

# Stress and Adaptation

Revised by Rita Weingourt

LAH3C

# Stress

- Stress comes from all areas.
- Stress can be
  - Acute: less than 6 months duration
  - Chronic
- One person looks at a stimulus and sees
  - Challenge leading to mastery and growth
- Another person looks at a stimulus and sees
  - Threat leading to stagnation and loss.

# Chronic vs. Acute Stress

- Living with a long term illness produces chronic stress.
- Living with long term job stress produces burnout (the outcome of chronic stress).
- Time limited events that threaten a person for a relatively brief period of time produce acute stress.

# Crisis Theory

- Crisis = Psychological Disequilibrium
- Anyone can have a crisis:
  - Situational,
  - Developmental
  - Adventitious

A person experiences crisis only if the event and the real or threatened loss is personally significant.

# Situational Crisis

- This is a response to stress arising from unexpected personal or family changes
  - May be positive or negative
- Examples?

# Developmental Crisis

- Sometimes called “maturational.”
- Stressful situations vary with life stages or transitions between life stages.
  - May be positive or negative
- Example?

# Adventitious Crisis

- Completely unexpected event that affects person, group, even community.
  - disasters
- Examples?

# Crisis is a Struggle for Equilibrium

- Difficult to predict what will be perceived as an event that can precipitate a crisis.
- Age and culture are important factors in response to stress.



# Stress and Culture

- Stressors and coping styles vary with different cultures.
- Be aware of your own perceptions of stress and coping in the context of your culture.
- Assess the influence of culture on the person's appraisal of his/her stress level.
- Determine the resources in the client's culture that may facilitate coping.

# Crisis

- Very personal.
- Crisis and stress appraisal must be seen through the patient's eyes.
  - Culture of the patient?
  - Dominant culture?
- It is important for the nurse to recognize when and if the client is in crisis.
  - Crisis is determined from the patient's point of view

# Patient Care Situations

- People who experience any kind of health issue always experience anxiety at some level.
- Always.
- Healthcare professional must take patient's anxiety level into consideration when providing care, teaching etc.

# Crisis = Anxiety

- Mild
- Moderate
- Severe
- Panic

# Mild Anxiety

- Everyone experiences this level of anxiety.
- Learning is enhanced.
- Heightened awareness of surroundings.
- Restlessness and irritability.

# Moderate Anxiety

- Psychological Responses
- 1. Reduction of perceptual field
- 2. Reduced alertness to environment
- 3. Learning is not optimal
- 4. Discontented feelings
- 5. Decreased
  - Concentration
  - Attention span

# Moderate Anxiety

- Physiological Responses
- Interrupted sleep
- Gastric irritability
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Muscle tension
- Increased perspiration
- Increased restlessness, pulse and respiration

# Moderate Anxiety

- Psychological Responses
- Increased speech rate, volume and pitch
- Low self-esteem
- Poorer than usual problem solving
- Feeling depressed (tired)
- Feeling guilty, overly responsible



# Severe-Panic

- No ability to focus on the environment
  - Misperceptions of the environment
  - No learning
  - No ability to concentrate
  - No ability to comprehend simple directions
- Sense of impending doom/terror
  - Seemingly bizarre behavior
  - Incoherence or inability to verbalize fears
  - Dilated pupils, labored breathing, trembling
  - Sleeplessness

# Assessment Questions

- 1. “What happened just before you started to feel this way?”
- 2. “What is different today about the problem? Be specific.”
- 3. “How is this problem affecting your life?”
- 4. Why have you come to the clinic (doctor, ER etc.)now?

# Support System Assessment

- 1. "To whom do you talk when you feel overwhelmed?"
- 2. "Whom do you trust to be part of the discussion (help you make a decision etc.)?"
- 3. "Who is available to help you now?"

# Coping Skill Assessment

- Coping skills are the client's efforts to manage psychological stress
  1. "What do you usually do when you feel stressed or overwhelmed?"
  2. "What has helped you get through difficult times in the past?"
  3. "What have you tried to get through this situation?"

# Life Span Considerations

- Healthcare professional must understand normal age-related
  - Physical, psychosocial and developmental changes.
  - Cultural norms, expectations
- Healthcare Professional/client relationship is built on this awareness.

# Children

- Hospitalized children and families are exposed to numerous stressors.
  - Healthcare professionals must distinguish between normal and abnormal responses.
- Healthcare professionals must form alliances and collaborate with parents or care givers
  - Poor interpersonal relationships lead to barriers to healing.

# Adolescents

- Adolescents and families struggle with independence needs and rebelliousness.
- This can be challenging in a healthcare situation.
  - The healthcare professional must approach the client using knowledge of developmental tasks, culture and unique circumstances.

# Adulthood

- The healthcare professional must be aware of the way the disease or injury may impact on developmental tasks.
  - Control is an issue
  - Unplanned loss is an issue.
  - Shared decision making is important.
  - Cultural norms and expectations are an issue



# Older Adults

- Consider developmental tasks
- Provide practical suggestions about death and dying issues.
  - Many feel a nursing home is where you go to die.
- Establish relationships with families and care givers.
- Assess impact of physical changes on psychological responses.

# Adult

- An adult male has just been informed that he has colon cancer. The healthcare professional walks into the room and sees the client gazing out the window. What should be the first response?
- A. “Don’t be sad. Many people live with cancer.”
- B. “Maybe we can talk about how your are going to tell your family.”

## Adult (cont.)

- C. “I took care of another patient whose colon cancer was cured by surgery.”
- D. “Perhaps I could sit with you for a few minutes so we can talk about this news.”

# Older adult

- During the initial assessment of an older woman experiencing a developmental crisis the healthcare professional asks which of the following questions?
- A. “How has Hurricane Sandy affected your life?”
- B. “How is having Diabetes affecting your lifestyle?”

## Older Adult (cont.)

- C. “I know this must be hard for you. Let me tell you what might help you.”
- D. “Since your husband died 2 months ago what have you been doing in the evening when you feel lonely?”