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EDITORIAL



## Health, Illness, and the Psychological Factors Affecting Them

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“Individuals who are satisfied with their lives and who experience frequent positive emotions – that is, individuals with high levels of subjective well-being ... – not only feel good, but may also have reduced risk for developing coronary heart disease (CHD) ... subjective well-being may buffer against the harmful health consequences of stress and exert direct influence on bodily systems, or may motivate healthy behavior” (Boehm et al., 2016, p. 1).

In this clearly formulated above quote, Boehm (2016) summarized the emerging research which points out to the close links between our thoughts, emotions, behaviors and physical as well as emotional health (see also Cameron & Leventhal, 2003). Seib et al. (2014) reiterated that exposure to stressful life events, which we all experience at some points of our journey on this earth, have deleterious effects on our health and well-being (see Nabi, Kivimaki, Vogli, Marmot, & Singh-Manoux, 2008). And while some ill health is unavoidable, and some level of stress is expected in our daily lives, high level and chronic stress may increase health compromising behavior which may further enhance the development of poor lifestyle habits, substance abuse, or physical inactivity (Daubenmier et al., 2012). Seib et al., (2014, p. e44) further explains that “exposure to prolonged stress may change the physiological processes within the body, leading to physiological dysregulation, exacerbating proclivities for unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, and contributing to morbid health conditions (Browning, Cagney, & Iveniuk, 2012; Daubenmier et al., 2012).”

Hershfield, Scheibe, Sims and Carstensen (2013) addressed the persistent emphasize of the research literature on the effects that negative emotions have on the etiology of illness, as well as the move, lately, to examine the beneficial effects that positive emotions have on stress (Ong, 2010). However, points Hershfield, the complex interplay between positive and negative emotions in daily experience has not been well understood or researched (Davis, Zautra, & Smith, 2004). Hershfield et al. (2013) indicates that “taking the good and the bad” in life may actually be good for us, and frequent mixed emotional experiences may actually be beneficial for one’s physical health. Karademas and Ioannis Tsaousis (2014) maintained that “Illness-related behavior is heavily influenced by complex processes that refer to recognizing and interpreting symptoms, understanding illness, and planning appropriate actions for coping with the disease” (p. 80). The authors examined the effect of personality and personality characteristics, on mental and physical health and well-being. In that context, Karademas

reviewed the Five-Factor Model (FFM), considered now the dominant framework for describing the manner in which we think, feel, and behave, pointing to five main dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism or emotional stability, and openness to experience. Reviewing the related literature, Karademas pointed out that research indicated that high levels of neuroticism, for instance, was positively correlated with poorer physical functioning, worse illness outcomes, greater alcohol consumption as well as increased cigarette smoking (Goodwin & Stein, 2003; Raynor & Levine, 2009). Conscientiousness was found to be a good predictor of life span mortality as well a protective factor against mortality (Taylor et al., 2009). Extraversion has been related to better health and well-being, and has also been linked to health behaviors, but in a diverse way (Taylor et al., 2009). Agreeableness has been shown to be related to better health behavior, while lower levels of this trait have been associated with increased mortality risk (Booth-Kewley & Vickers, 1994; see also Wiebe & Fortenberry, 2006). Shoda, LeeTiernan, and Mischel (2002) observed that the thoughts, emotions and behaviors that people experience are closely related to the interpersonal system of which they are a part and not just as a result of their personality alone. Shoda et al. (2002) observed that there are studies which have shown that partner personality characteristics, such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, are associated with the quality of their relationship and that in turn is considered to be an important determinant of health. Similarly, people afflicted with chronic illness seem to adapt to their illness and symptoms not in isolation but while they interact and are supported by their partner (Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, & Lucas, 2010).

As is clear from the above brief summary of some of the recent research studies, there is still quite a lot unknown and unclear indications as to the interplay of psychological and physical factors in health and illness. The present volume aimed to add to the existing literature the observations, reviews, studies, and explorations of the major “players” in this wide field. Below is a brief summary of each of the articles included in this volume.

