

L 8. Psychology of personal health.

Lifestyle and health.

Models for defining health (Source: Larson 1999)

Medical model	The absence of disease or disability
World health organization (WHO) model	State of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and <u>not merely the absence of disease or infirmity</u>
Wellness model	Health promotion and progress toward higher functioning, energy, comfort, and integration of mind, body, and spirit
Environmental model	Adaptation to physical and social surroundings - a balance free from undue pain, discomfort, or disability

Definitions of Health Psychology



Health psychology is a branch within the psychology field that focuses on how social, psychological, and biological factors combine to influence human health.

By Taylor, health psychology is to understanding psychological influences on how people stay healthy, why they become ill, and how they respond when they get sick.

Health psychology aggregates the specific educational, scientific, and professional contributions of the psychology discipline to the promotion and maintenance of health, the promotion and treatment of illness, and related dysfunctions (Matarazzo, 1980).

What is Health Psychology?



Health psychology is the field devoted to understanding psychological influences on how people stay healthy, why they become ill and how they respond when they do get ill.

The field focuses on

- **health promotion and maintenance;**
- **prevention and treatment of illness;**
- the **etiology and correlates of health, illness, and disability** and
- **improvement of the health care system and**
- **the formulation of health policy.**

Health Psychology: Biomedical model



The interaction of the mind and the body has concerned philosophers and scientists for centuries.

Different models of the relationship have predominated at different times in history.

The **biomedical model**, which has dominated medicine, is a reductionistic, single-factor model of illness that treats the mind and the body as separate entities and emphasizes illness concern over health.

Health Psychology: Biomedical model



- The biomedical model clearly incorporates the assumption of a mind-body dualism, maintaining that mind and body are separate entities.
- The biomedical model clearly emphasizes illness over health.

This model has proven to be scientifically and clinically inadequate in explaining the disease process.

Health Psychology: Biopsychosocial model

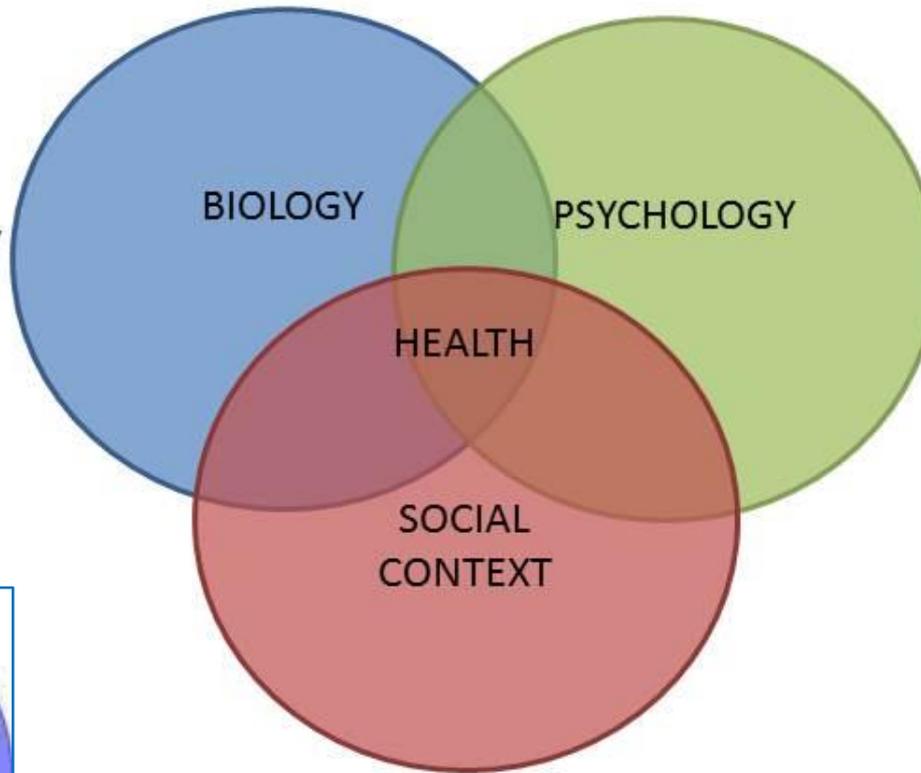
The biomedical model is currently being replaced by the **biopsychosocial model**, which regards any health disorder as the result of the interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors.

The **biopsychosocial model** recognizes the importance of interacting macrolevel and microlevel processes in producing health and illness. Under this model, health is regarded as an active achievement.

The biopsychosocial model guides health psychologists and practitioners in their research efforts to uncover factors that predict states of health and illness and in their clinical interventions with patients.

