Stress

Psychology 311
Abnormal Psychology

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Definitions

- Stress = Negative emotional experiences associated with behavioral, biochemical and physiological changes that are related to perceived challenges. (Sarason)

Important Points

- Are negative emotional experiences
- Are associated with ______ changes.
  - Behavioral
  - Biochemical
  - Physiological
- Are related to perceived challenges
  - Perception may not be accurate

Types of Stress

- Transitional
  - Moving
  - Burnt chocolate chip cookies
- Acute
  - Has sudden onset
    - Death of a spouse
    - Fired from a job

Stressors

- Are the events that stimulate the behavioral, biochemical, or physiological changes
- Come from many sources
  - Work
  - Home
  - School
  - Community
  - News
  - World Wide Web
  - Others

Vulnerabilities

- How resilient are you.
- How many coping skills do you have
- Is the person a positive or negative thinker.
Successful coping

- Abilities
  - Seek pertinent information
  - Sharing of concerns
  - Redefine the situation
  - Consider alternatives/consequences
  - Use of humor to diffuse the situation.

Knowing more information lowers stress levels

- Being told about surgery
- Be prepared for the worst case scenario
- Social support is critical to well being/handling stress
- Need different adaptation strategies for all different stressors.

Factors to take into Account When Assessing Stress

- Duration
- Severity
- Predictability
- Degree of Loss
- Self-Confidence
- Suddenness of Onset

Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Physiological</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Rapid pulse</td>
<td>Deterioration in Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t Concentrate</td>
<td>Pounding Heart</td>
<td>Smoking, Drugs, Alcohol abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td>Quick breathing</td>
<td>Accident Prone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry</td>
<td>Increased Perspiration</td>
<td>Nervous Mannerisms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absent Minded</td>
<td>Teeth Grinding</td>
<td>Eating changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racing Thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sleeping changes</td>
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</tbody>
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Major Common Stressor

- Bereavement and Grief
  - Is a stressor
  - What’s Normal
- Life Transitions are stressors
  - Adolescence
    - Is a stressor, physiologically and physically
    - Many hormonal changes
    - Major social changes
- Clinical Reactions to Stress
  - Stress plays a role in most abnormal psychological cases.
  - Three conditions where great stressors are most likely to trigger disorders
    - Adjustment Disorders
    - Acute Stress Disorder
    - Dissociative Disorder
Adjustment Disorders

- Recent life stress – followed by a maladaptive reaction
- Individual who has not adapted well to a stressor that has occurred in the past three months

Information Needed to Make a Diagnosis

- Time of onset and duration of stressor
- Duration of the symptoms
- Depressed mood
  - Anxiety
  - Inappropriate antisocial behaviors

Acute Stress Disorder

- Changes in emotion, thoughts, behaviors
- Are linked to extremely traumatic stressors
- Examples
  - Experienced or witness a traumatic event causing fear, horror, helplessness,

Symptoms

- Dissociation
- Numbness
- Detachment
- Absence of emotional responsiveness

Diagnostic Information

- Exposure to some extreme event
- Dissociative symptoms
- Persistent reexperiencing of the event
- Marked avoidance of related stimuli
- Marked anxiety arousal
- Clinically significant symptoms that last two to four weeks

Dissociative Disorders

- Upsurge of stressors that individuals cannot handle
- Typically will see dramatic behavior patterns not seen in the other disorders
- Is a severing of connections between ideas and emotions.
Four Major Types

- Dissociative Amnesia
- Dissociative Fugue
- Dissociative Identify Disorder
- Depersonalization

Dissociative Amnesia

- Memory loss
- Has no organic indication of cause
- Precipitated by
  - Physical accident but does not cause brain damage
  - Psychological/emotional trauma
- Cannot be explained by ordinary forgetfulness
- Several types

Localized

- Failure to recall events for a period of time following the traumatic event.
- Have event – cannot remember anything for two hours

Selective

- Have some recall after the event but do not recall everything.
- Have a spousal death
  - Can recall making funeral arrangements
  - Cannot recall calling spouses parents

Generalized

- Cannot recall your entire life
- Have event - cannot recall your past experiences
- But you do create new memories following the event

Continuous

- Cannot recall right before the event, during the event, and new experiences following the event.
- Continue to not create new memories
- Remember – There is no organic damage.
Systematized

- Loss of recall in certain categories
- Have event
  - Cannot recall foods you like
  - Can recall your friends

Dissociative Fugue

- Unexpected travel away from home and workplace
- Assume a new identity
- Cannot recall former identity
- Usually ends when the person wakes up confused, scared about being in a strange place
- Key, cannot recall events in the fugue state following the event.
- Is usually of brief duration,
- Usually recover from the fugue event
- Rarely reoccurs

Example

- Assume you are married, have kids, house, dog, etc
- Have event – enter fugue state
- Leave Moscow, move to Florida
- Get married again, have kids, house, dog, etc.
- Leave fugue, Why am I here?
- Key, don't recall anything from the different state
- Very very hard to fool a trained clinician.

Dissociative Identity Disorder

- Also called Multiple Personality Disorder
- Can have one or many personalities
- Each has
  - Own memories and behaviors
  - None of the personalities knows the other
  - Usually begins in childhood
  - Is a way of self protection
  - Create another personality to handle the stressor
- Often only comes out in therapy sessions
  - May be a clinical artifact

Depersonalization

- Is a feeling detached from one’s self
- Lost sense of reality