Mental Health and Stress
Learning Objectives

- Define *mental health* and discuss the characteristics of mentally healthy and self-actualized people
- Describe the various mental disorders and appropriate treatments for each
- Discuss various forms of stress, stress response and chronic stress
- Describe key stressors and various strategies to manage stress and relax
Positive Psychology and Character Strengths

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

They Don't Waste Time Feeling Sorry for Themselves

They Don't Waste Energy on Things They Can't Control

They Don't Dwell on the Past

They Don't Make the Same Mistakes Over and Over

They Don't Resent Other People's Success

They Don't Give Up After the First Failure

They Don't Feel the World Owes Them Anything

They Don't Give Away Their Power

They Don't Fear Taking Calculated Risks

They Don't Worry About Pleasing Everyone

They Don't Fear Alone Time

They Don't Expect Immediate Results
- 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.
Happiness

Happiness involves three components:

- Engagement (depth of involvement with family, work, romance, and hobbies)
- Meaning (using personal strengths to serve some larger end)
- Positive emotion and pleasure (savoring sensory experiences)
What are your major sources of happiness?

**Top nine answers**
- Your relationship with your children: 77%
- Your friends and friendships: 76%
- Contributing to the lives of others: 75%
- Your relationship with spouse/partner or your love life: 73%
- Your degree of control over your life and destiny: 66%
- The things you do in your leisure time: 64%
- Your relationship with your parents: 63%
- Your religious or spiritual life and worship: 62%
- Holiday periods, such as Christmas and New Year’s: 50%

What one thing in your life has brought you the greatest happiness?

**Top four answers**
- Children/grandchildren: 35%
- God/faith/religion: 11%
- Family: 17%
- Spouse: 9%

Do you generally wake up happy?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 14%
- Depends/don’t know: 6%

Would you say that so far you have lived the best possible life that you could have, a very good life, a fair life, or a poor life?

- Best possible: 13%
- Very good: 37%
- Good: 33%
- Fair: 15%
- Poor: 2%
Bereavement and Healthy Grieving

Grieving is a natural response to loss and is often expressed by a multitude of intense emotional feelings.

- Numbness and shock
- Separation
- Disorganization
- Reorganization
Mental Disorders

Disorders recognized by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)/published by American Psychiatric Association

Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions that affect the mood, thinking and behavior
Mental Illness and the Brain

Diseases that affect the brain and cause distress and impaired functioning for the individual

**Cognitive disorders** are caused by a pathology of the brain and are rare (*Alzheimer disease*)

Mental disorders are more commonly caused by complex interactions of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors

Some have a genetic component (schizophrenia, bipolar and depression)
Neurotransmitters

**Norepinephrine**/ main neurotransmitter used by the sympathetic nervous system
Active during stress response/ fight or flight situations
Increase in anxiety, restlessness, blood pressure, heart rate

**Dopamine**/ secreted by neurons in the midbrain/
positive feelings of reward and pleasure, motor control, motivation
Restless legs syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), addiction and Parkinson’s disease
**Serotonin**/ central nervous system/associated with emotions and mood
Low levels related to depression, managing anger and concentration

**GABA**/main inhibitory neurotransmitter of the CNS
Promotes relaxation and inhibits excitation
Low levels cause restlessness, poor verbal memory night sweats and short temper
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)
Warning Signs of Depression

- Feeling of sadness or emptiness
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Fatigue
- Feeling of worthlessness
- Reduced ability to concentrate
Bipolar Disorder

*Manic* episodes that may alternate with depressive episodes

*Manic episode*: an abnormally elevated irritable mood during a specific period of time

Strong evidence of a genetic component for this disorder
Anxiety Disorders

Very common (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

Dependence on a substance or a behavior
Signs of Addiction

- Continued, compulsive behavior despite serious negative consequences

- Physiological dependence reduces sensitivity to substance’s effects (*needing more all the time*)

- Withdrawal symptoms occur when substance use stops

- Even without physiological dependence, psychological dependence can occur
Alcohol
AA has more than 2 million members—only a small proportion of those who are dependent on alcohol.

Drugs
More than 8 percent of the population currently use illicit drugs, with marijuana by far the most commonly used.

Tobacco
Smoking rates have declined dramatically since their peak in the 1960s, but one in five Americans still smokes.

Caffeine
The most widely used psychoactive drug in the United States, caffeine is consumed in coffee, soda, and, most recently, energy drinks with names like Red Bull and Full Throttle.

Food
Some people who are addicted to food have binge-eating disorder—a psychological disorder like anorexia or bulimia—and are likely to be overweight or obese.

Gambling
About 3–4 percent of those who gamble are believed to do so compulsively.

Shopping
A cultural emphasis on material goods, fueled by advertising, contributes to compulsive shopping.

Sex
Sex addicts are preoccupied with sexual thoughts and activities much of the time. The vast majority grew up in abusive family environments.

Internet
Internet addicts spend hours online every day instead of spending time on real-life activities and relationships.
Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders

- Delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech or behavior, and other signs that an individual has lost touch with reality

- 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
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
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?

"I have a lot of 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*
Sources of Stress

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

*Parasympathetic branch*: initiates stress response

*Sympathetic branch*: turns off stress response and returns the body to normal.
The Stress Response: Changes in the Body

Scalp: The scalp tightens so that hair appears to stand up.

Eyes: Pupils dilate to sharpen vision.

Ears: Hearing becomes sharper.

Brain-center: Neurotransmitters in the brain activate the amygdala, triggering an emotional response to the stressor, such as fear or anger.

Brain-front: Neurotransmitters suppress activity in the frontal cortex of the brain (concerned with short-term memory, inhibition, and rational thought), allowing quick reactions to take over.

Heart: Heart rate increases, heart beat becomes stronger.

Blood: Blood pressure increases, clotting time decreases.

Lungs: Breathing rate increases, lungs take in more oxygen.

Liver: Liver converts glycogen to glucose for instant energy.

Mouth: Salivation decreases as fluids are diverted from nonessential functions.

Stomach, intestines: Digestion in the stomach slows or stops.

Sweat glands: Perspiration increases to cool the body.

Hands and feet: Extremities become cold as blood is directed away from skin and toward large muscles.

Adrenal glands: Adrenal glands release hormones that cause physiological and metabolic changes.

Large muscles, legs: Muscle tension in the large muscles increases to prepare body for action.
Other Factors affecting Response to Stress

*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
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.
Physical Effects of Chronic Stress

Stress plays a role in illness and disease in a variety of ways

- **Immune system**
  
  *Both brief and long-term stressors decrease immune function*

- **Cardiovascular system**
  
  *Long-term stress response can cause various forms of heart disease*
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
Stress Reduction Strategies

- Time management
- Social support
- A healthy lifestyle
- Relaxation techniques
  - Deep breathing
  - Progressive relaxation
  - Visualization (guided imagery)
  - Mindfulness-based meditation
  - Yoga
Personality Types

**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
Type C personality types: introverted, detail-oriented, reserved people

Type D personality types: not very expressive, and hold in negative emotions
10 TIPS TO STRESS LESS

1. Look for opportunities in life’s challenges.
2. Go for a walk with a friend.
3. Focus more on things you can control.
4. Ask for help.
5. Give a compliment.
6. Get involved with a cause you believe in.
7. Reminisce about good times.
8. Go to bed earlier.
9. Take a dance class.
10. Visit www.mentalhealth.asn.au

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