

Stress & Health; Positive Psychology

Health Psychology

Health psychology	Study of how psychological factors influence health, illness, & recovery
Etiology / Aetiology	Origin or cause of illness
Epidemiology	Study of frequency, cause, & distribution of illness
Retrospective studies	Look at past of those diagnosed w/ illness
Prospective studies	Follow healthy over time, track later diagnoses
Psychogenic illness	Originating from the mind
Psychosomatic illness	Symptoms arise from thoughts/beliefs of illness
Psychoneuroimmunology	Relationship between stress, psychological factors, immune function, & health

The Stress Response

Fight-or-flight (or freeze)	Phys. reaction to threat
Stressor	Threat to safety or demand on resources
Stress response	Reaction to stressors via sympathetic nervous system
Social Readjustment Rating Scale - Holmes & Rahe	Ranks perceived stress of life events (fight, speech, date, illness, job loss, etc.)
Chronic stressor	Minor stressor which occurs continuously or repeatedly
Environmental stressor	Env. feature repeatedly evokes stress response (noise, crowding, etc.)
Tend-and-befriend response – Shelley Taylor	Focus on relationships & empathy during threat
HPA axis (Hypothalamus – Pituitary – Adrenal Glands)	Sequence of stress response activation

Stress hormones	<i>Epinephrine/adrenaline</i> <i>Cortisol (glucocorticoid)</i>
Homeostasis Gr. “same state”	Body works to maintain steady optimal state
Allostasis Gr. “variable state”	Optimal state is a fluctuating range
General Adaptation Syndrome – Hans Selye	Alarm: react Resistance: resources mobilized Exhaustion: depleted

Health Effects of Stress

Immune cell types	Lymphocytes (<i>T-cells, B-cells</i>), macrophages (<i>big-eaters</i>), natural killer cells
Telomeres	Ends of chromosomes; shorten w/ aging & stress
Helicobacter pylori	Bacteria → gastritis & ulcers
Type-A Behavior Pattern <i>Friedman & Rosenman</i>	Competitive, easily irritated/hostile, feel time pressure
Type-B Behavior Pattern	Easy-going, relaxed
Atherosclerosis Gr. “gruel + hard”	Buildup of plaque on arterial walls

Cognitive & Social Factors in Stress

Primary appraisal	Determine if there’s a threat
Secondary appraisal	Assess how to respond
Learned helplessness – Martin Seligman	Learned lack of control over negative events
Socioeconomic status (SES)	Rank in social hierarchy via education, income, occupation; low SES associated w/ poorer health
Self-serving bias	Take credit for own success & place blame for failure
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Persistent stress & high arousal after trauma

Coping with Stress

Hardiness <i>Susanne Kobasa</i>	Commitment, enjoying challenge, & feeling control
Post-Traumatic Growth	Greater purpose or meaning from traumatic experience
Reappraisal	Reinterpret stressful stimulus or situation
Coping approaches (appraisal, problem, or emotion -focused)	Focus on reinterpreting, confronting problem, or reducing neg. emotion
Biofeedback	Monitor h.r. or muscle tension to improve control
Relaxation Response <i>Herbert Benson</i>	Activates Parasympathetic NS; ↑ immune function
Neurogenesis	Growth of new neurons
Endorphins	“endogenous morphine” reduce pain & boost mood
Social support	Feeling loved, valued, & connected to others
Faith Factor	Better health assoc. w/ religiosity/spirituality

Positive Psychology & Well-Being

Optimism vs. Pessimism	Tendency to “expect the best” vs. will get worse
Happiness Set-Point	Most events don’t shift well-being long-term
Adaptation Level Phenomenon / Hedonic Treadmill	We adjust to new circumstances reducing effect on well-being
Relative Deprivation / Upward Comparison	Compare self to those better-off; feel worse
Downward Comparison	Consider those worse off; can boost <i>gratitude</i>