

Unit III: The Psychological Person

SWK 3800
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Cognition

our conscious or preconscious thinking process
-- the mental activities we are or can become aware of
with probing

Emotion

a feeling state characterized by our appraisal of a
stimulus

Components of Personality

- Openness to experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

Theories of Cognition

- Cognitive theory: (Piaget) capacity for reasoning develops as we mature
- Information Processing theory: problem-solving based upon previously “coded” information
- Social Learning theory: behavior is learned through reinforcement, punishment, conditioning, and observational learning

Distinctions for reinforcement and punishment

Reinforcement: two types (+ and -)
+ increases or strengthens a behavior
- removes a negative consequence to increase or
strengthen a behavior

Punishment: anything that decreases or weakens a
behavior

Effective use of Reinforcement

Quality
Timing
Frequency

Effective use punishment

Timing
Frequency
Pairing
Disposition
Control

Respondent conditioning

emission of a behavior based upon a specific stimulus
(also called classical conditioning)

Observational learning (modeling)

learning about potential consequences of a behavior by
observing another engaged in the behavior

Using the Social learning theory “A – B – C’s”

- A is for antecedent (before)
- B is for behavior (observable)
- C is for consequence (outcome)

Mechanisms of Behavior
Change is included in the
course note outline

Language development

- 4 months - turn head toward sounds, verbalizing
- 8 months - imitate and repeat sounds
- 1 year - understand simple commands and express choices, some words
- 18 months - use of approx. 50 words, can respond to questions and instructions

Language development and impact on behavioral / emotional control

- vocabulary is a strong predictor of self-regulation (especially for boys)
- voicing thoughts reduces frustration
- better perception of emotional states and therefore better regulation and responses

Important factors to consider for language development

- influenced by interactions
- influenced by exposure
- private speech is important
- do not excessively correct or interrupt

Piaget considered middle childhood to be focused on “concrete operations”

this age can not go beyond the here and now perspective (no hypotheticals)

Why is middle childhood when most societies begin formal education?

logical, complex thought processes, ready for sequential development of ideas, can use symbols

Tasks of cognitive development in middle childhood

- compensation
- reversibility
- centering

Issues for children with above average IQ (what is above average?)

- IQ over 125
- emotional maturity
- creative, nonconforming

Issues for children with below average IQ (what is below average?)

- IQ under 90
- accommodations
- issues of self-fulfilling prophecy

Levels of intellectual disability

- Mild (IQ 50 - 70)
- Moderate (IQ 35 - 50)
- Severe (IQ 20 - 35)
- Profound (IQ below 20)

Areas of competence for assessment of intellectual disability

- motor skills
- communication skills
- socialization skills
- daily living skills

Other areas of impact to assess

- attention
- memory
- self-regulation
- language development
- academic development
- motivation

***It is important to help every individual function at their highest level (to maximize autonomy and help them access support and resources).**

How are learning disabilities recognized?

- 1. Discrepancy in expected and actual
- 2. Deficit in processing information
- 3. Abnormal processes
- 4. Rule out other explanations

Potential causes and symptoms of a learning disability

- Causes: prenatal problems, malnutrition, heredity, environment (many potentials)
- Symptoms: inattentiveness, impulse control, mood swings, memory problems, use of symbols, communication problems, work problems (many symptoms)

Individuals with learning disabilities may suffer the effects by developing a fear of failure, withdrawing from interactions, having a sense of helplessness and a low self-esteem.
**most individuals with learning disabilities have above average IQ scores – they simply learn in a different manner.

Multiple Intelligences and cognitive processing

many forms of intelligence and problem solving
(assess for strengths of the individual)

How does coping factor in with emotional intelligence?
What is emotional intelligence?

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are"
Anais Nin

What is moral reasoning?

sensitivity to, and knowledge of, what is considered right and wrong

What progress has a preschool child made in moral reasoning?

- develops with language and locomotion
- motivated to avoid punishment
- motivated to receive rewards
- differences in gender for moral development (Kohlberg and Gilligan)

Moral reasoning expands during middle childhood

- internalize values and morals
- begin to self monitor
- begin to show empathy

Primary emotions

common to all individuals
mobilize us, focus us
anger, fear, sadness, joy and anticipation

Secondary emotions

social acquired (vary among people)
envy, jealousy, anxiety, guilt, shame, relief, hope,
depression, pride, love, gratitude, compassion and hate

How can our past and present experiences influence our behaviors?

our interpretation of situations is based upon our past experiences (how we coded them)

How we view ourselves and how others view us can greatly influence our psychological functioning. For example, the age at which an individual reaches puberty can have lasting psychological and social impact. The differences are evident by gender.

- Males who mature early (make better first impressions and are more assertive)
- Males who mature late (more tolerant, flexible and easy-going)
- Females who mature early (less confident, very self critical)
- Females who mature late (no effects)

Anyone who is highly critical of his or her appearance is at risk for developing an eating disorder. Eating disorders are VERY complicated to treat because of the involvement of the individual's perceptions, values and self-esteem.

In the US approximately 95% of individuals diagnosed with an eating disorder are female – why?

