

Chapter 15 Stress and Health

Sec 1: Sources of Stress

Stress – person's perception of his or her inability to cope with a certain tense event or situation

Components of Stress

1. Stressor – stress producing event or situation
2. Stress Reaction – body's response to a stressor
3. Distress – negative stress, stems from acute anxiety or pressure and can take a harsh toll on the mind and body
4. Eustress – positive stress, results from the strivings and challenges that are the spice of life

Conflict Situations – when a person must choose between two or more options that tend to result from opposing motives

1. Approach-Approach Conflict – must choose between two attractive alternatives, easy to resolve and does not produce a great deal of stress
2. Avoidance-Avoidance Conflict – confront two unattractive alternatives, either course of action will be frustrating and usually involves a high level of stress
3. Approach-Avoidance Conflict – situation that has both enjoyable and disagreeable consequences, level of stress depends on the intensity of the desire or perceived threat

4. Double Approach-Avoidance Conflict – choose between multiple options, each of which has pleasurable and disagreeable aspects

Appraising a Situation

1. Primary Appraisal – refers to our immediate evaluation of a situation
2. Secondary Appraisal – deciding how to deal with a potentially stressful situation
3. 3 ways to appraise a situation: irrelevant, positive, or negative

Environmental Stressors

1. Noise – loud, irregular, or uncontrollable noises are one of the greatest irritants in our lives
2. Crowding (only the feeling of being crowded)
3. Life Changes – marriage, illness, new job, moving, death, divorce
4. Hassles – common, relatively minor, day-to-day stressors (linked to health problems)
5. Uplifts – small, positive events, can protect against stress

Sec 2: Reactions to Stress

Reactions to Stress

1. Holistic – human body is an integrated organism, our physical well-being effects how we behave

General Adaptation Syndrome – 3 stages in the body's stress reaction

1. Alarm – body mobilizes its fight-or-flight defenses, person becomes exceptionally alert and sensitive to stimuli in the environment and tries to keep a firm grip on his or her emotions
2. Resistance – find means to cope with the stressor and to ward off, superficially at least, adverse reactions
3. Exhaustion – adrenal and other glands involved in the fight-or-flight response have been taxed to their limit
 - A. Responses that were good for immediate resistance to stress are harmful in the long run

Emotional Responses

1. Anxiety – most common response to stress, generalized apprehension or feeling of danger
2. Anger – the irate reaction likely to result from frustration
3. Fear – usual reaction when a stressor involves real or imagined danger

Cognitive Responses

1. Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
2. Recurring Thoughts
3. Poor Decision Making
4. Unjustified suspicion or distrust of others

5. Burnout – physically worn out and emotionally exhausted from giving too much time or energy while not receiving sufficient gratification

Behavioral Reactions – nervous habits, smoking, drinking, drug use, fatigue, aggression, suicide, and criminal activity

Physical Reactions

1. Psychosomatic Symptoms – real, physical symptoms that are caused by stress or tension (headaches, stomach aches, & muscle pains)
2. Emotional Stress – can cause peptic ulcers, hypertension, certain kinds of arthritis, asthma, & heart disease
3. Stress can be a direct or indirect cause of an illness
 - A. Migraine Headache – usually a physical reaction to stress
 - B. Reduces our resistance to infectious disease by tampering w/ our immune system (body's natural defense system against infection)

Factors Influencing Reactions to Stress

1. Personality Differences
 - A. Type A – always prepared for fight-or-flight, have a great deal of hostility, maybe irritable, and cannot tolerate delays, feel guilty when they are not doing something

i. Maybe susceptible to coronary artery disease, often followed by heart attacks, in their 30s & 40s

B. Type B – generally relaxed, patient, and do not become angry easily

C. Emotional Expressiveness – people who neither express nor admit strong feelings of despair, depression, and anger are more likely to develop cancer than those who can vent their emotions

2. Perceived Control Over Stressors – physical disorders are more likely when we do not have control over stressors

A. People prefer predictable stress over unpredictable stress

3. Social Support – feeling that one is cared for, loved, respected, and part of a network of communication and mutual obligation

