What is Adjustment?
Adjustment refers to the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Witen & Lloyd, 2005)

- The concept of adjustment is borrowed from biology.
- Adjustment is different from adaptation. Adaptation refers to an individual's physiological structure or function or habit that allows it to survive in new surrounding

- Adjustment is a psychological concept.
- In daily life an individual make variety of adjustment to people, circumstance, and events

- Adjusted vs. Maladjusted: An individual is supposed to be well adjusted if he/ she has constructive and positive approach towards life, maintains satisfactory relationship with others, adhere to prescribed social norms etc.

    - Adjustment refers to successful changes in any activity or environment.

- Maladjustment refers: vice versa of adjustment

THE CONCEPT OF ADJUSTMENT

Reference: Lazarus, R.S. (1961): Adjustment and Personality. Richard S. McGraw-Hill.

The concept of adjustment was originally a biological one and was a cornerstone in Darwin's theory of evolution (1859). In biology the term usually employed was adaptation. Darwin maintained that only those organisms most fitted to adapt to the hazards of the physical world survive. Biologists have continued to be concerned with the problem of physical adaptation, and many human illnesses are thought to be based on the processes of adaptation to the stress of life (cf. Selye, 1956). Such illnesses include diseases of the circulatory system that produce coronary attacks and cerebral hemorrhages as well as disturbances of the digestive tract such as ulcers and intestinal colitis.

Man's behavior can be described as reactions to a variety of demands or pressures that are brought to bear upon him. The clothing he wears varies with the climate in which he lives and represents, at least partly,

an adaptation to weather. Architectural forms also depend upon climatological and topographical factors, and man has shown great ingenuity in adapting the raw materials of his environment to his need for shelter and warmth. This is dramatically illustrated by the remarkable feat of the Eskimos, who build houses out of ice and snow (in adapting to the rigors of life in the Arctic). We can understand a great deal of human behavior by conceiving human actions as adaptations to various kinds of physical demands.

Just as a person adapts to physical demands, he also adjusts to social pressures, that is, demands that arise from living interdependently with other persons. When he is an infant, his parents make demands upon him to acquire the proper values and behavior patterns. When he is adult, they continue to have expectations of his marriage, his career, or where and how he lives. Wives have certain expectations about their husbands, husbands about their wives, employers about their employees, and children about their parents. These expectations function as powerful pressures upon the individual.

The biological concept of adaptation has been borrowed by the psychologist and renamed adjustment. The psychologist is more concerned with what might be called "psychological survival" than physical survival. As in the case of the biological concept of adaptation, human behavior is interpreted as adjustments to demands or pressures. These demands are primarily social or interpersonal, and they influence the psychological structure and functioning of the person.

It was said that adjustment involves a reaction of the person to demands imposed upon him. The psychological demands made upon the person can be classified into external and internal.

ADJUSTMENT TO EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL DEMANDS

There are a large number of external demands that arise from the physical conditions of existence. From the psychological viewpoint, how ever, those pressures arising out of our existence as social beings are of greater importance. From early childhood we are confronted with the demands of other persons to do some things and not others. At first, these demands deal with relatively primitive actions. For example, we are required to feed ourselves, not to hit other children, and not to damage property. Between two and three years of age we must learn to control the sphincter muscles of the bladder and bowel according to social custom. As we mature, the demands of others become more subtle and include conceptions, values, and more complex patterns of social be havior. Our failure to comply with these demands results in disapproval and negative consequences, and our conformity to them leads to approval and positive consequences. When we incur the disfavor of our parents and other persons who are significant to our welfare, strong anxieties are aroused. We learn that certain forms of behavior lead to approval, and hence the reduction or elimination of anxiety, and that other forms of behavior have the opposite effects.

This process of socialization in response to anxiety and social pressures has been very effectively discussed by Allison Davis, who has been concerned with the influence of social-class factors in the development of personality. He writes (1944, pp. 203-204): The intensive study of normal personalities leads inevitably to the recognition of the tremendously vital role of this type of socialized anxiety in the integration and direction of the personality, notably in the development of individuals of middle status. One of the certain gains for social science, in the recent studies of normal individuals living in their social contexts, has been the discovery that many concepts of personality economy developed by psychopathology do not hold for individuals in our own culture who are not mentally ill. The tendency of the psychopathologist to extend the concept of

the neurotic, maladaptive, irrational type of anxiety, for example, to all anxiety has been a dangerous generalization. In the same way many other concepts of maladaptive functions, based upon clinical study of the delinquent, the criminal, or the mentally ill have been applied wholesale to the analysis of the personality dynamics of normal people by mental hygienists, psychiatric case-workers, and by other students of personality development. These supposedly symptomatic traits include, among others, such motivations as hostility, guilt feelings, intimidation, inferiority feelings, chronic frustrations, as well as anxiety.

The fact is, however, that all of these motivations not only appear in the normal range of human personalities in American society, but these instigations may be all culturally useful and may be integrated in some form into the adaptive behavior of the well-adjusted and socialized child or adolescent. For example, most young children of middle-status families are trained in the basic cultural forms with regard to property, exploration of the adult world, and aggression largely through those feelings of shame, of age inferiority, of guilt, and of anxiety which are instilled by the parents and other adults in accord with the necessary modes of child training in a society like that of American middle class. Even aggression and hostility must be taught to the child through culturally approved forms. With regard to overt aggression, the middle-class boy must learn, for example, (1) to fight when attacked by another boy, (2) not to attack a boy unless he has been struck, (3) not to attack girls or supervisory adults under any circumstances, but also (4) not to withdraw when in a normal, approved competitive situation. A child without the culturally approved, adaptive type of aggression in a competitive and status-structured society like ours is himself abnormal.

We are born, as human beings, with a great many internal needs, the frustration of which leads to discomfort and sometimes death. Many of these are physiological. If we don't eat, we become hungry and uncom fortable. If we don't drink, we experience the unpleasant reaction of thirst. Other such physiological, internal needs are sleep, defecation, and temperature regulation. In childhood we soon discover that there are

certain ways of gratifying these needs, and we behave accordingly when ever an unpleasant state of tension associated with some need exists. In the course of development, additional internal needs emerge, which are primarily social rather than physiological such as, need for human company, social approval, a sense of self- and social esteem etc.