Psychology
Session 13
Stress and Health

Date: December 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2016

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Agenda

1. Personality and health
2. Stress
3. Coping with stress
4. Common stressors
5. Strategies for reducing stress
Personality and Health

• High Neuroticism is a risk factor for physical illnesses (Goodwin & Friedman, 2006).

• Conscientiousness predicts longevity (Kern & Friedman, 2008) and is linked to healthy behaviors (Bogg & Roberts, 2004).

• Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience are related to engaging in coping strategies (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010).
General Adaptation Syndrome

- **Alarm stage**: the sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for fight to flight
- **Resistance stage**: physiological adaptation to stressor
- **Exhaustion stage**: energy depletion, individual becomes sick or dies

Cognitive Theory of Stress

- Cognitive processes affect the physiological, emotional, and behavioral responses to an event.

- **Primary appraisal**: What does the event mean to me? How important is this stressor?

- **Secondary appraisal**: How do I deal with the stressor?

(Wood et al., 2017)
Why do we experience stress?

- **Conflicting motives**: stress resulting from having to make choices
- **Lack of control**: stress resulting from the inability to predict
- **Racial stress**: stress resulting from being the minority race
- **Extreme stress**: stress resulting from experiencing catastrophic events

(Wood et al., 2017)
Stressors of parents with children with ASD

• Managing challenging behaviors and social exclusion
• Judgment from others
• Lack of support
• Emotional impact on family: decreased self-esteem, feelings of failure, rejection, loneliness, and denial

(Ludlow, Skelly, & Rohleder, 2011)
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- The person was exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence
- The traumatic event is re-experienced
- The individual actively avoids stimuli related to the traumatic event
- The individual experiences changes in cognitions, emotions, and/or arousal levels after the event
- The symptoms persist for more than a month

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
PTSD- children under 6

• Extreme temper tantrums
• Recurrent recollections of event
• Avoidance thoughts and feelings related to trauma
• Loss of interests
• Restricted range of feelings
• Detachment from loved ones

(APA, 2013)
Coping with stress

• **Problem-focused coping**: alleviate or/and eliminate stressor

• **Emotion-focused coping**: decrease emotional impact of stress
  – Strategies can include denial, wishful thinking, and humour

(Wood et al., 2017)
Common Stressors amongst Childcare Providers

• Work conditions

• Meeting demands of parents and children

• External factors
  – Family and school demands
  – Other jobs

• Work events
  – Transitions

(Baumgartner, Carson, Apavaloaie, & Tsouloupas, 2009)
Common Coping Strategies amongst Childcare Providers

• Emotional-focused strategies
  – Praying and meditating
  – Positive self-talk
  – Distractions

• Problem-focused strategies
  – Getting help from a more knowledgeable person
  – Planning classroom management strategies

(Baumgartner et al., 2009)
Factors that reduce stress

- **Optimism**: having a positive view of the world
- **Hardiness**: commitment, having a sense of control, viewing change as a challenge
- **Social support**: people who provide resources for stressors and emotional support

(Wood et al., 2017)
Meditation

- **Attention**: concentration vs. awareness
- **Relationship to cognitive processes**: observing or modifying your thoughts
- **Concentrative technique**: focus on breathing, a picture, or physical experience
  - Focus on objects will lead to disengage usual mental processes (i.e. responses to thoughts, emotions, actions)
- **Mindfulness technique**: staying at present moment and prevent the mind from wandering to the past or future

(Sedlmeier et al., 2012)
Massage

- Infant massage may have beneficial effects on lowering infant stress levels, infants’ sleeping and crying patterns, as well as interactions with mothers who are post-natally depressed.
  
  (Shipwright & Dryden, 2012)

- Massage is directly related to positive health outcomes (i.e. reduced agitation, relaxation).

- Massage has resulted in little measureable physiological changes but decreases perceived anxiety and stress.

  (Labrique-Walusis, Keister, & Russell, 2010)
Exercise

• **Monoamine hypothesis**: increased arousal and attention leads to increased self-efficacy and lower anxiety

• **Endorphin hypothesis**: endorphin production leads to euphoric state

• **Thermogenic hypothesis**: increased body temperature lead to enhanced mood

• Physical activities decrease depression and future likelihood of depression.

  (Motta, McWilliams, Schwartz, & Caver, 2012)
Helping children cope with stress

• Consistency between home and childcare
  – Encourage parents to bring photographs of home to your center
  – Ask how parents how they guide their children at home

• Pay attention and listen to children

• Talking to children about their emotions

• Give children time for quiet activities (i.e. blocks, play dough, imaginative play)

(The Psychology Foundation of Canada, 2012)
Helping parents cope with stress

- Parents experience decreased marital satisfaction due to new parenting roles (Johns & Belsky, 2007).
- Although having a child with severe illness can be stressful for parents, it can also lead to beneficial, long-term personal changes in parents (Hungerbuehler, Vollrath, & Landolt, 2011).
- In a parent education program, ECEs modeled, provided parents with feedback, and supported parents’ learning experiences. Building relationships is essential to program success (MacFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012).
Helping colleagues cope with stress

• Coworkers are an important source of support because they have an understanding of work-related stress.

• Coworkers’ emotional support is related to decreased physiological strain and increased job performance.

(Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2009)
References


References


References