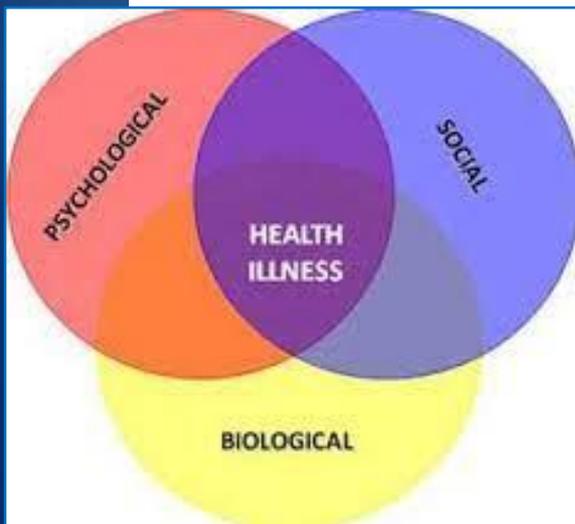
BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING HEALTH

Gender
Physical illness
Disability
Genetic vulnerability
Immune function
Neurochemistry
Stress reactivity
Medication effects



Learning/memory
Attitudes/beliefs
Personality
Behaviours
Emotions
Coping skills
Past trauma

Social supports
Family background
Cultural traditions
Social/economic status
Education



The Biopsychosocial Model vs The Biomedical Model

- Maintains that all illness can be explained on the basis of aberrant somatic processes (biochemical imbalances or neuropsychological abnormalities)
- Assumes that psychological and social processes are largely independent of the disease process.

The Biopsychosocial Model in Health Psychology



- Its fundamental assumption is that any health or illness outcome results from biological, psychological, and social factors.

Advantages of the Biopsychosocial Model

- Both, macrolevel processes (such as the existence of social support, the presence of depression) and microlevel processes (such as cellular disorders or chemical imbalances) interact to produce a state of health or illness.
- Maintains that the mind and body cannot be distinguished in matters of health and illness because both clearly influence an individual's state of health.

The Biopsychosocial Model as a Research Tool

- Researchers measure ALL three classes of variables.
- The significant health problems of the day, especially the origin and treatment of chronic illness, can increasingly be understood substantially in psychological and social factors.
- The field of health psychology addresses an issue of paramount economic and social importance, namely, Health Care.

Clinical Implication of the Biopsychosocial Model



- The diagnosis should always consider the interacting role of biological, psychological, and social factors in assessing an individual's health or illness.
- Recommendation for treatment must also examine all three sets of factors.
- Makes explicit the significance of the relationship between patient and practitioner.

The Mind-Body Relationship: A Brief History



There's evidence of ancient cultures that suggests that mind and body were considered a **unit**.

Early cultures believed that disease arose when evil spirits entered the body and that these spirits could be exorcised through treatment.

The **Greeks** were among the first to identify the role of bodily functioning in health and illness. They developed a **humoral theory** of disease, in which specific personalities were associated with four humors, the vital bodily fluids.

Middle Ages: Mysticism and demonology dominated the concepts of disease, which was “God’s punishment of evildoing.” Throughout this time, the Church was the guardian of medical knowledge.

The Mind-Body Relationship: A Brief History

Renaissance: Great strides were made in the technological basis of medical practice, such as Leeuwenhoek's microscopy and Morgagni's contributions to autopsy.

For the next 300 years, physical evidence became the sole basis for diagnosing and treating the illness.

The rise of modern psychology: Sigmund Freud's early work developed the concept of conversion hysteria. According to him, unconscious conflicts can produce physical disturbances that symbolize repressed personality psychological conflicts.

In 1930, unlike Freud, **Helen Flanders Dunbar**, and **Franz Alexander** linked patterns of personality to a specific illness. Their works helped the emerging field of **psychosomatic medicine**.

The Mind-Body Relationship: A Brief History



The rise of health psychology can be tied to several factors, including

- ✓ the increase in chronic or lifestyle-related illnesses,
- ✓ the expanding role of health care in the economy,
- ✓ the realization that psychological and social factors contribute to health and illness,
- ✓ the demonstrated importance of psychological interventions to improving people's health, and
- ✓ the rigorous methodological contributions of health psychology researchers.

Aims of Health Psychology

The aims of health psychology can be divided into two sections.

1. Understanding, explaining, developing and testing theory.

- ✓ Evaluating the role of behavior in illness (e.g., coronary heart disease is related to behaviors of smoking, food intake, lack of exercise).
- ✓ Predicting unhealthy behaviors (e.g., smoking, alcohol consumption, and high-fat diets are related to beliefs).
- ✓ Evaluating the interaction between psychology and physiology (e.g., the experience of stress relates to appraisal, coping, and social support).
- ✓ Understanding the role of psychology in the experience of illness (e.g., understanding the psychological consequences of illness could help to alleviate symptoms such as pain, nausea, vomiting, anxiety, and depression).
- ✓ Evaluating the role of psychology in the treatment of illness (e.g., changing behavior and reducing stress could reduce the chances of a further heart attack).

Aims of Health Psychology

The aims of health psychology can be divided into two sections.

2. Aim of health psychology is to put this theory into practice.

- ✓ Promoting healthy behavior (e.g., understanding the role of behavior in illness can allow unhealthy behaviors to be targeted.
- ✓ Understanding the beliefs that predict behaviors and making necessary changes.
- ✓ Preventing illness (e.g., behavioral interventions during illness: stopping smoking after a heart attack may prevent further illness.
- ✓ Changing beliefs and modifying/coping with stress.

What do health psychologists do?



Health psychologists perform a variety of tasks. They develop theories and conduct research on the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors in producing health and illness.

