

Chapter 16

Health, Stress, and Coping



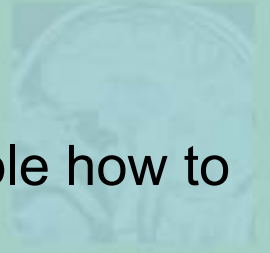
Health Psychology and Behavioral Risk Factors

- Health Psychology: Uses behavioral principles to prevent illness and promote health
- Behavioral Medicine: Study of behavioral factors in medicine, physical illness, and medical treatment
- Lifestyle Disease: Diseases related to health-damaging personal habits
- Behavioral Risk Factors: Behaviors that increase the chances of disease, injury, or premature death
- Disease-Prone Personality: Personality type associated with poor health; this type of person tends to be chronically depressed, anxious, hostile and frequently ill



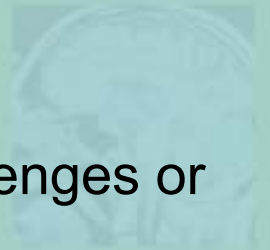
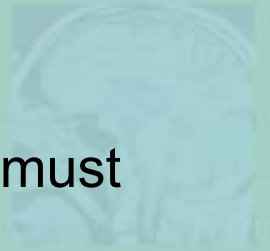
Ways to Promote Health

- Refusal Skills Training: Program that teaches young people how to resist pressures to begin smoking
- Life Skills Training: Teaches stress reduction, self-protection, decision making, self-control, and social skills
- Role Model: Person who serves as a positive example of good and desirable behavior
- Wellness: Positive state of good health and well-being



Stress

- Mental and physical condition that occurs when a person must adjust or adapt to the environment.
 - Includes marital and financial problems, to name some
- Stress Reaction: Physical reaction to stress.
 - Autonomic Nervous System is aroused
- Stressor: Condition or event in the environment that challenges or threatens the person
- Pressure: Occurs when a person must meet urgent external demands or expectations
- Threat: Event or situation perceived as potentially harmful



Burnout, and Appraising Stressors

- Burnout: Job-related condition (usually in helping professions) of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Involves:
 - Emotional exhaustion; feel used up and apathetic towards work
 - Depersonalization: Detachment from others
 - Feeling of reduced personal accomplishment
- Primary Appraisal: Deciding if a situation is relevant to oneself and if it is a threat
- Secondary Appraisal: Deciding how to cope with a threat or challenge
- Perceived lack of control is just as threatening as an actual lack of control



Threats and Frustration

- Problem-Focused Coping: Managing or altering the distressing situation
- Emotion-Coping Focusing: Trying to control one's emotional reactions to the situation
- Frustration: Negative emotional state that occurs when one is prevented from reaching desired goals
- External Frustration: Based on external conditions that impede progress towards a goal
- Personal Frustration: Caused by personal characteristics that impede progress towards a goal



Reactions to Frustration

- Aggression: Any response made with the intention of harming a person, animal or object
- Displaced Aggression: Redirecting aggression to a target other than the source of one's frustration
- Scapegoating: Person or group are blamed for conditions they did not create; the scapegoat is a habitual target of displaced aggression
- Conflict: Stressful condition that occurs when a person must choose between contradictory needs, desires, motives or demands



Conflicts

- Approach-Approach Conflicts: Having to choose between two desirable or positive alternatives.
 - E.g. choosing between a new BMW or Mercedes
- Avoidance-Avoidance Conflicts: Being forced to choose between two negative or undesirable alternatives. E.g. choosing between going to the doctor or contracting cancer
 - *Not* choosing may be impossible or undesirable
- Approach-Avoidance Conflicts: Being attracted (drawn to) and repelled by the same goal or activity. Attraction keeps person in the situation but negative aspects can cause distress
- Ambivalence: Mixed positive and negative feelings; central characteristic of approach-avoidance conflicts



Anxiety

- Anxiety: Feelings of tension, uneasiness, apprehension, worry and vulnerability.
 - We are motivated to *avoid* experiencing anxiety



Freudian Defense Mechanisms; Psychological Defenders of You!

