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PSYC 101 – 004

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Motivation and Emotion (Mod 28-31)

Motivation is a need or desire that energizes and directs behavior. It is affected by both nature and nurture. For something to be qualified as an instinct then that behavior “…must have a fixed pattern throughout a species and be unlearned”. Psychologists eventually discovered drive-reduction theory, which shows that a psychological need motivates an organism to satisfy that drive (with food or water). At times motivated behaviors increase arousal. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs shows us our natural priorities that each individual has. Social interaction seems to boost our motivation and emotion. We also suffer from ostracism, or social exclusion. Social media tends to hinder our offline relationships, but overall it is strengthening connectedness. The social media sites tend to reflect the “real you”.

Hunger can be a very powerful driving force. Our bodies keep track of our energy use and tell us when we get low (hunger pangs). Everybody varies in how much energy they use to maintain body functions. Body chemistry and environment decides when and what we eat, or like to eat. Situations can also control our eating. Obesity can be “…socially toxic”, it can give individuals lower well-being and increased depression. Eating and exercising practices are driven by both natural and environmental forces.

How we feel psychologically effects how we act/feel physically. We cry because we are sad, and smile because we are happy. In the two factor theory, our physical reactions and our thoughts together create emotion. Arousal is what fuels our emotion, but how we interpret an event determines the type of emotion we feel.

Because of the way are raised and the environment that we grow up in, we all perceive different expressions and actions differently then would somebody in an entirely different culture. Women also tend to be more socially literate, they can more easily read and interpret emotions than men. Interestingly enough we can even “fake it till we make it” with our emotions. Simply by acting happy we can become happy.

Stress, Health, and Human Flourishing (Mod 32-33)

Stress is the process of appraising and responding to a threatening or challenging event. Stressors can have both positive and negative effects. Stressors fall into three main types which are catastrophes, significant life changes, and daily hassles. Catastrophes are unpredictable and large, which can be earthquakes or war. Significant life changes include leaving home, getting fired, have one you love pass away etc. Daily hassles include rush hour traffic, dealing with people, long “to-do” lists, family problems, etc. All of these can have negative effects on mental and physical health.

The General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is a three phase stress response to an event. It is said that almost anything can activate this cycle. Each of us have different methods of dealing with stress, i.e. freezing up, and withdrawing. Some people, more often men, turn to alcohol to cope with stressful situations.

Stress can directly affect how we feel not just psychologically but physically as well. Your thoughts and feelings “…influence your brain, which influences the endocrine hormones that affect your disease fighting immune system”. Stress can even increase the likelihood of a transition form an HIV infection to AIDS. Stress can cause hypertension (high blood pressure) which can in turn cause coronary heart disease. Stress can even affect you solely because of your type of personality. People with Type A personalities are more likely to suffer from heart attacks then those of Type B personalities. Simply because of the more laid back nature they have. Not only can stress affect us, but depression and pessimism can have the same outcomes.

Self-control is the “ability to control impulses and delay short-term gratification for longer-term rewards”. People with better self-control tend to be less prone to depression, and stress. It has also been predicted that they may have better grades, and social success. Simply our moods can determine the longevity of our health both physiologically and psychologically. Research shows that exercise can be one of the best ways to reduce stress. It is found that happiness is genetically influenced. But the environment matters as well, it’s all about how we view things, and where our “happiness set-point” lies.