

# INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY: STRESS AND HEALTH

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# BELIEFS AND HEALTH

- **BELIEFS:** The subjective assessment of events that are influenced by our private logic and lifestyle dynamics.
- Much of the stress response that releases the chemicals and hormones in the body is directly related to our beliefs about the event.
- For some of you in the room you will view this presentation as pleasant thus you will release endorphins that will make you feel good
- Others of you viewing the presentation as unpleasant or boring will either sleep with your eyes open or release unhealthy hormone (corticosteroids) in your body. Let's now talk about beliefs, health and Individual Psychology

# BELIEFS AND HEALTH

- Some of you in this room who possess certain beliefs related to your private logic and lifestyle are going to live longer!
- Research on beliefs of individuals who place a high value on **conscientiousness**( organized, goal focused, and social norm driven) have been found to live longer, have fewer automobile accidents and experience less depression (Weiss & Costa,2005).
- In addition you will experience more success at work, smoke less, more stable marriages, more children, exercise more, eat right and less likely to be involved in risky sexual behavior (Roberts& Bogg, 2004).

# BELIEFS AND HEALTH

- Researchers in Germany(2004) and other researchers found additional personality factors and beliefs associated with health. In a study of over 5000 subjects, results indicated that major illness such as heart disease, cancer, ulcers diabetes, etc. were less likely to occur with individuals that were optimistic, sense of control of environment (Sense of Coherence) (Yousfi, Mathews, & Schmdt-Rathjens, 2004, Kubzansky, Sparrow, Vokonas,& Kawachi, 2001).

# BELIEFS AND HEALTH

- Exaggerated beliefs of “the world is a good place” called positive illusions have shown to be very strong indicators of extended life after serious illnesses (Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower & Gruenewald, 2000)
- Research on optimistic belief systems, show similar results related to health. Some of the research results show fewer colds, less visits to doctors offices, more likely to follow good health practices if illness occurs, heal faster after surgery, and pay closer attention to health issues (Karren, Hafen, Smith, & Frandsen, 2006)

# BELIEFS AND HEALTH

- A similar set of belief described as **hardiness** or the three c's of Commitment, Control, and Challenge seem to serve as stress buffers for individuals. For example studies show HIV patients ability to increase killer cell activity related to their illness, graduate students report less illness, view problems as challenges, exercise more and eat more healthy foods and nurture more social contacts (Flannery, 1989, Friedman & VandenBos, 1992, Karren, Hafen, Smith, & Frandsen, 2006).
- Research in this area shows the importance of a sense of control, order in one's life, feeling optimistic and having a purpose in life. I say that these individuals look for ways of turning lemons in to lemonade as the key to good health and lower stressed lives.

## BELIEFS TO MAKE YOU SICK ARE:

- People should not be trusted, I must bully others to get what I want, expecting that others will mistreat me, having a poor opinion of others, purposeful use of anger and high level of I and me in your communication with others is the description of “A heart attack waiting to happen.”
- In the literature it is referred to as the second generation Type A Personality which is now the “Coronary-Prone Personality.”
- If you identify with the majority of these beliefs, research has show that you are 4 to 7 times more likely to have heart disease or in the process of developing the disease.

# MORE BAD NEWS

- Evidence is now mounting that this cluster of beliefs is observed in a statically higher number of individuals with peptic ulcers , headaches, cancer, genital herpes, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and thyroid problems (Yousfi, Matthews, Amelang& Schmidt-Rathjens, 2004, Mittleman, Maclure, &Sherwood,1995, Sparrow, Vokonas &Weiss,1996,Smith&Glazer, 2004).
- As if this is not enough bad news there are also findings related to passing on these beliefs and behaviors to your children (Karren, Hafen, Smith& Frandsen, 2006).



## BUT SOME GOOD NEWS

- The idea that there was a personality/belief connection to cancer was not validated based on a sample of 30,000 men and women of all ages in Japan (Nakya,2003).
- The coronary prone patient can benefit by using their aggressive and hostile attributes to follow treatment interventions suggested by doctors after heart attacks
- And of course not all get sick due to these belief systems.

