

CHAPTER 14 TAKING CHARGE OF ONE'S HEALTH

Stressors and Responses

Stress is person's response to events that threaten them. A student can experience various kinds of stress from deadline of projects or exam, family problem, peer pressure to the complex stress such as ever changing environment or terrorist attack. Even the pleasant events, such as preparing for a party or starting a sought-after job can produce stress.

In recent years, focus on this issue has been broadened as psychology came to see stress and coping in broader context. Health Psychology, a newer subfield of psychology, investigates the psychological factors such as stress of different kind and in different situation. It also includes coping mechanism, prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Stress Effect on the Body

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Muscle Tension | ● Uncontrolled blood glucose level |
| ● Tension-type headache and migraine headache | ● Heartburn or acid reflux |
| ● Difficulty in breathing | ● Ulcer |
| ● Asthma | ● Severe stomach pain |
| ● Increased heart rate | ● Diarrhea |
| ● Stronger contraction of the heart muscle | ● Constipation |
| ● Elevated blood pressure | ● Increased respiration rate |
| ● Heart attack | ● Dilated blood vessel in the arms and legs |
| ● Stroke | ● Affects testosterone production |
| ● Inflammation of the respiratory system | ● Sperm production |
| ● Elevated epinephrine and cortisol hormones | ● Erectile dysfunction |
| ● Absent or irregular menstrual cycle | ● Difficult premenstrual symptoms |

Stress and Filipinos: The Social and Cultural Dimension of Stress

Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it (Selye, 1926). Stress is an individual's physiological and/or psychological reaction to the real and imagined demands of life. It is the way a person reacts physically and emotionally to change. On the other hand, culture is best defined as a highly complex, continually changing system of meaning that is learned, shared, transmitted and altered from one generation to another (Triandis, 1995). How does culture might influence environmental system, personal system, transitory conditions, cognitive appraisal and coping skills, and health and well-being?

Stress has turned into an unavoidable truth, and for a few, the day by day standard. However, incidental stress can help enhance our concentration and execution, living with incessant stress can reverse discharge by causing uneasiness, discouragement, and serious medical issues. Stress affects the body's immune system. Filipinos experience stress and results to illnesses, physical and mental, fleeting and serious and life-threatening. This can also lead to depression and other maladaptive behavior that can be harmful to self and others. On the other hand, stress can be mediated through culture. For instance, Filipinos have various threshold and ways to cope with stressors. Concurrently, men and women express emotion in different patterns. Women deal with stressful situation through tiis (endurance) and kimkim (repression). Men are less expressive than women and prone to confront "political economy of stress" (Tan, 2006). Thus, culture influences how people react to stressors.

Taking Care of the Self: The Need for Self Care and Compassion

Self-compassion is composed of three main components: (1) self-kindness, (2) a sense of common humanity and (3) mindfulness. Self-compassion is not self-pity, self-indulgence and self-esteem (Neff, 2003). Taking

Main Components of Self-Compassion

Self-Kindness	Common Humanity	Mindfulness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being warm and understanding when she/he suffer, fail or feel inadequate rather than self-critical• Recognizing imperfection and consider life difficulties as inevitable• Acknowledging problems and shortcomings without judgment• Tendency to be gentle when confronted with painful experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suffering and individual deficiency is part of human existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nonjudgmental, receptive mind-state in which thoughts and feeling are observed• Equilibrated stance in terms negative emotions ,feelings are neither suppressed or exaggerated• Inadequacies are ignored or distorted

Benefits of Self-compassion

1. Self-compassion enhances motivation.
2. Self-compassion promotes health-related behaviors.
3. Self-compassion benefits interpersonal relationships.
4. Self-compassion predicts happiness and optimism.
5. Self-compassion enhances well-being.