Personality types & stress

Type A Personality

- Proposed by Cardiologist Meyer Friedman & Ray Rosenman (1974)
- Observed that their patients had similar characteristics
  - (cardiac patients = weight, physical factors, smoker, no exercise ++ similar “characters” = highly motivated, highly ambitious, love to compete, aggressive, hostile)

- Research show that aggressiveness & anger are dangerous characteristics of Type A personality
- When hostile, testosterone is released = atherosclerosis sets in.
The Type A Personality has:

- An intense sense of time urgency, race against the clock, the need to do more in the shortest time possible
- An aggressive personality that at times evolve into hostility, high motivation, short tempered, high sense of competitiveness, make a contest of everything, inability to have fun or relax
- An intense achievement motive,
- Polyphasic behaviour-the need to do several different tasks at the same time

Characteristics of Type A Personality

- Competitive
- Verbally aggressive
- Hard-driving
- Unable to relax
- Very time conscious
- Easily angered
- Hostile +++

- Special body language + speech patterns
  (esp when responding to stressful situation)
  - Tightening of facial muscle
  - Gesturing with clenched fist
  - Using explosive speech
  - Interrupting the other party (meant to make his point)
  - Hurrying the pace
### Type A Personalities

- Usually are highly successful people
- Hard work, competitiveness & fanatical drive are rewarded with success (financial/promotions etc)
- Often admired by others who wonder how do they sustain their high level of activity
- Negative side-effect = CHD (Coronary heart disease)

### Characteristics of Type B Personality

- In general, just the opposite of Type-A
- Relax, easy-going
- Not as competitive
- Less time-urgency & anger
- Not easily frustrated

### TYPE A vs TYPE B

- Type A = are rushed, ambitious, time-conscious & driven. Studies suggest these traits, if not properly managed, can create stress-related illnesses.
- Type B = more relaxed, less time-conscious & driven person.
  - Able to view things more adaptively.
  - Better able to put things into perspective.
  - Think through how they are going to deal with situations. Consequently they tend to be less stress-prone.
Characteristics of Type C Personality

- Temoshok & Dreher (1992) introduced Type-C, also known as cancer-prone personality
- Easily give up when faced by repeated failure & stress
- Develop a sense of hopelessness & helplessness about their problem(s)
- Show suppression or absence of emotion
- Resign themselves to their fate

Type C Personalities ...

- People pleasers (wanting to be more acceptable to others)
- Intentionally suppressing their emotions in order to be nice; do not stand up for their own values
- Violates integrity, increase passivity, reinforce helplessness & hopelessness
- **Cognitive** = do not believe they can handle the problem; **Emotional** = repeated failure & < belief in own ability leads to chronic depression; **Behavioural** = Depression + , belief = inertia (a failure to attempt to change/ inactivity)

EQ

- **Goleman, 1996**. individuals are believed to vary in their ability to perceive, process and manage information that is emotional in nature.
- Emotional intelligence is not about emotions per se, but more about the ability to use emotional information and integrate it with thoughts and actions.
- EQ - individuals with higher emotional intelligence are somehow more successful at work and in their personal lives (Goleman, 1996).
Emotional Quotient (EQ)

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to:
- recognize emotions in self and others
- manage one’s own emotions
- empathize with others
- maintain successful relationships

Emotional Quotient (EQ) & Stress

- High control over one’s emotion → better deal with stress
- Know how & when to use the right emotion
- Intrinsic motivation
- Ability to identify & acknowledge other people’s emotions & respond appropriately
- High interpersonal skill

Anxiety

- Anxiety is both symptom of stress and a stressor (cause of further stress)
- Anxious reactive type
Anxious-Reactive Type

- Consistently over reacts
- Easily becomes anxious, and continues to be anxious even after the stressors is gone
- Tendency to "catastrophize" stressors (make it sounds BIG, DIFFICULT, UNMANAGEABLE)
- Difficulty in forgetting negative experiences

“Hardiness/ resilience”

- Suzanne Kobasa (1979) → the Hardy Personality
- 3 characteristics of resilient people:
  1. Perceive stressor as a challenge / do not fear stressor
  2. Perceive stress as a normal, part & parcel of life events
  3. Highly committed in any given situation
- Three key beliefs that helped turn adversity into an advantage

- Hardiness is a personality construct
- consisting of the three interrelated components of challenge, control and commitment,
- suggested as a stress resilience factor (Kobasa, 1979).
• The Commitment attitude led them to strive to be involved in ongoing events, rather than feeling isolated.
• The Control attitude led them to struggle and try to influence outcomes, rather than lapse into passivity and powerlessness.
• The Challenge attitude led them to view stress changes, whether positive or negative, as opportunities for new learning.

Characteristics of “stress-resistant” individuals

• Flanerry, 1990
• 8 characteristics of a resilient person
  • Make own decision
  • Focus on tasks & responsibilities
  • Control diet (not much caffeine/nicotine intake)
  • Exercise
  • Humourous
  • Religious (have faith)

4. Environmental Factors
   a) Time and Body Rhythms

   • Everything work on time basis, solar time, light time, seasonal time, metabolic time, etc.
   • Socially imposed environment such as around the clock policeman, war, medical attention, shift job, certain development tasks for certain age etc
• The body cannot make necessary adjustment in the short time usually allowed.