A. Can reduce both likelihood & severity of stress related diseases

B. Offer 4 kinds of support:

1. Emotional – involves concerned listening, which forms a basis for offering affection and concern bolstering the stressed person's confidence

2. Appraisal – listener feeds back info and probing questions to the stressed person as an aid in sorting out, understanding, and planning to deal w/ the sources of stress

3. Informational – stressed person responds to what he or she has learned and evaluates the manner in which he or she is dealing with stressors
4. Instrumental – represents active, positive support in the form of direct help such as money or living quarters

Sec 3: Coping with Stress

Cognitive Appraisal – interpretation of an event that helps determine its stress impact

1. Defensive Coping Strategies

- a. Denial – person decides the event is not really a stressor
- b. Intellectualization – individual analyzes a situation from an emotionally detached viewpoint
- C. Both can prevent physical reactions to stress but can lead to more stress in long run if a legitimate stressor is ignored

Active Coping Strategies – appraise situations as challenges not threats

1. Involve changing our environment or modifying a situation to remove stressors
2. Hardiness – personality traits of control, commitment, and challenge that help us reduce stress
 - A. Control – ability to affect the outcome of a situation

- B. Commitment – establishing and pursuing our goals
- C. Challenge – actively confront and solve problems instead of feeling threatened by them
- 3. Controlling Stressful Situations
 - A. Escape/Withdrawal
 - B. Spacing out stress producing events
- 4. Problem Solving – involves a rational analysis of the situation that will lead to an appropriate decision, healthy strategy
- 5. Explanatory Style
 - A. Optimists – typically puts the best face on any set of events
 - B. Pessimist – always sees the dark side
- 6. Relaxation
 - A. Progressive Relaxation – lying down comfortably and tensing and releasing the tension in each major muscle group in turn
 - B. Meditation – focusing of attention w/ the goal of clearing one’s mind and producing an “inner peace”
- 7. Biofeedback – technique for bringing specific body processes under one’s conscious control
- 8. Humor – laughing actually releases the tension of pent-up feelings and can help you keep a proper perspective
- 9. Exercise – stimulates and provides an outlet for physical arousal, and it may burn off stress hormones
- 10. Support Groups & Professional Help – help people with specific stress related problems

11. Training – new, unfamiliar, or dangerous situations can be stressful because we are unsure we can deal with it
12. Improving Interpersonal Skills – developing skills in dealing with others is one of the best ways to manage stress

Sec 4: Stress in Your Life

Autonomy – ability to take care of oneself and make one's own decisions

1. Choosing College

- a. College is one of the first big steps toward autonomy for most young people
- b. “College Shock” – emotional upheaval many freshmen feel due to new found freedoms
- c. Many students approach college with high, often unrealistic, aspirations
 - i. Many choices are made based on fantasy

2. Sources of Change

- A. Challenges the identity a student has established in high school
- B. Greater Diversity
- C. Developmental Friendships – friends force one another to reexamine their basic assumptions and perhaps adopt new ideas and beliefs
- D. Coping with Change (Stress)

1. Some students redouble efforts to succeed in the field they have chosen and avoid people and situations that might bring their doubts to surface
2. Some avoid confronting doubt by going through the motions and emotionally detaching themselves
3. Resynthesis – students combine old ideas with new ones and reorganizing feelings in order to renew one's identity (keeping options open)

Working – each person's work experience is different and each person reacts differently to a job as a result of his or her own personality

Work Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction – important because low job satisfaction is associated with high absenteeism and worker turnover

1. Resources – worker feels that they have enough help, supplies and equipment
2. Financial Reward – job pays well, offers good fringe benefits, and its secure
3. Challenge – job is interesting and enables the worker to use his or her special talents & abilities
4. Relationships with Coworkers – worker is on good terms professionally and socially w/ colleagues
5. Comfort – working conditions and related factors (hours, travel to & from the job, work environment)

Changing Careers – many people change careers several times, most common for young people

A. Career – a vocation in which a person works at least a few years

Comparable Worth – concept that women and men should receive equal pay for jobs calling for comparable skill and responsibility