CHAPTER 11 Stress and Health Psychology

Links to Learning Objectives
- **ENDURING ISSUES IN STRESS AND HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY**
- **SOURCES OF STRESS**
  - Major sources of stress, three types of conflict
  - Self-imposed stress, individual differences
- **COPING WITH STRESS**
  - Direct & defensive coping
  - Socioeconomic status, culture, & gender
- **HOW STRESS AFFECTS HEALTH**
  - How the body responds to stress
  - Heart disease
  - Immune system
- **STAYING HEALTHY**
  - Four proven ways to reduce stress
  - Coping effectively
  - Four elements of a healthy lifestyle
- **EXTREME STRESS**
  - Five major sources of extreme stress
- **THE WELL-ADJUSTED PERSON**
  - Standards for judging who is well

Enduring Issues

**Person-Situation**
**Nature-Nurture**
**Stability-Change**
**Diversity-Universality**
**Mind-Body**

To what extent do the methods that people use in coping with stress depend on the environment in which they find themselves?

Enduring Issues

**Person-Situation**
**Nature-Nurture**
**Stability-Change**
**Diversity-Universality**
**Mind-Body**

To what extent do people respond differently to severe stress?

Enduring Issues

**Person-Situation**
**Nature-Nurture**
**Stability-Change**
**Diversity-Universality**
**Mind-Body**

Can psychological stress cause physical illness?

Sources of Stress
Sources of Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Distinguish between stressors and stress. Identify the major sources of stress. Describe the three types of conflict. Explain what is meant by "self-imposed stress."

Stressor: Any environmental demand that
• Creates a state of tension or threat (stress)
• Requires change or adaptation (adjustment)

Change

- All stressful events involve change.
- Most people prefer order, continuity, and predictability in their lives, so anything requiring change (good or bad) can be experienced as stressful.
- The more change required, the more stressful the situation.

College Life Stress Inventory

Everyday Hassles

Hassles can be as stressful as major life events, since they lead to feelings of:

Pressure

A feeling that one must speed up, intensify, or change the direction of one’s behavior or live up to a higher standard of performance

Frustration

The feeling that occurs when a person is prevented from reaching a goal

Causes include:
- Delays
- Lack of resources
- Losses
- Failure
- Discrimination

IN
Conflict

Types of conflict:
- Approach/approach
- Avoidance/avoidance
- Approach/avoidance

Self-Imposed Stress

When individuals carry around a set of irrational, self-defeating beliefs that add unnecessarily to the normal stress of living

Stress and Individual Differences

Learning Objective: Describe the role of optimism and pessimism, locus of control, hardness, and resilience in affecting people's responses to stress.

- Optimists
- People with an internal locus of control
- People with the hardness trait
- People who are resilient

- Pessimists
- People with an external locus of control

Ways of Coping with Stress

Learning Objective: Compare and contrast direct coping and defensive coping. Describe and give an example of the three strategies for coping directly with stress. Describe and give an example of the major ways of coping defensively.

Direct coping: intentional efforts to change an uncomfortable situation

Defensive coping: Various ways people convince themselves – through a form of self-deception – that they are not really threatened or do not really want something they cannot get
Acknowledging a stressful situation directly and attempting to find a solution to the problem or to attain the difficult goal

Deciding on a more realistic solution or goal when an ideal solution or goal is not practical

Avoiding a situation when other forms of coping are not practical

Defusal to acknowledge a painful or threatening reality

Excluding uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, and desires from consciousness
Defensive Coping

TYPES OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS:
- Denial
- Repression
- Projection
- Identification
- Regression
- Intellectualization
- Reaction Formation
- Displacement
- Sublimation

Attributing one’s repressed motives, feelings, or wishes to others

Defensive Coping

Taking on the characteristics of someone else to avoid feeling incompetent

Defensive Coping

Reverting to childlike behavior and defenses

Defensive Coping

Thinking abstractly about stressful problems as a way of detaching oneself from them

Defensive Coping

Expression of exaggerated ideas and emotions that are the opposite of one’s repressed beliefs or feelings

Defensive Coping

Shifting repressed motives and emotions from an original object to a substitute object
Redirecting repressed motives and feelings into more socially acceptable channels.

Defensive Coping

Types of Defense Mechanisms:
- Denial
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Redirecting repressed motives and feelings into more socially acceptable channels.