• A night worker’s body temperature cycle would be expected to be opposite that of a day workers, unless the night shift schedule is maintained for several weeks.

• Time disturbance & body biorhythm: nightshift workers suffer from disturbance in resting time; often accidents occur around 2-4 a.m.

• Jet lag

b. Eating & drinking habits

• Unhealthy, imbalance diet (high sugar, high salt = high anxiety; under/malnourish; Vit C & B needed for nerve functions & endocrine esp during GAS
• Substance abuse – drugs & alcohols for temporary relief; caffeine /smoking etc
• Over eating

c. Addictions / anxiety may lead to sleep disturbance

d. Noise may increase heart rate, blood pressure, GAS continues

e. Change of weather = too hot, to cold, hays, etc ➔ stress
Marriage Humour

• **Women are unpredictable. Before marriage, she expects a man, after marriage she suspects him, and after death she respects him.**

• **When a man opens the door of his car for his wife, you can be sure of one thing: either the car is new or the wife.**

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5. Social support

• Material & psychological resources that can be obtained from others in one's social support network

• Examples?

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Social support

• Social support = the existence of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value, & love us.

• A broad definition: "resources provided by others" *(Cohen & Syme, 1985)*
Other definitions

• Gottlieb (1983) - interpersonal coping resources. Being supportive has less to do with the 'kinds' of support provided and more to do with how people interact with and relate to one another
• Verbal & nonverbal information, nasihat, material resources given by others (Gottlieb, 1983)
• The helping functions done by family members, friends & people who know us when we are in need / stress (Thoits, 1986)

Structural versus functional social support

• The structural: "how many friends, colleagues, family relationships" you have (WHO, HOW MANY)
• The functional aspect would refer to what do they do (WHAT)
• In essence you can have lots of friends but not interact with them & this may not be very useful

Structural versus functional SS

• A functional view of social support argues that there are specific types of support that are beneficial in specific types of situations.
• Two types of support can be highlighted: emotional and practical.
• Emotional support refers to the feeling of being loved, cared for and esteemed by others,
• Instrumental support refers to the assistance with tasks.
Received versus perceived support

- The exchange of supportive behaviours is not sufficient in itself to improve the recipients emotional well-being.
- He or she has to feel supported. Thus, the actual support received cannot be objectively observed and counted; rather the recipient has to be asked how it was perceived. (subjective evaluation)

Social/family factors that may help:

- Positive thinking
- High self-esteem
- Open communication & supportive
- Ability to adapt
- Informal social support
- Extended family
- Community resources
- Socioeconomic / demographic factors

Types of Social Support (House, 1981)

- Emotional Support
  - Emotional support are actions that show esteem, affect, trust, concern & listening
  - denotes what is done to facilitate the person's capacity for emotion-focused coping
- Instrumental Support
  - Material support are actions such as doing something or giving time & energy
  - denotes what is done to enhance the person's capacity for problem-focused coping
- Informational Support
  - denotes advice, guidance and other such means of backing up both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping
- Appraisal/maktumbalas kendiri
  - Appraisal support are honest personal feedback from others
### Pearson (1982) 12 types:

1. Love & care (love, caring, physical care)
2. Encouragement (words & behaviour that are encouraging, boost confident level)
3. Modelling (showing examples to solve problems)
4. Help in managing tasks (i.e. care for a sick child, transportation etc)
5. Friendship (companion, someone to talk to)
6. Unconditional respect (acceptance, respect, someone who understands, trustworthy)
7. Provide advices, suggestions, guidance
8. Comforting (soothing, comforting)
9. Giving material help (provide, lend)
10. Informative (provide info, knowledge, skills to manage problems)
11. Honest (being honest in informing you of the situation/progress)
12. Backup (backing your rights, opinion, be the middle person etc.)

### Research findings:

- Social support influence health of the victim (Weiten, 1994. pg.88)
- Gore (1978) = studied 100 men (head of households) who lost their jobs following a factory shut down
- He found that, those who receive high support from their wives, friends & relatives are i) less frustrated & ii) not showing symptoms of diseases
Findings

• Jemmoit & Magloire (1988) found that college students who receive high SS have an antibody that is much higher than those who get low SS

• Relevant SS is highly related with the stressor (listening & emotional support are more relevant than advising a grieving widow to “get well soon” (Auerbach, 1998)

• The amount of actual SS is not as important as the perceptions of the receiver towards the support (satisfaction, continuity, “boleh diharapkan”) (Auerbach, 1998)

• Besides SS, the stressed person must actively involve in the problem solving efforts
  • If not, the relief is temporary, he will become more dependent
Additional notes:

- The willingness of others to provide SS is also influenced by the personality of the receiver
- Extrovert, > sociable & often being helpful are > easier to obtain SS
- Gender factor: women can give & get > SS

Qs:

- When you are having problems, who would help?
- What kind of help?
- How do they help
- What are other things that are needed?
- Are you satisfied with the help/support that you received?

6. Other demands & Expectations

- Multiple stressors / demands / expectations complicate the stress appraisal & coping processes