Life-Situation Interventions: Intrapersonal

Chapter 5
PSY3332

Life Situation Stressors

- Identification of unnecessary situations in life that add stress.
- You can control that life experience.
- You can actively choose to include or abolish stressor.

Unnecessary Life Stressors

- Nutrition
- Noise Stressors
- Some Life Events
- Many Daily Hassles
- Too few "Uplifts"
Good Nutrition Can...

- Eliminate stressors due to poor nutrition.
- Help the body to better respond during stressful situations.

Nutrition and Stress

- A balanced diet is necessary for good health.
  - food pyramid
  - variety
  - balancing energy intake with output
- Malnourishment can be due to
  - eating too much
  - eating too little
  - ingesting some nutrients in inappropriate amounts

Eating Behaviors and Stress

- Malnourishment can lead to illnesses that can cause stress effects to be magnified
  - heart disease
  - cancer
  - obesity (see BMI chart… Are you in danger?)
  - anorexia nervosa
  - bulimia
- Some foods can cause stress symptoms
  - psuedostressors & sympathomimetics
    - caffeine
    - nicotine
Malnourishment and Stress

- The stress response (cortisol) requires greater use of
  - B Complex Vitamins
  - Vitamin C
- The stress response also increases the excretion of
  - Calcium
  - Potassium
  - Zinc
  - Copper
  - Magnesium

Food Selection May Affect the Body’s Physiology

- Excess sugar & processed flour ingestion
  - b-vitamin use
  - hypoglycemic responses --> more reactive to stress
  - stress-diabetes link/
    - beta cell burn out in susceptible individuals
- Excess salt (sodium) intake
  - raises BP by increases fluid volume… add vasopressin & aldosterone = hypertension

Noise as a Stressor

- Most disturbing is noise that constantly changes in either
  - pitch
  - intensity (85 db)
  - frequency
- Noise can
  - increase blood pressure and heart rate
  - increase muscle tension
  - cause irritation and anxiety
**Controlling Stress From Noise**

- Use earplugs when exposed to loud noise.
- Listen to music at a moderate volume.
- Use sound-absorbing materials in the home.
  - curtains
  - carpeting
  - acoustic ceiling tiles
- Keep noise-making appliances away from common living spaces (bedroom, living room).
- Live in areas distant from industrial plants, airports, and busy roadways.

**Some Noises Reduce Stress**

- White noise
- Mantras
- Certain forms of music

**Unnecessary Stressors**

- Changes due to major life events can be stressful
  - Anderson’s Life-Event Scale
  - Holmes & Rahe’s Social Readjustment Rating Scale
  - Higher scores = increased risk of illness or injury
- Note that pleasant changes are also stressors (marriage, pregnancy, retirement)
**Unnecessary Stressors**

- When too many changes have already occurred—make active choices:
  - avoid additional changes if possible, or
  - postpone changes if possible, or
  - plan ahead and prepare for the change
- **Social Support Network**—Identify support
  - Decreases susceptibility to consequences due to change
  - Family and strong friendships
    - provide input on how to deal with the changes
    - provide help in directly dealing with the changes
    - provide emotional support

**Social Support Networking**

- Social support is being
  - accepted for oneself
  - loved for oneself
  - needed for oneself
- Social support can
  - reduce stressors
  - prevent the negative consequences of stress
- Social isolation is a stressor

**Developing a Strong Social Support System**

- Practice the conflict resolution technique
- Apply the assertiveness skills
- Be caring and open with others
- Overcome fears of being
  - rejected
  - embarrassed
  - ridiculed
Percent Increased Mortality Risk in U.S. Citizens Relative to Married Persons

- Single (1990)
- Widowed (1990)
- Divorced (1990)
- Never Married (1990)

**SOURCE:** Kao & Uchino, 1995 / CDC, 1996

---

Social Networks, Age, and All-Cause Mortality: Findings from the Alameda County (CA) Study

- MALES
  - Low Connected
  - High Connecteds
  - MALES
  - Low Connected
  - High Connecteds

**SOURCE:** Berkman & Syme, 1979

---

Pet Ownership and 1-Year Survival After Coronary Care Unit Discharge

- Own Pet
- Don't Own Pet

**SOURCE:** Public Health Report (1990) Vol. 95, (4) 307-311
Unnecessary Stressors

- Major life changes are not the only stressors.
- Everyday **hassles**
  - are regularly occurring relatively minor negative situations
  - may be more detrimental to health
  - The Hassles Scale
- **Uplifts**
  - are positive events that make us feel good
  - absence of uplifts may also be related to ill health
- So, plan your day to reduce the hassles and include some uplifts (give yourself success).
**Identify Patterns for Success**

- Success Analysis- Active pursuit of success!
  - 1. Divide life into 3 each parts (by year)
  - 2. In each part identify 3 successes and why you consider these successful
  - 3. Identify most & least successful experience
  - 4. Separate page: list 10 strengths, positive characteristics, talents
  - 5. Identify four patterns of how success is defined
  - 6. How you define success?
  - 7. Prescribe experiences that will be successful for you and will take advantage of your strengths.

---

**Eliminating Unnecessary Stressors**

- Maintain a stress diary.
- Analyze the data you have gathered.
  - What stressors do you commonly experience?
  - How do these stressors affect you physiologically and psychologically?
  - Do these stressors negatively affect your performance?
- Can you do without some of these stressors?