- Defense Mechanism: Habitual and unconscious (in most cases) psychological process designed to reduce anxiety
 - Work by avoiding, denying or distorting sources of threat or anxiety
 - Used short-term, defense mechanisms can help us to get through everyday situations
 - If used long term, may end up not living in reality
 - Most operate unconsciously
 - Protect idealized self-image so we can live with ourselves



Learned Helplessness

- Learned Helplessness (Seligman): Acquired (learned) inability to overcome obstacles and avoid aversive stimuli; learned passivity
 - Occurs when events *appear* to be uncontrollable
 - May feel helpless if attribute failure to lasting, general factors



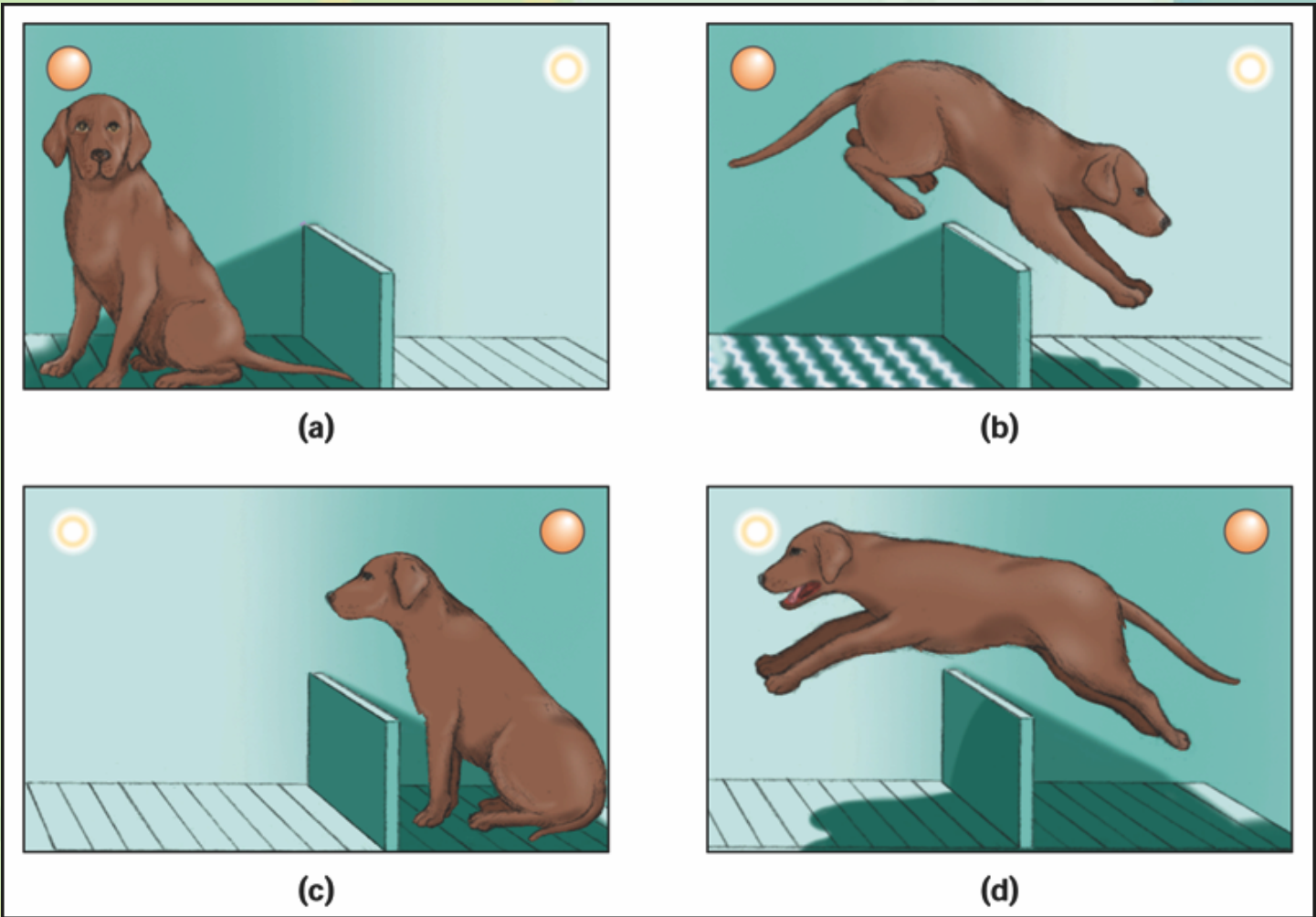


Figure 16.6

In the normal course of escape and avoidance learning, a light dims shortly before the floor is electrified (a). Because the light does not yet have meaning for the dog, the dog receives a shock (non-injurious, by the way) and leaps the barrier (b). Dogs soon learn to watch for the dimming of the light (c) and to jump before receiving a shock (d). Dogs made to feel “helpless” rarely even learn to escape shock, much less avoid it.

