Chapter 2: Mental Health and Stress

Positive Psychology and Character Strengths

- In recent years, psychologists have become more interested in positive psychology
- Focus on positive emotions, characteristics, strengths, and conditions that create happiness
- Six virtues that “enable human thriving”
  - Wisdom
  - Courage
  - Humanity
  - Justice
  - Temperance
  - Transcendence

Characteristics of Mentally Healthy People

- Possess high self-esteem
- Accept imperfections in themselves and others
- Altruistic
- Have a sense of control over their lives
- Demonstrate social competence in relationships
- Able to rely on others
- Not overwhelmed by emotions
- Try to maintain a positive outlook on life
- Capable of intimacy; no fear of commitment
- Show creativity
- Persevere and take on challenges
- Take reasonable risks in order to grow
- Can bounce back from adversity

The Self-Actualized Person

- Self-actualization: the state attained when a person has reached his or her full potential
- Proposed by Maslow as the level at which people achieve transcendence
  - State of well-being that comes from finding purpose and meaning in life

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Resilience

- Optimism: tendency to see problems as temporary and specific rather than permanent and general
- Self-efficacy: a general sense that you have some control over your life
- Resilience: the ability to bounce back from adverse events
Happiness and Positive Psychology

- Happiness involves three components:
  - Positive emotion and pleasure (savoring sensory experiences)
  - Engagement (depth of involvement with family, work, romance, and hobbies)
  - Meaning (using personal strengths to serve some larger end)
- Engagement and meaning are the most important in giving people satisfaction and happiness

Emotional Intelligence

- Psychologist Daniel Goleman expanded concept of intelligence by including the idea of emotional intelligence
  - Insists qualities such as self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence, and empathy are more important than IQ

People who are emotionally intelligent can:

- Recognize, name, and understand their emotions
- Manage their emotions and control their moods
- Motivate themselves
- Recognize and respond to emotions in others
- Be socially competent

Bereavement and Healthy Grieving

- Grieving is a natural response to loss and is often expressed by a multitude of feelings, including sadness, loneliness, anger, and guilt
- Such intense emotional feelings can have a negative impact on one’s overall health
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve and no specific timetable
- Seeking support and keeping a journal can be part of the healing process

Facing Death

- Kübler-Ross, 1969: stages people go through when in the process of dying
  - (1) Denial and isolation;
  - (2) anger;
  - (3) bargaining;
  - (4) depression;
  - (5) acceptance
  - Stages are not linear; people experience them in different orders or may revisit stages
- More modern approaches focus on ways to live with illness rather than prepare for death
The Brain’s Role in Mental Health and Illness
● The brain is the central control station for human intelligence, feeling, and creativity
  ○ The brain and nervous system mediate all behavior, both normal and abnormal
● Since the 1980s, knowledge of the structure and function of the brain has increased dramatically
● Advances in imaging technologies (CAT scans, PET scans, MRIs, fMRIs) have allowed for many new discoveries

The Developing Brain
● By the age of 6, 95% of the brain is formed
● A growth spurt in adolescence occurs in the frontal cortex, where the “executive functions” of planning, organization, and rational thinking are controlled
● By the early to mid 20s, a more mature adult brain results

Mental Illness and the Brain
● Mental illnesses are diseases that affect the brain
  ○ Cognitive disorders are caused by a pathology of the brain and are rare
  ○ Mental disorders are more commonly caused by complex interactions
    ■ Biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors
    ■ Some have a genetic component
● Imbalances of neurotransmitters seem to be particularly important in a variety of mental disorders

Mental Disorders and Treatment
● Mental disorder: a pattern of behavior associated with distress (pain) or disability or with significantly increased risk of suffering, death, pain, disability, or loss of freedom
  ○ A mental disorder is different from a psychological problem that can be considered normal, and it can be diagnosed from a set of symptoms

Mood Disorders
● Known as depressive or affective disorders
● Among the most common mental disorders around the world
● More than 20 million adults in the United States suffer from a depressive illness, affecting more women than men
● Examples include:
  ○ Major depressive disorder (depression)
  ○ Bipolar disorder (manic episodes)
### Anxiety Disorders

- Along with depression, anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders
  - Affect more than 40 million Americans 18 and older
    - Panic attack: apprehension or intense fear in the absence of danger
    - Panic disorder: recurrent unexpected panic attacks
    - Specific phobia: intense fear of a situation or object, invoking immediate anxiety
    - Social phobia: intense fear of social or performance situations
    - Generalized anxiety disorder: worry about routine matters
    - Obsessive-compulsive disorder: persistent, intrusive thoughts, impulses, or images that cause intense anxiety or distress

### Addiction

- Continued, compulsive behavior despite serious negative consequences
- Physiological dependence reduces sensitivity to substance’s effects
- Withdrawal symptoms occur when substance use stops
- Even without physiological dependence, psychological dependence can occur
- Usually associated with substance use, but concept of addiction now extended to other areas of compulsive behaviors

### Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders

- Disorders characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech or behavior, and other signs that an individual has lost touch with reality
- Schizophrenia has a strong genetic component
- In most cases, symptoms of the disease can be controlled with medication

### Mental Disorders and Suicide

- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students
- About 7% of college-aged students seriously considered suicide in 2012, and almost 1% attempted to kill themselves
- Women in U.S. society are more likely to attempt suicide, but men are four times more likely to succeed

### Summary:

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### Mental Disorders and Suicide