They help treat patients with a variety of disorders and conduct counseling for the psychosocial problems that illness may create.

They develop worksite interventions to improve the employees' health habits and work in medical settings and other organizations to improve health and health care delivery.

Because of their experience in health psychology, they are often able to understand and manage the social and psychological aspects of the health problems they treat better than would be the case if their education had included only training in traditional medicine.

Criteria of Mental Health



1. Ability to accept self.

A mentally healthy individual feels comfortable about themselves. They feel reasonably secure and adequately accept their surroundings. In other words, they have self-respect.

2. Capacity to feel right towards others.

An individual who enjoys good mental health can be sincerely interested in others' welfare. They have friendships that are satisfying and lasting. They can feel like a part of a group without being submerged by it. They take responsibility for their neighbors and their fellow members.

Criteria of Mental Health (cont.)



3. Ability to fulfill life tasks.

It bestows the individual's ability to meet the demands of life. A mentally healthy person can think for themselves, set reasonable goals and make decisions. They do something about the problems as they arise, shoulder their daily responsibilities, and are not bowled over by their own emotions of fear, anger, love, and guilt.

4. Adequate contact with reality.

It includes a perception of the environment without distortion and the capacity for empathy and social sensitivity, respect, and concern for the wants and needs of others.

Criteria of Mental Health (cont.)



5. Control of thoughts and imagination.

It includes whether individuals can control or manage their thoughts and imagination appropriately. Derailment of thoughts or others' thought disorders is not present.

6. Efficiency in work and play.

It correlates with whether the individual successfully achieves personal and professional development stage tasks.

Criteria of Mental Health (cont.)



7. Social acceptance.

It suggests that the individual has achieved a satisfactory role within the group, society, and environment. An individual can love and accept the love of others.

8. Positive self-respect.

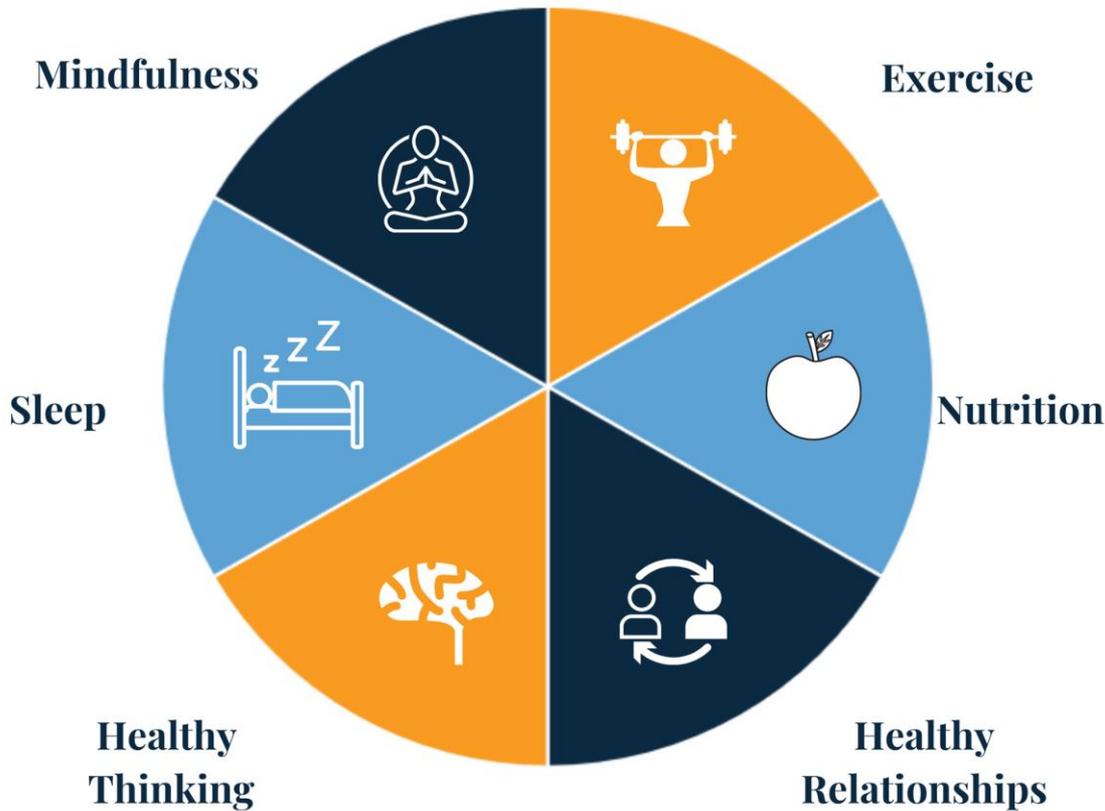
It includes an objective self-view, knowledge, and acceptance of an individual's strengths and limitations. The individual feels a strong sense of personal identity and security within the environment.

9. A healthy emotional life.

Ability to adaptively respond to the environment and develop a philosophy of life, both of which help the individual maintain anxiety at a manageable level in response to stressful situations.

Six dimensions of a healthy lifestyle

6 Dimensions of a Healthy Lifestyle



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