years and secondly positive developmental elements may not have been acquired. Feelings of shame can be so powerful that attempting to repair damage might not even be considered.

Despair that arises in an inner world of secrets and shame can be toxic. It can be useful to consider past events like a car accident. It may have been our fault or not. We may carry scars with us or not. However, if we have done all we can to repair and correct, then letting the past fade into the past might be the best course of action.

Not Knowing What is Possible

A child might be under severe emotional strain from being bullied. He might not be aware that there are options to confront a bully. Once can call out a bully to explain himself and thus turn the tables so that the bully is under the glare of public scrutiny. Each incident can be documented and witnesses found to testify such that a prosecutable case can be brought. Physical resistance can be given to physical bullying such that even in defeat, the bully pays some cost.

Children in particular are vulnerable to not knowing what is possible because of their limited experiences. If one comes to see an unbearable situation it can seem hopeless because of a limited understanding of options. In old movies a child from an abusive home was often said to have run away to join the circus. However, some children who heard of this may have left abusive homes only to end up in street prostitution or on drugs or both. Being aware of options also includes a realistic view of consequences as well.

The narrowing of focus that can occur for someone approaching suicide can even drive out consideration of options that have been known previously. If mentioned they can be dismissed as unachievable or unrealistic. often what is observed in the declining will to take corrective steps.

The will to live

There is a spark in each of us that will cause us to grasp at a straw even if we are drowning. But this spark can grow dim as one becomes tired, despairing, disconnected, and frustrated. People with terminal cancer can go through similar stages as the will to live becomes increasingly fainter. A Spanish survivor from a ship wreck off Texas several hundred years ago lived for years with the costal Indians until he was able to connect with Spaniards coming north out of Mexico. He described an existence of trying to eat as much as possible of whatever was available in each season in order to survive until the next season. It is interesting that dire circumstances can reveal a desperate will to live while comfort and ease can sometimes reveal a disinclination.

Suicide can be mystifying to one who is on the edge of survival. However, ironically, modern society has established institutions like public school that work to make children grow up more compliant and even docile. This tends to sap the will. The diminishment of will is often aggravated because in a consumer society not getting what you want can further erode the will to live. Having been bombarded with images of a happy consumer life, considering that these pictures were fiction and unobtainable can leave one lamenting the loss of an imaginary but anticipated life.

The emotional currents that flow through a life can vary considerably. At one moment the will to live can seem almost extinguished and even in a short period of time can seem very intense. As a result, someone who seems to have much to live for may consider suicide at a particular moment. The timing of a low period can be critical for someone who is also in despair.

The Spiritual Dimension

One element that in the past has strengthened individuals and families has been their religious beliefs and traditions. Many of these have provided a feeling of certainty and contributed to a sense of place in the universe. The increase in atheism has also removed this component from how many people see themselves in relation to the universe and which can contribute to a feeling of isolation.

Some religions may be more accurate than others, and truth can be something valuable to search out. However, even for a religion that may lack in the area of truth, there is value in having that dimension in one's life. In a consumer society, one's "religion" may only be represented by the bumper sticker that declares "He who dies with the most toys wins".

Mormonism, Islam, and Confucism may not offer absolute truth, but they can offer a sense of family and duty that can give followers a sense of place and define a world in which they can fit. Similar to the philosophy of Stoicism, many find the pursuit of virtue to give them and their family cohesion. Conversely, often what is offered as "new Age" or even the occult tends to just amplify a self focus to unhealthy dimensions.

Buddhism describes the trouble one can have with desire and advocates its elimination. While it is true that the pursuit of desires can bring painful consequences, the elimination of desire

altogether may not open the door to happiness. Christianity declares the opportunity to transition from the destructiveness of selfishness to the happiness to be found in selfless love. Sadly, most Christianity is presented with rituals or doctrines of criteria that presents itself as just another religious tradition. Most people use religion not so much for faith but as a tradition that provides stability, continuity, and context for their lives. This is not without value. For without this frame of reference, one can be left only with “scientific” atheism or nihilism.

One’s spiritual needs might take them beyond religion into a search for truth. One might argue about which religion is closest to truth, but in the last analysis that is up to the searcher. The person who thought he had found truth and was subsequently surprised to find out what he thought was wrong can face a world shattering upheaval in his life, or he can continue his search in a new direction.

How Suicide Develops

Modern life is difficult, particularly on children. Painful experiences, isolation, a lack of control, a lack of experiences, a lack of understanding, a narrowing of focus, and a sense of hopelessness can all contribute to a downward spiral of despair. It can seem to blow up in a short period or it can take months or years to reach actionable levels.

A person might threaten suicide and see in the response of others that encourages them to threaten repeatedly. After a while the response can diminish and the person who was sort of feeding on it finds themselves actually thinking of doing it.

Some who resist suicide may think of the pain it could cause others. Some think that suicide will cause others pain that they want them to feel. Many people use what is called suicidal ideation as a mental construct that is recalled to soothe anxiety. If used repeatedly, it can begin to take on proportions of a plan.

The event driven pain such as the death of a child or spouse, the loss of a job, being a refugee, or otherwise sudden upheaval in life can be intense and cause one to despair of life. However, this pain can diminish even with recurrences if one can manage the time for healing. One can experience an event such as returning to civilian life after the military that slowly turns into a longer term process as one finds it difficult to fit in to an environment they thought would be familiar.

Who is affected by Suicide

Obviously the person that commits suicide is the one mostly affected by suicide. However, family members, friends, coworkers, and others can also be impacted. There can be a huge life lasting emotional scar of regret and even recrimination. There can even be physical disadvantages especially to parents that lose a means of support for their latter years.

Sometimes, especially if one feels isolated, a person might think that their suicide will not effect others. This is not true. People will often feel that the close relationship they thought they had

should have meant that someone in pain would have reached out to them. They can torment themselves asking what they should have done to be a better friend, parent, sibling, or even child.

What can be done to change course?

The person considering suicide is usually feeling alone. It can be the intellectual pointlessness of Nihilism, the emotional feeling of abandonment, the physical pain of illness, or even the general despair of anything ever getting better. This can be amplified with those who have no positive experience of being able to make things better.

Often at the point of considering suicide one's focus has narrowed so much that alternatives and options do not seem possible. Taking big steps to fix everything can seem so unrealistic as to be out of reach. However, one can start with a corner of their life. Being able to do some activity for an hour or two a week can become an anchor to exercise some control and from this to explore, experiment, and expand such to build on this foundation. In a way this can start a trajectory that can build momentum to reenter the world with better success.

Left in isolation we can tend to have our focus in life to narrow in on us. If we can take on things that draw ourselves out of ourselves, we may be able to stop the world from seeming increasingly darker. Traditionally getting married and raising a family would almost demand that we set aside some of our selfishness and self-focus for others. In modern life one can also invest themselves in others through things like volunteer work.

Starting with small steps can be a key to setting in motion a new direction in life. Experimenting with new skills, new people, new methods can start to reveal things that work and can be accumulated to build a set of new skills that increasingly are more useful.

One factor that greatly reduces the number of suicides is that the human body is particularly difficult to kill. Most try to overdose on pills and often change their minds. If talking on the phone with someone in the process of this type of suicide it can be useful to ask that they unlock their door while they are still capable because the police or EMTs are not always willing to break down someone's door should they change their mind and want help.

Summary

People can despair of life for many different reasons. Some do not know how to break out of a downward spiral. Some cannot summon the effort to do so. Teen suicides have increased along with the expansion of social media. As our society changes, it seems to take a greater toll on us. We may need to explore new ways to reach out and support each other.