- **What leads a person to suicide?**
  - As many as 90% of those who commit suicide are suffering from a mental disorder—often depression
  - The symptom linking depression and suicide is a feeling of hopelessness
  - Depression and alcoholism may be involved in two-thirds of suicides
  - Substance abuse and depression can be lethal
  - Sometimes there is no apparent precipitating event or problem

- **Behavioral signs that may indicate a person is thinking about suicide:**
  - Comments about death and threats of suicide
  - Increasing social withdrawal and isolation
  - Intensified moodiness
  - Increase in risk-taking behaviors
  - Sudden improvement in mood, accompanied by certain behaviors, such as giving away possessions

- **How to help:**
  - The danger of asking if someone is thinking about suicide (“planting the seed”) is a myth
  - Encourage the person to talk
  - Encourage the person to get help through a suicide hotline or counseling
  - Do not keep the situation a secret
  - Do not leave a suicidal person alone

### Self-Injury

- Intentional injury to one’s own body, known sometimes as self-harm, self-mutilation, or self-injurious behavior
- Behaviors include cutting, burning, scratching, branding, picking, hair-pulling, and head-banging
- Individuals often have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse as well as coexisting problems such as substance abuse or an eating disorder

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**Summary:**
Treatments for Mental Disorders

- Psychotherapy
  - More than 250 different models of psychotherapy
  - Based on the development of positive interpersonal relationship between a client and a therapist

- Medications
  - Antipsychotics
  - Antidepressants
  - Anxiolytics (anti-anxiety)
  - Use has increased dramatically in recent years

What Is Stress?

- Stress: the general state of the body, mind, and emotions when an environmental stressor has triggered the stress response
- Stressors: events or agents in the environment that can cause stress
  - When you appraise an event as positive, you experience eustress, or positive stress
  - When you appraise it as negative, you experience distress

The Stress Response

- A stress response (or fight-or-flight response) is a series of physiological changes that occur in the body
- All animals, including humans, have the ability to respond to emergencies they perceive as dangerous
- The autonomic nervous system is triggered via the sympathetic branch to activate the body’s organs to respond to the possible threat; it has two branches:
  - Sympathetic branch: initiates stress response
  - Parasympathetic branch: turns off stress response and returns the body to normal

The Stress Response: Changes in the Body

Summary:
The Relaxation Response

- *Homeostasis* is a state of stability and balance in which body functions are maintained within a normal range
- The *relaxation response* is a series of physiological changes that calm the body systems and return them to normal functioning

Acute Stress and Chronic Stress

- Your body can deal with short-term *acute stress*, as long as you recover afterwards
- When stress is constant, it becomes damaging to the body
- Many people live in a state of *chronic stress*, which is a stress response continuing without a relaxation and increases the likelihood of illness or disease

The General Adaptation Syndrome

- Hans Selye developed the *General Adaptation Syndrome* as an explanation of the physiological changes observed during a stress response
- The process has three stages:
  - **Alarm**
  - **Resistance**
  - **Exhaustion**

Physical Effects of Chronic Stress

- Stress plays a role in illness and disease in a variety of ways
  - **Immunesystem**
    - Both brief and long-term stressors decrease immune function
  - **Cardiovascular system**
    - Long-term stress response can cause various forms of heart disease

Summary:
Physical Effects of Chronic Stress

- Stress plays a role in illness and disease in a variety of ways
  - Gastrointestinal system
    - Common forms of stomach ailments can be related to stress
  - Mental health
    - Forms of acute and chronic stress can contribute to the development of psychological illnesses
    - Acute stress disorder
    - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
    - Adjustment disorder

Mediators of the Stress Response

- Different people respond differently to stressors
- Factors that affect these responses could be past experiences and overall level of wellness
- Other critical areas include:
  - Personality traits
  - Habitual ways of thinking
  - Inborn or acquired attitudes toward the demands of life

Personality Factors

- **Type A behavior pattern**
  - Impulsive, achievement oriented, and highly competitive
  - Prime candidates for stress-related illnesses, and increased risk for a number of other diseases
- **Type B behavior pattern**
  - More easygoing and less readily frustrated
  - Less susceptible to coronary heart disease
- **Recent additional personality types**
  - Type C personality types: introverted, detail-oriented, reserved people
  - Type D personality types: not very expressive, and hold in negative emotions

Cognitive Factors, and Resilience and Hardiness

- **Cognitive factors**: your outlook and beliefs about life affect how you deal with stressors in your life
- **Resilience**: stress-resistant people seem to focus on immediate issues and explain their struggles in positive and helpful ways
- **Hardiness**: characterized by a tendency to view life events as challenges rather than threats

Summary:
Sources of Stress

- Life events
- Daily hassles
  - College stress
  - Job pressure
  - Burnout
  - Money and financial worries
- Family and interpersonal stress
- Time pressure, overload, and technology
- Anger
- Trauma
- Societal issues

Healthy and Unhealthy Ways to Manage Stress

- Unhealthy ways to manage stress include the use of tobacco, the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol, and the use of food to manage feelings
- Need to experiment with active stress management techniques
- What works for one person may not be helpful for another
- Practice stress management on a regular basis
- Some stressful events and situations are overwhelming—don’t hesitate to seek counseling

Stress Reduction Strategies

- Time management
- Social support A healthy lifestyle
- Relaxation techniques
  - Deep breathing
  - Progressive relaxation
  - Visualization (guided imagery)
  - Mindfulness-based meditation
  - Yoga
  - T’ai chi
  - Biofeedback
  - Affirmations

Summary: