
L 10. The communicative side of communication

L12 The perceptual side of communication

Stress

Psychology in Our Social Lives

- A fundamental principle of social psychology is that our cognitions, emotions, and behaviors are strongly influenced by the *social situation* --the people with whom we are interacting and communicating.

Social Cognition

Learning Objective

Review the principles of social cognition, including the fundamentals of how we form judgments about other people.

Social Cognition

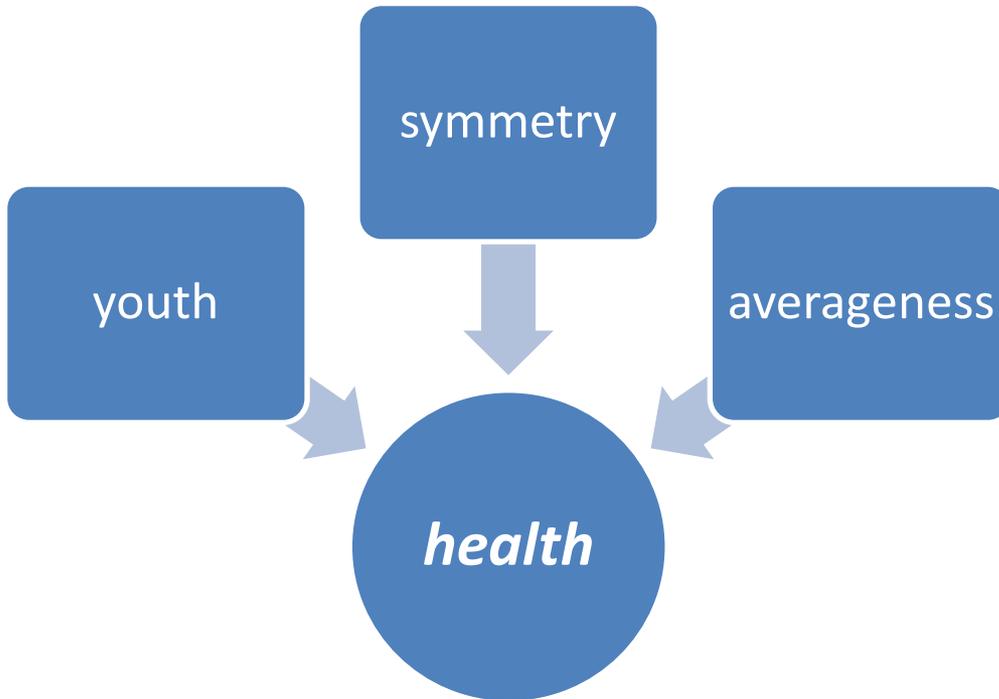
- **social cognition**
 - the part of human thinking that helps us understand and predict the behavior of ourselves and others
- Social cognition drives
 - our judgments about other people,
 - our impressions of other people, and
 - our *attitudes* – our enduring evaluations of people or things.

Social cognition is the mental activity that relates to social activities, and which helps us meet the goal of understanding and predicting the behavior of ourselves and others.

A fundamental part of social cognition involves *learning* – the relatively permanent change in knowledge that is acquired through experience.

Perceiving Others

Initial attraction between people is usually the result of physical attractiveness.



We show a preference for faces that are symmetrical, similar and common, and attractive.

- Our initial judgments of others are based on physical attractiveness.
- We use attractiveness as a cue for health.
- People we find more attractive may also have been healthier evolutionarily

Some marked gender differences in the response to physical features.

The physical attractiveness stereotype refers to the tendency to perceive attractive people as having positive characteristics, such as sociability and competence.

Forming Judgments on the Basis of Appearance: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination

stereotyping

- **tendency to attribute personality characteristics to people based on their external appearance or social group memberships**

discrimination

- negative behaviors toward others based on prejudice

prejudice

- **the tendency to dislike people because of their group memberships**

self-fulfilling prophecy

- our expectations about others' personality characteristics lead us to behave in ways that make those beliefs come true