Socioeconomic, Cultural, and Gender Differences in Coping with Stress

Learning Objective: Explain how socioeconomic status, culture, and gender affect levels of stress and ways of coping with stress.

Socioeconomic Status
- People in lower socioeconomic classes have to deal with more stress than people who are financially secure.
  - Less effective coping
  - Fewer resources

Culture
- Cultural background influences the way that individuals cope with stress.
  - Most European Americans: Explicit social support
  - Most Asian Americans: Implicit social support

Gender
- Men and women may cope differently with stress.
  - Men: Alcohol, aggression
  - Women: Rumination, tending-and-befriending; also report experiencing more stress

How Stress Affects Health

Learning Objective: Explain why “experiencing too much stress over too long a period can contribute to physical problems.” In your explanation, include Cannon’s theory of the fight-or-flight response and the several stages of Selye’s general adaptation syndrome.

- Health psychology: A subfield of psychology concerned with the relationship between psychological factors and physical health and illness
- Acute or chronic stress is linked to lowered immunity, and poor health makes people more vulnerable to everything from the common cold to an increased risk for heart disease.

The Body’s Response to Stress

Learning Objective: Explain why “experiencing too much stress over too long a period can contribute to physical problems.” In your explanation, include Cannon’s theory of the fight-or-flight response and the several stages of Selye’s general adaptation syndrome.

- The hypothalamus stimulates the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system and the adrenal glands to release stress hormones such as adrenaline and norepinephrine into the blood.
- The physiological response mobilizes the body to respond to external threats by attacking or fleeing.

Cannon’s Theory of Fight-or-Flight

Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome

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Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome
General Adaptation Syndrome

Stage 1: Alarm reaction
Stage 2: Resistance
Stage 3: Exhaustion

Stress and Heart Disease

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Summarize the evidence that shows chronic stress can contribute to heart disease. Include Type A and Type D personalities in your summary.

Stress is a major contributing factor in the development of coronary heart disease (CHD), the leading cause of death and disability in the U.S. Certain behavior patterns are linked to CHD:

Type A Personality
Characteristics:
- Hostility
- Competitiveness
- Urgency
- Constant striving

Link to CHD:
- High heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Chronic anger
- Hostility

Type D Personality
Characteristics:
- Depression
- Negative emotions
- Social inhibition

Link to CHD:
- Cortisol

Stress and the Immune System

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Summarize the research evidence that “stress also affects the functioning of the immune system.”

- Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI): Studies the interaction between stress and immune, endocrine, and nervous system activity
- Chronic stress has been linked to suppressed functioning of the immune system, especially with respiratory illness.
- The research on a possible link between stress and cancer is mixed.

Staying Healthy

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Describe the four proven ways to reduce stress.

Ways to reduce stress:
- Religion/Altruism
- Effective coping skills
- Exercise/Relaxation/Training
- Social support

Coping Effectively

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Explain the role of proactive coping, positive reappraisal, and humor in reducing stress.

Proactive coping:
Anticipating stressful events and taking steps to avoid them or minimize their impact

Positive reappraisal:
Finding a new meaning in a situation, or finding a perspective or insight that you had overlooked to view events as being more positive
- Humor: One of the most effective, stress-relieving forms of reappraisal
**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** Describe the four elements of a healthy lifestyle.

**Elements of a healthy lifestyle:**
- Diet
- Exercise
- Quit Smoking
- Avoid High-Risk Behaviors

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**Extreme Stress**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** Identify the five major sources of extreme stress and describe their impact.

**Sources of Extreme Stress**

1. Unemployment
2. Divorce and separation
3. Bereavement
4. Catastrophes
5. Combat and other threatening personal attacks

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**Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** Explain the role of proactive coping, positive reappraisal, and humor in reducing stress.

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):
  - Psychological disorder characterized by episodes of anxiety, sleeplessness, and nightmares resulting from some disturbing past event; also daytime flashbacks

- Posttraumatic Growth (PTG):
  - Positive growth that may follow an extremely stressful event

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**The Well-Adjusted Person**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** Describe the several standards for judging whether an individual is well adjusted.

Psychologists disagree about what constitutes good adjustment.

- Some think it is the ability to live according to social norms.
- Others argue that well-adjusted people enjoy the difficulties and ambiguities of life, treating them as challenges to be overcome.
- According to Abraham Maslow, well-adjusted people attempt to “actualize” themselves; they live in a way that enhances their own growth and fulfillment.