Psychology 250--Abnormal Psychology

Topic 6

Stress Related Disorders

Mind Map of Essential Knowledge (Vocabulary and Concepts):

Stress and Health

Health Psychology - in this context, it’s the sub discipline that studies what causes stress in individuals, how they respond to it (coping), the effects on their physical and psychological health, and strategies for helping them cope and reduce the negative physical, psychological, and behavioral effects.

Psychoneuroimmunology -- explores the relationship among stress and the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. In this context, it explores the negative impact on the immune system by the chronic secretion of stress hormones (catecholamines) and chronic inflammation. It also explores the relationship between high stress, aging, and the shortening of telomeres.

Significant sources of stress include:
1. Trauma, including terrorism related trauma
2. Life Events — significant changes that demand adjustment
3. Acculturation — the special case of life events that demand adjustment by immigrants or natives to mainstream cultures

Stress Related Disorders

Adjustment Disorders

- A maladaptive response to a stressor
- Develops within 3 months of the onset of the stressor
- Results in significant impairment of social, occupational or academic functioning or
- Results in emotional distress greater than that normally induced by the stressor
- The reaction isn’t sufficient enough to be called something else like traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, or depression

Subtypes include
Adjustment Disorder with:
- Depressed Mood
- Anxiety
- Mixed Anxiety with Depressed Mood
- Disturbance of Conduct
- Mixed Disturbance of Emotions and Conduct or
- Unspecified

Traumatic Stress Disorders

Types
1. Acute Stress Disorder
   - an acute maladaptive reaction to a trauma
2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
   - a prolonged maladaptive reaction to trauma

Common Features
- Avoidance Behavior
- Reexperiencing the event
- Emotional distress, negative thoughts, and impaired functioning
- Heightened arousal
- Emotional numbing

Factors Predictive of PTSD
- Degree of exposure & severity of the trauma
- History of childhood sexual abuse
- Genetic predisposition
- Lack of social support
- Lack of effective coping strategies
- Feelings of shame
- Dissociation or numbing
- Prior psychiatric history

Treatments for Stress Related Disorders
Repeted exposure (including prolonged exposure), expressive writing, group therapy and other social support, training in coping strategies, stress management and anger management, perhaps eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EDMR)