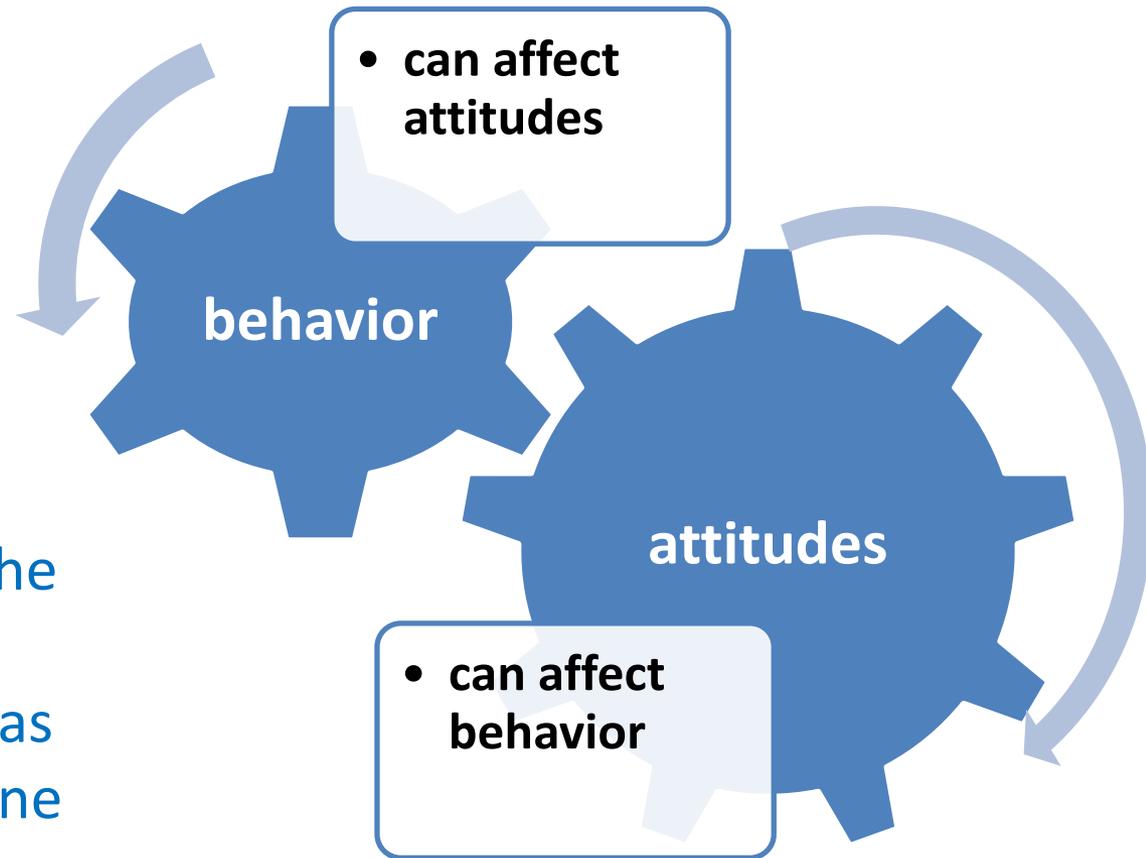
social identity

- **the positive emotions that we experience based on our group memberships**

Attitudes and Behavior

- **attitudes**
 - our relatively enduring evaluations of people and things

Behaviors influence attitudes in part through the process of self-perception. We use our own behavior as a guide to help us determine our own thoughts and feelings.



Attitudes and Behavior

Techniques That Can Be Effective in Persuading Others

Technique	Examples
Choose effective communicators.	Use communicators who are attractive, expert, trustworthy, and similar to the listener.
Consider the goals of the listener.	If the listener wants to be entertained, then use a humorous ad; if the listener is processing the ad more carefully, use a more thoughtful one.
Use humor.	People are more easily persuaded when they are in a good mood.
Use classical conditioning.	Try to associate your product with positive stimuli such as funny jokes or attractive models.
Make use of the listener's emotions.	Humorous and fear-arousing ads can be effective because they arouse the listener's emotions.
Use the listener's behavior to modify his or her attitude.	One approach is the foot-in-the-door technique.

Summary

- Social cognition involves forming impressions of ourselves and other people. Doing so quickly and accurately is functional for social life.
- Our initial judgments of others are based in large part on what we see. The physical features of other people—and particularly their sex, race, age, and physical attractiveness—are very salient, and we often focus our attention on these dimensions.
- We are attracted to people who appear to be healthy. Indicators of health include youth, symmetry, and averageness.

Summary, continued

- We frequently use people’s appearances to form our judgments about them, and to determine our responses to them. These responses include stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Social psychologists believe that people should get past their prejudices and judge people as individuals.
- Attitudes refer to our relatively enduring evaluations of people and things. Attitudes are determined in part by genetic transmission from our parents and in part through direct and indirect experiences.
- Although attitudes predict behaviors, behaviors also predict attitudes. This occurs through the processes of self-perception and cognitive dissonance.

Stress

Learning objective

Define stress and the types of stress that can impact you and your work performance.

➤ **Stress** is the body's response to change; defined in many ways. Stress and the types of things that cause stress can vary from person to person.

Today, we generally say that stress is the body's way of responding to a demand.

Stressful – a situation or event which is challenging to deal with and makes us feel anxious and distressed.

We tend to think of all stress as negative, but as **Hans Selye** pointed out in his early research, *some types of stress can cause us to challenge ourselves and work at a higher level*

TABLE 10.2 Common Effects of Stress

On Your Body	On Your Mood	On Your Behavior
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or undereating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry outbursts
Chest pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol abuse
Fatigue	Irritability or anger	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Sadness or depression	Social withdrawal
Stomach upset		
Sleep problems		

Types of stress

Acute stress is the type of stress we experience on a day-to-day basis – for example, the stress of getting our to-do list finished or the stress of unplanned obstacles.