# MOODS AND HEALTH

- **Cancer and Depression-Ten** year study found link between mood and survival rate of cancer patients (Brown, Levy, Rosberger & Edgar,2003).
- **Heart disease and Depression-Five** times the risk of suffering heart attack compared to others with no major depression history (Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robies, &Glasser) Other studies with large sample indicated depression in recovering patients report more symptoms and poorer health (Rumsfeld, Hatky, Lie, Browner& Whooley,2003)
- **Anxiety& Depression-Norway sample of 50,000** men and women reported significantly higher number of somatic symptoms with no medical validation of illness (Haug, Mykletun & Dahl, 2004) (Organ Jargon)

# MOODS, FOODS AND YOUR HEALTH

- **Depression and fatty acid:** If sad, eat fresh water fish, green leafy vegetables, walnuts, and sunflower seeds. Most of us however, will do the quick fix and eat sweets when we feel sad. Well designed study found appropriate dose of mega-3 (fatty acid) improved clients disposition with less depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, suicidal ideation, and sexual dysfunction (Peet & Horrobin, 2002, Logan, 2004).
- **Depression and B complex vitamins:** Yogurt, cheese, green leafy vegetables, meats, poultry and whole grain products are a few food rich in this vitamin (Karren, Hafen, Smith, & Frandsen, 2006).

# MOODS FOODS AND YOU

- A researcher and author from England has written a government report titled **Changing Diets, Changing Minds: how food affects mental well being and behaviour**. He makes the strongest case to date of diet, mood and mental health. It is our moods that dictate eating and this has far reaching impact on such illnesses as depression, ADHD, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer's disease. The author claims the problem is due to processed food that creates less chance of getting proper nutrition( Van de Weyer, 2005). We know what to eat but our moods may direct us rather than our mind.

# MOODS, FOODS AND LECTURES

- In summary, then, as you leave this lecture your mood may well determine your next bite of food or drink. If I have been boring or made you irritable you might reach for a cookie which is a double hit of brain chemicals to deal with your mood. It will increase the **serotonin** that will make you calm and **endorphins** that will reduce the pain you have experienced by sitting through this boring lecture. If however, you want to stay alert for your next exciting class you will reach for nuts, meats, or coffee which will increase your concentration and alertness. These foods will increase your **dopamine** level (Allison & Beck, 2006). Now let's move to social relationships.

# FRIENDS AND HEALTH

- The term **friends** will be used to represent our social and intimate connections. So in a sense we are looking at two of **Adler's life task** of social and intimate relationships and the construct of social interest.
- **Evidence is clear:** the more that you are socially connected less depression, the evidence indicates you are more resistant to cold virus, higher rate of survival from cancer and heart surgery, more able to tolerate pain from surgery and heal more rapidly (Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, Rabin & Gwaltney, 1997, Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1998, Cunningham, Edmonds, Lockwood, Warr, 1999, Edmonds, Lockwood, Warr, 1999, Helgeson, Cohen, Schulz, & Yasko, 1999, Kawachi & Berkman, 2001, Nikelly, 2005, Karren, Hafen, Smith & Frandsen, 2006).

## MORE GOOD NEWS:

- **Insurance statistics from North America:** good social connections on the average add 9 years to your life.
- That a good marriage alone adds five years
- **More friends are better than fewer friends:** study of heart attack survival patients found two or more social connections had twice the level of survival rate than patients with one or less connections (Karren, Hafen, Smith & Frandsen).
- **For women:** the maximum benefit of social contacts is six or more friends

# FRIENDS AND INTIMACY

- Less stress, eat better, exercise more regularly and more regular medical check-ups
- Men benefit more from healthy marriage
- Women experience more stress but more emotional benefits (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001)
- Good Sex: frequency of orgasm with married females connected with living longer (Seldin, Friedman & Martin, 2002).
- One episode of sex for 20 to 30 minutes equivalent to running three miles.
- Increased sex for over 50 year olds can add 1-8 years to your life (Roizen & Oz, 2005)



