

## Psychology 202

### Chapter 11: Health and Well-Being

#### *Can Psychosocial Factors Affect Health?*

- Behaviors and attitudes affect one's health
- **Health psychology:** A field that integrates research on health and psychology; it involves the application of psychological principles to promote health and well-being
- Launched when psychologists came to appreciate the importance of lifestyle factors to physical health
- Health psychologists apply their knowledge of psychological principles to promote health and well-being, instead of thinking about health merely as the absence of disease
- **Well-being:** A positive state that includes striving for optimal health and life satisfaction
- We must participate in health-enhancing behaviors in order to obtain optimal health
- Psychologists who study health and well-being rely on the relationship between thoughts, actions, and physical and mental health
- Research address issues that will help people live a healthier life
- Also affect how these relationships affect our actions

#### *The Biopsychosocial Model of Health Incorporates Multiple Perspectives for Understanding and Improving Health*

- **Biopsychosocial model:** A model of health that integrates the effects of biological, behavioral, and social factors on health and illness

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- Research that integrates these levels of analysis helps to identify strategies that may help prevent disease and promote health
- Our thoughts and actions affect the environments we choose to interact with, and those environments, in turn, affect the biological underpinnings of our thoughts and actions
- The biopsychosocial model is central to understanding the difference between traditional medical model and the approach taken by health psychologists
- Understanding individuals thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are central to understanding and improving health

#### *Behavior Contributes to the Leading Causes of Death*

- People are more likely to die from causes of their own behavior
- Obesity, lack of exercise, smoking, high-fat diets, and certain personality traits contribute to this cause of death
- Lifestyle behaviors that begin in childhood and the teen years may decrease health or even lead to death
- Violence, accidents obesity, lack of exercise, risky sexual behavior, the use and abuse of drugs — all negative factors associated strongly with young people

#### *Placebos Can Be More Powerful Medicine*

- Scientists often study a drug or treatment by comparing it with a placebo
- Research participants are typically randomly assigned the placebo or the actual drug
- **Placebo effect:** An improvement in health following treatment with a placebo — that is, with a drug or treatment that has no apparent physiological effect on the health condition for which it was prescribed

- The placebo effect is a good example of the biopsychosocial model at work
- The belief that the medication will work is a psychological factor and it affects the body in ways similar to those of medication

### *How Do We Cope with Stress?*

- Stress is a basic component of our daily lives
- It results from ways we directly think about events in our lives
- **Stress:** A pattern of behavioral, psychological, and physiological responses to events when the events match or exceed the organisms ability to respond in a healthy way
- **Stressor:** An environmental event or stimulus that threatens an organism
- **Coping response:** Any response an organism makes to avoid, escape from, or minimize an aversive stimulus
- When too much is expected of us, or when we are scared, we perceive discrepancy between demands of the situation and the resources of our biological, psychological, and social systems
- Stress is often into two parts
  - **Eustress:** Stress from positive events
  - **Distress:** Stress from negative events
- Major life stressors are changes or disruptions that strain central areas of peoples lives
- Major life stressors include choices made by individuals, not just things that happen to them