- the most widely experienced stress and is the result of the daily pressures and demands we all face.
- tends to be short term , e.g., a rush of customers over the lunchtime period.
- not only felt due to experiences we think of negatively, it can also be felt when we partake in actions which bring thrill and excitement to our lives.

Types of stress

Episodic stress is so called because it is used to describe when stress is experienced too frequently.

- It is often seen in people *who make unrealistic or unreasonable demands of themselves*, causing them stress in attempting to achieve their goals.
- Although suffered more frequently than an acute stress, episodic stress is not continual and will stop from time to time e.g., at the end of a project or during holiday periods.
- This type of stress usually goes with little relief or rarely gets relief.
- The person who suffers from episodic stress feels stressed constantly with little relief, e.g., they may constantly complain about how much work they have and may be constantly late or always in a rush and may be anxious and irritable on a regular basis.
- Often, a person who suffers from this type of stress *may have taken on too much and created self-imposed demands*.

Types of stress

Chronic stress is characterized as long-term stress, where there is little hope for relief.

- happens month after month, year after year, **the stressful situation can seem to be never-ending.**
- can **result when a person is subjected to persistent stress over a long period of time e.g., an unhappy relationship,** chronic illness or ill-chosen career.
- the person may give up looking for solutions to the stress and tends to just live with it.
- sometimes it begins with traumatic experiences such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or **traumatic** childhood experiences.
- can occur in response to everyday stressors that are ignored or not managed well, e.g., someone may have episodic stress, but over a long period of time, this can become chronic stress.
- the accumulated stress developed from the various stressors can lead to serious physical or psychological illness.
- this can result in behaviors such as self-harm, violence or suicide.

Types of stress

Not all stress is negative! Not all stress is bad; some stress can actually help us to perform at a higher level and challenge us.

This type of stress is called **eustress**.

Eustress

Positive stress to help us achieve at a higher level and challenge us.

Characteristics Of Type A Individuals

High need for control

“Doing more in less and less time”



Defining Characteristics

- Time urgency
- Competitiveness
- Polyphasic behaviors
- Hostility



Work-Related Behaviors

- Poor delegation
- Likes to work alone
- Jumps into action
- Sets high goals
- Hard work
- Perceives more stress

Four A's for Dealing with Stress

- **Avoid** the stressor
- **Alter** the stressor
- **Adapt to** the stressor
- **Accept** the stressor

Avoid the stressor

- Look at the stressor.
- Try to put the stressor in a positive light.
- Consider the stressor and the long-term impact. Will this be a stressor in three months or one year?

Alter the stressor

- Learn to say no to things that may cause stress.
- Change the way you are working with the stressor.
- Communicate needs and wants.

Adapt to the stressor

- Change your opinion of the stressor.
- Look at how the stressor can be positive; for example, "I have a lot of work, but if I do well, it might mean a promotion."

Accept the stressor

- Find other outlets to handle the stressor.
- Develop a tolerance to the stressor.
- Let go of things you cannot control.

Four A's for Dealing with Stress

Avoid the stressor. We can try to avoid situations that stress us out. If watching certain television programs causes stress, stop watching them! Spend time with people who help you relax. We can also look at saying no more often if we do not have the time necessary to complete everything we are doing.

Alter the stressor. Another option in **dealing with stress** is to try to alter it, if you can't avoid it. When changing a situation, you can be more assertive, manage time better, and communicate your own needs and wants better. For example, Karen can look at the things causing her stress, such as her home and school commitments; while she can't change the workload, she can examine ways to avoid a heavy workload in the future. If Karen is stressed about the amount of homework she has and the fact that she needs to clean the house, asking for help from roommates, for example, can help alter the stressor. Often this involves the ability to communicate well.

Adapt to the stressor. If you are unable to avoid or change the stressor, getting comfortable with the stressor is a way to handle it. Creating your own coping mechanisms for the stress and learning to handle it can be an effective way to handle the stress. For example, we can try looking at stressful situations in a positive light, consider how important the stressor is in the long run, and adjust our standards of perfectionism.

Accept the stressor. Some stressors are unavoidable. We all must go to work and manage our home life. So, learning to handle the things we cannot change by forgiving, developing tolerances, and letting go of those things we cannot control is also a way to deal with a stressor. For example, if your mother-in-law's yearly visits and criticisms cause stress, obviously you are not able to avoid or alter the stress, but you can adapt to it and accept it. Since we cannot control another person, accepting the stressor and finding ways of dealing with it can help minimize some negative effects of the stress we may experience.

Researchers have found the following activities cut stress significantly:

1. Meditating
2. Listening to music
3. Getting enough sleep
4. Drinking black tea
5. Spending time with a funny friend
6. Pampering, such as a massage
7. Doing something spiritual
8. Chewing gum

Other ways to reduce stress might include the following:

1. Exercising
2. Developing good time management skills < Eating a healthy diet < Organization, such as keeping workspace organized
3. Picturing yourself relaxed
4. Breathing deeply
5. Social interaction, such as spending time with family and friends
6. Positive thinking