# BAD NEWS

- Marriage gone bad: negatively impacts heart patients, increase blood pressure, arthritic symptoms, and depression (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001)
- Health effects of a bad marriage are worse than the benefits of a good marriage (Revenson, Schiaffino, Majerovitz & Giborsky, 1991, Hopkins & Slaten, 1996).
- Divorce, however, is particularly hurtful to men when compared to married men-ten times TB, seven times for pneumonia, twice for heart disease, and three times more of cancer rates when compared to the normal population (Karren, Hafen, Smith & Frandsen, 2006).

# THE CONNECTION OF IP AND HEALTH

- Our beliefs related to our private logic and lifestyle do impact our health. My personal research supports the importance of the lifestyle on marital satisfaction, depression, and coping with stress.
- Social Interest is alive and well and is clearly supported by the research on those that have it and those that do not. Different words by many researchers are nothing more than variations of the construct of social interest proposed by Adler, Dreikurs and others.
- Encouragement of self and others seems to be supported with the positive illusions and optimism research.
- The mind body connections as proposed by Adler in the construct of holism and organ inferiority is supported.

# INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY AND HEALTH

- The importance of holism as it relates to thinking, moods, interaction with others, nutrition, and spiritual aspects of health are clearly supported in my research of some 70 hours of reviewing the medical, psychosomatic and psychological journals.
- I did not include the spiritual component of health. I don't need to quote research findings to support this aspect of wellness. This is consistently supported.
- Now from this extensive investigation of the subject of Stress and Health, I would like to conclude this lecture with what you are doing or might do at this conference or in the future to increase the possibilities I will see you next year!

# SUGGESTIONS FOR HEALTH

- Being angry with someone is like taking poison, hoping the other person will die! Work on turning anger into healthy thoughts by avoiding power struggles, using deep breathing exercises, counting to 10, using non confrontive communication skills and /or seek counseling. Evidence is too clear “Anger kills”
- Take time to nurture your friendships. It looks like from the research that it is a good health insurance policy when you get ill.
- Check your mood before you eat. Make certain you are eating to nourish your body, not your mood.

# SUGGESTIONS FOR HEALTH

- Nurture your significant others: Simple rule of thumb based on research by John Gottman is three to one ratio of encouragement verses negative statements increases partner satisfaction and leads to extended marriage and quality relationships.
- Get out of a bad marriage to cut your losses related to health issues. However, it is suggested you do it with the help of a professional.
- Eat more fish and green vegetables! It keeps coming up in the research on wellness of the benefit.
- Attack your sadness and depression with vigor!

# SUGGESTIONS FOR HEALTH

- Have more safe sex! Evidence is consistent of the importance of this activity at all ages
- If none of these are possible most of us can engage in what I consider potentially the best activity to increase wellness. **Exercise!** It reduces the risk of hearth disease, depression, some types of cancer, high blood pressure and increases self esteem, libido, bone strength, and overall well being. It is the magic cure for most stress.
- Don't worry be happy! Remember our beliefs dictate our moods and being happy is a buffer for stress.
- In fact smiling releases good hormones in the body even if at times you donot feel like smiling.

# SUGGESTIONS

- If your beliefs are causing you stress talk with a professional
- If you are not eating right try to change your eating habits.
- Increase your friendship circle if you believe that you don't have enough support
- If you have health issues search for the reason. Some of the health issues may be somatic and not medically based
- Don't spend too much time with friends that are consistently depressed, pessimistic, and present world view of doom. Pick to be around happy people if possible.
- Exercise more regardless of age, even if it is nothing more than walking up flights of stairs at your flat, or to the market or just with a friend or loved one. Of course for maximum benefit a regular exercise program is the magic cure for a stress addicted lifestyle.
- Finally the quote most compatible with Individual Psychology about much of what I have said today is: The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a hell out of heaven or a heaven out of hell (Milton). The choice is up to you related to stress and your health. Thank You