There are 3 main forms of eating disorders

- 1. Anorexia Nervosa
- 2. Bulimia Nervosa
- 3. Binge-eating disorder

I. Anorexia Nervosa “loss of appetite due to nerves”

- over-achievers, perfectionist, “model” yet feel out of control begins as a restrictive diet
- involves distorted body image and intense fear of gaining weight

2. Bulimia Nervosa “ox-like hunger”

- people-pleasers, conflict avoidance, feel out of control
- begins as a restrictive diet (fail)
- compensate for failure with binge and compensation
- can develop cycle of anorexia and bulimia

3. Binge-eating disorder or compulsive eating

- dynamics very similar to bulimia nervosa but the individual does not have compensation behaviors
- food amnesia
- social isolation

What does this mean for the beauty standard that US adolescent females (and adult females) hold?

When is an individual in the U.S. culture considered to be independent?

- ability to handle role transitions
- emotional independence
- social independence
- economic independence

What influences normative behavior for an adult?

- family and background
- past experiences
- cultural and community influences
- friends

What is involved in effective communication?

- Active listening
- I-messages
- no-lose problem solving
- resolving collisions of values

What is the distinction between a person who is non- assertive, assertive, and aggressive?

An assertive individual is considerate of their own personal values and the values and perspective of the receiver.

An aggressive individual is egocentric in their responses. They give no thought to the receiver's values or perspective.

A non-assertive individual devalues their own values and perspective by completely overlooking them and concentrating solely on the values and perspective of the receiver.

Tips to becoming more assertive

- assess your own actions
- focus on reactions
- identify a role model
- practice and continue to practice
- expand behaviors (and practice)

In assessing capacity for learning throughout the life-span, one question seems interesting to consider - why are middle-aged adults superior at games like scrabble?

Crystallized intelligence

verbal reasoning, vocabulary, comprehension
increases through middle adulthood

Fluid intelligence

motor speed, inductive reasoning, memory
slightly declines during middle adulthood

One final psychological issue to consider is also one of the most feared issues of later adulthood - the potential for dependence on others. How and why is this manifest in the US culture?

- focus on independence
- finances
- physical health
- hostility

Additional Psychological
issues throughout the life-
span

Experiences of Trauma
impact psychological
functioning

Childhood Trauma

- disruption of normal brain development
- dysregulation of emotions
- hyper vigilance and perception of threat

Adolescent Trauma

- disruption of normal brain development
- impact on prefrontal cortex - frontal lobe (planning, perceptions, social functioning, expressive language, orientation to place, empathy.....)
- hyper vigilance and perception of threat

Adult Trauma

- Can alter brain functioning - especially executive functioning (problem solving)
- hyper vigilance and perception of threat
- Physical symptoms and autoimmune responses (ACEs study)

Threat activation and the Limbic System

- Prefrontal Cortex
- Limbic System
- People can get caught in a feedback loop with the Limbic system (amygdala) responses

Adult identity development and economic success through one's employment can be impacted by sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment (in general terms) involves any unwelcome advances, requests, and verbal/physical conduct between individuals....

Steps to take if experiencing sexual harassment

- confront the individual
- be assertive
- document
- talk to others
- get witnesses
- contact EEOC

Abortion: the voluntary termination of pregnancy before the fetus is able to live outside the uterus.

(In most states during the first trimester. Legal since the Supreme Court ruling Roe v Wade in 1973).

There are MANY ethical issues and long-term psychological consequences when an individual chooses to terminate a pregnancy.

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (1997) ethical principles involved in the decision to abort

- Protection of life
- Equality of treatment
- Autonomy and freedom
- Do the least harm
- Best quality of life
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Truthfulness and full disclosure

When an individual loses a pregnancy not by choice, there are also lasting psychological issues.
General issues to address -

- differences in grief
- problems with grief
- reminders

Assessing for Depression begins with middle-aged children. At this age, depression does not present itself in the same form as adult depression it is referred to as masked depression.

Symptoms of masked depression

- low self esteem
- self-blame
- hopelessness
- acting out
- self-harm

Consequences of recurring depression

- usually due to genetic vulnerability
- episodes become more severe
- need for treatment
- focus on long term coping skills

Things that can help someone with depression

- Medication
- Therapy
- Positive support system
- Improved diet and sleep hygiene
- Increasing physical activity/exercise
- Exposure to sunlight

When a person (any age) reports being depressed or contemplating suicide, this should **ALWAYS** be taken seriously.

Factors that contribute depression and suicide contemplation

- stress
- family or social problems
- psychological problems
- physical issues
- overwhelmed
- impulsive

To be effective and helpful

- remain calm and supportive
- help identify loss and focus on problem
- help latch on to will to live
- give suggestions/options for help

Using the SAD PERSONS scale is for assessing risk for suicide (one point for each area that applies).

- S is for sex
- A is for age
- D is for depression

- P is for previous attempts
- E is for ethanol (substance use or abuse)
- R is for rational thinking loss
- S is for social support problems
- O is for organized plan
- N is for no spouse
- S is for sickness

- Scoring:
- 0-2 safe to go
- 3-4 follow up
- 5-6 intervention
- 7+ extreme risk

“Question negative self-talk before it becomes destructive. And don’t believe everything you feel and think. Just because you sometimes believe you’re worthless, unlovable, and stupid doesn’t mean you actually are these things.”

Victoria Maxwell