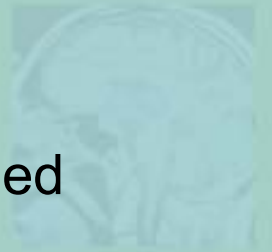
Depression

- Depression: State of feeling despondent defined by feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness
 - One of the most common mental problems in the world
 - Childhood depression is dramatically increasing
 - Some symptoms: Loss of appetite or sex drive, decreased activity, sleeping too much
- Mastery Training: Responses are reinforced that lead to mastery of a threat or control over one's environment
- One method to combat learned helplessness and depression



How to Recognize Depression (Beck)

- You have a consistently negative opinion of yourself
- You engage in frequent self-criticism and self-blame
- You place negative interpretations on events that usually would not bother you
- The future looks grim
- You can't handle your responsibilities and feel overwhelmed



Stress and Health

- Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS): Rates the impact of various life events on the likelihood of contracting illness
 - Not a foolproof method of rating stress
 - Are positive life events (getting married, having a child) always stressful?
 - People also differ in their reactions to stress
- Acculturative Stress: Stress caused by adapting to a foreign culture



Psychosomatic Disorders

- Psychosomatic Disorders: Psychological factors contribute to actual illnesses (bodily damage) or to damaging changes in bodily functioning
- Hypochondriacs: Imagine that they suffer from diseases and often complain about this
 - Certain kinds of ulcers are *not* psychosomatic
 - Most common complaints? Respiratory and gastrointestinal

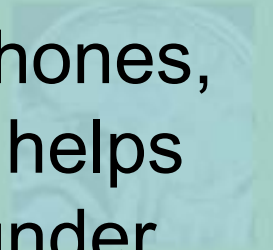


Biofeedback

- Biofeedback: Information given to a person about his or her bodily activities
 - Aids voluntary regulation of activities such as blood pressure, heart rate, and so on
 - Helpful but not an instant cure
 - May help relieve muscle-tension headaches, migraine headaches, and chronic pain



In biofeedback training, bodily processes are monitored and processed electronically. A signal is then routed back to the patient through headphones, signal lights, or other means. This information helps the patient alter bodily activities not normally under voluntary control.



Cardiac Personalities

- Type A Personality: Personality type with elevated risk of heart attack; characterized by time urgency and chronic anger or hostility
 - Anger may be the key factor of this behavior
- Type B Personality: All types other than Type A's; unlikely to have a heart attack



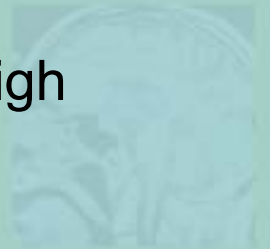
Hardy Personality

- Hardy Personality: Personality type associated with superior stress resistance
 - Sense of personal commitment to self and family
 - Feel that they have control over their lives
 - See life as a series of challenges, not threats



General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

- Series of bodily reactions to prolonged stress. Occurs in three stages:
 - Alarm Reaction: Body resources are mobilized to cope with added stress
 - Stage of Resistance: Body adjusts to stress but at a high physical cost; resistance to other stressors is lowered now
 - Stage of Exhaustion: Body's resources are drained and stress hormones are depleted. Results might be:
 - Psychosomatic disease
 - Loss of health
 - Complete collapse



Immunity

- Immune System: System that mobilizes bodily defenses like white blood cells against invading microbes and other diseases
- Psychoneuroimmunology: Study of connections among behavior, stress, disease, and immune system



Stress Management

- Use of behavioral strategies to reduce stress and improve coping skills
- Progressive Relaxation: Produces deep relaxation throughout the body by tightening all muscles in an area and then relaxing them
- Guided Imagery: Visualizing images that are calming, relaxing or beneficial
- Stress Inoculation: Using positive coping statements to control fear and anxiety. Designed to combat:
 - Negative Self-Statements: Self-critical thoughts that increase anxiety and lower performance
- Coping Statements: Reassuring, self-enhancing statements used to stop negative self-statements



Meditation: Ommmmm....

- Mental exercise designed to focus attention and interrupt flow of thoughts, worries, and analyses
- Concentrative Meditation: Attention is paid to a single focal point i.e. object, thought, etc.
 - Produces relaxation response and thus works to reduce stress
- Receptive Meditation: Based on widening attention span to become aware of everything experienced at a given moment
- Mantra: Word(s) or sound(s) repeated silently during concentrative meditation
- Relaxation Response: Occurs at time of relaxation; internal response that prevents activation of adrenal glands