*Karatekin* examined the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACE), such as maltreatment, exposure to violence, and family psychopathology, are stressful and potentially traumatic events that take place during childhood. They found that students with greater exposure to early adversity were more likely than others to seek psychological/psychiatric, formal, and informal types of help. Additionally, the most common reasons for seeking help were anxiety and stress in the low-ACEs group and depression in the high-ACEs group. Unfortunately, their research also demonstrated that although students with more ACEs seek more help than students with fewer ACEs, they are less likely to find these helpful and more likely to quit prematurely.

*Svirsky, Taubman – Ben-Ari, Ben Shlomo, Azuri and Horowitz* examined this issue in an even earlier time of life, during assisted reproduction, for women who required it. The authors were interested in the effects of the internal resources of meaning in life, attachment style as well as self-disclosure to a woman’s level of perceived stress upon commencement of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). Results indicated that older age, greater self-disclosure to the mother, higher perception of meaning in life, and lower anxiety attachment were related to lower levels of perceived stress. As the authors remarked, they highlighted, in their study the importance of a woman’s

personal and interpersonal resources for reducing the experience of stress in the early stages of ART.

*Lee, Park, Bae and Lim* examined Korean students and what moderates the effects of prevention-focus [one of Higgins's self-regulatory strategies which encompasses the motivation to obtain security, avoid undesired end states, and satisfy one's ought self] acts as a moderator of the journey from insecure attachment (attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety) to depression. They found a significant moderating effect for prevention-focus on the path from attachment avoidance to depression, but not on the path from attachment anxiety to depression. The authors, consequently, recommended that different interventions are needed for different combinations of persons' insecure attachment dimensions and levels of prevention focus.

The last four articles address quality of life, first focusing on the couple (partner violence), and then on improving the individual's satisfaction and functioning in life. *Lutwak* focuses on the effects of intimate partner violence, which may include PTSD, a life-altering disorder, which may also result in severely disturbed behavior by the affected victims. And as the authors asserted, survivors may require support from mental health and social service experts and even medical and pharmaceutical agents in order for them to be able to improve the quality of life, reduce depression, decrease stress, ameliorate physical symptoms, and prevent suicidal ideology. Additionally, noted the authors, there may be need for economic and employment assistance as well as placement in safe housing.

*Stepanikova et al.* examined perinatal maternal stress and its effects on childhood infectious diseases. The diseases that they focused on were children's diseases, which include eye infection, ear infection, bronchitis/lung infection, laryngitis, strep throat, cold sores, and flu/flu-like infection. They found that perinatal stress is linked to susceptibility to infectious diseases in school-age children. They reviewed several intervention strategies to address stress in pregnant and postpartum women may benefit long-term children's health.

The article by *Chang et al.* examines the role of basic psychological needs as a mediator of the association between future orientation and depressive symptoms in a sample of multiethnoracial adults. Results indicated that the association between future orientation and depressive symptoms was accounted for by dimensions of basic psychological needs. Specifically, future orientation was negatively related to depressive symptoms through positive associations involving autonomy and competence, but not relatedness. These results suggest possible mechanisms by which believing in a changeable future might foster stronger satisfaction of basic psychological needs, especially autonomy and competence, that might help multiethnoracials garner greater protection when encountering stressful situations in their lives.

The article by *Chan, Liu, Liang, Deng, Wu and Yan* closes this special issue by addressing the considerable stress that we experience on a daily basis. Consequently, developing effective approaches to cope with mood problems is of importance in our day and age. A systematic review of the related literature indicated that while the jury is still out as far as the effect of aerobic exercises, in anaerobic training, moderate exercise intensity appears to be associated with greater mood improvements. It appears that psychological as well as neurophysiological accounts can explain the superiority of

moderate intensity exercise. Moderate intensity exercise provides a sense of mastery, and in terms of neurophysiology, both stress and reward systems are affected by exercise.

It is hoped that the research and reviews included in this volume will not only enrich readers' understanding of the field of psychology of health and illness but may be a catalyst for further research and development.

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