



Psychophysical Disorders

Psychology 311
Abnormal Psychology

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Overview

- Has a mind/body connection
- Many disorders
 - Coronary Heart Disease
 - Cancer
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
 - Headaches
 - Irritable bowel Syndrome
 - Others

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Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)

- Highly correlated with obesity and/or smoking
- Contributes to 40% of all deaths
- Is the leading cause of death after age 66
- Is the leading cause of death for men after age 39
- Stress
 - Causes heart to work harder
 - Is fine when being confronted by a bear
 - Is not fine for a traffic jam

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Personality subtypes and CHD

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Early Studies

- Friedman Rosenman (1975)
- Used a structured interview technique
- Followed 3,154 individuals for 8 years
- Controlled for high cholesterol
- Contended CHD was associated with particular personality types
- Type A Personality
- Type B Personality

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Type A Subtype

- Has an intense and competitive drive for achievement and advancement.
- Has an exaggerated sense of urgency for passing time
- Need to hurry
- Often has considerable aggressiveness and hostility toward others

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Type B Personality

- Are less driven than type A's
- Were less hostile

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Results

- Type A personality subtypes had twice as many individuals with CHD as Type B individuals.

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Problem

- Recent studies did not replicate the results
- Several studies found no predictive relationship of Type A's and mortality or heart attacks
- Other studies found no relationship between Type A and CHD

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Why?

- Used a different method (questionnaires) to assess personality subtypes
 - May have not adequately measured it.
- Not all aspects of Type A were related to CHD

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Examples

- Found Hostility and Anger were the major predictors for CHD
 - Were related to higher BP reactivity to stress
 - Higher cholesterol
 - More smoking and alcohol use
 - Greater activation of Platelets (block arteries)
- Sex Differences
 - Women – indirect expressions of antagonism,
 - Men, Overt expressions of anger

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Other Studies

- Cynicism may be important in Type A
 - Higher coronary artery blockage rates and coronary death correlated with high MMPI cynicism levels.
 - Also predicts arteriosclerosis, heart attacks and CHD death.
 - Is higher in men than women
 - Higher among African Americans than Caucasians

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Problem

- Difficult to objectively identify constructs or agree on vague terminology
 - anger, hostility, cynicism
- Researchers define differently – creates problems
- Measures do not correlate highly

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Type D personality

- Defined by high scores on negative affectivity
 - High levels of anxiety, anger, depression
- Plus inhibition in the expressions of these emotions
- Studies
 - Of heart attack patients, 52% of Type D's experienced another heart problem vs. 12% of non-type D's

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Conclusions

- Many variables are correlated with CHD
- Studies indicate correlations, not causations.
 - Interpret with caution
 - But something is there

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Other Disorders having Psychological Components

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Asthma

- In an asthma attack
 - Air passages in lungs become narrowed
 - Breathing becomes hard and wheezy
- Triggers
 - Viral infections
 - Pollution
 - Smoke
 - Allergens
 - Emotional States
 - Others

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Symptoms

- Usually begins suddenly
- Person has a tightness in the chest
- Wheezing
- Coughing
- If severe, may cause a panic attack as well which increases the symptoms
 - Person cannot get air into their lungs
 - Feels like they are suffocating
 - Sounds and symptoms increase the fear
- Think how you would feel if you could not breath.

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Psychological Factors

- Personality tests often show individuals with high levels of negative emotions
- Stress can precipitate attacks
 - Often associated with anxiety
- Individuals also feel more hostile and more helpless.

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Treatments for Psychophysical Disorders

- Medications
 - Cannot be underestimated
 - Can be useful for many disorders
 - Can reduce the damage or prevent damage
 - Can stop symptoms when present
 - Can be lifesaving
- Issue
 - Drugs only treat symptoms.
 - May not treat the underlying stressors that may cause or contribute to the problem

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Psychological Emphasis

- Try to identify the variables associated with the disorder – then reduce them
 - Stress/Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Anger
- Many approaches
 - Psychoanalytic
 - Behavioral
 - Cognitive
 - Community

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Psychoanalytic

- Use free association, dream analysis etc.
- Try to confront infantile origins of fears.
- Get at underlying issues, then make the client confront the issue
- Assumption, when made conscious and confronted, the issue goes away

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Behavioral and Cognitive

- Use many techniques
- Systematic Desensitization
- Assertion training
- Relaxation training
- Rational Emotive Therapy
 - Confront the clients thinking patterns
- Others

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Community Techniques

- Works on large scale
 - Communities, towns, etc
- May use
 - Advertisements, PSAs, other media
 - Try to reduce some problem (CHD)
 - May include education or active interventions
- May be used in worksites as well
 - Change in building design
 - Old vs. new Psychology offices

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Conclusions

- Many different types of disorders can be influenced by psychological variables.
- Disorders can also be reduced by psychological interventions.
- Combinations of biological and psychological interventions can be very effective in reducing or eliminating psychophysical problems.