# Chapter 32 Psychology of Suicide

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# Abstract

Suicide is a major health concern that claims many lives each year. Despite the importance of the problem, the causes of suicide are mostly unknown, and current theories are somewhat speculative. A better understanding of suicidal behavior may be possible through an understanding of the linkages between suicide and stress. A number of theories, known as stress-diathesis theories, attempt to shed light on the relationship between stress and suicide. These theories postulate that suicide occurs when a diathesis (i.e., a predisposition) is acted upon by life stressors causing an individual to reach a breaking point at which suicide becomes likely. There are a number of physiological possibilities for the link between stress and suicide, including the neurotransmitter norepinephrine and the hypothalamus/pituitary gland/adrenal gland axis.