

# Health Psychology

## 1- Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine

**Health Psychology** establishes/maintains health and prevent/treat illness. (influences)

**Behavioral Medicine** focuses on developing/integrating behavioral and biomedical knowledge to promote health and reduce illness. (factors)

-> Both seek for *Health Promotion* (lifestyle to optimize health) & *Public Health* (health and diseases in large populations)

**Biopsychosocial Model:** Biological, Psychological and Social factors in health too.

**R**elationship between the Mind and the Body, They are deeply connected.

The mind can affect the body, as well as the body can affect the mind. ( good physical health reflects good feelings, and negative thoughts reflects fatigue etc.)



## 2- Making Positive Life Changes

**Health behaviors** = practices that have an impact on physical well-being (coping with stress, exercising, safe sex...)

**T**heoretical Model of Change, where changing behavior needs a change of attitude:

- **Theory of reasoned action** = effective change requires:
  - specific intention about their behavior
  - positive attitude about the new behavior
  - favoring the new behavior by their social group
- **Theory of planned behavior** = above + person's perception of control over the outcome,

Critics of these theories -> Only rational process (avoiding regret can be a strong motive too).

**S**tages of Change Model = five steps process by which individuals give up bad habits and adopt healthier life:

- Pre-contemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation/determination
- Action/Willpower
- Maintenance (transcendence = change the lifestyle accordingly)

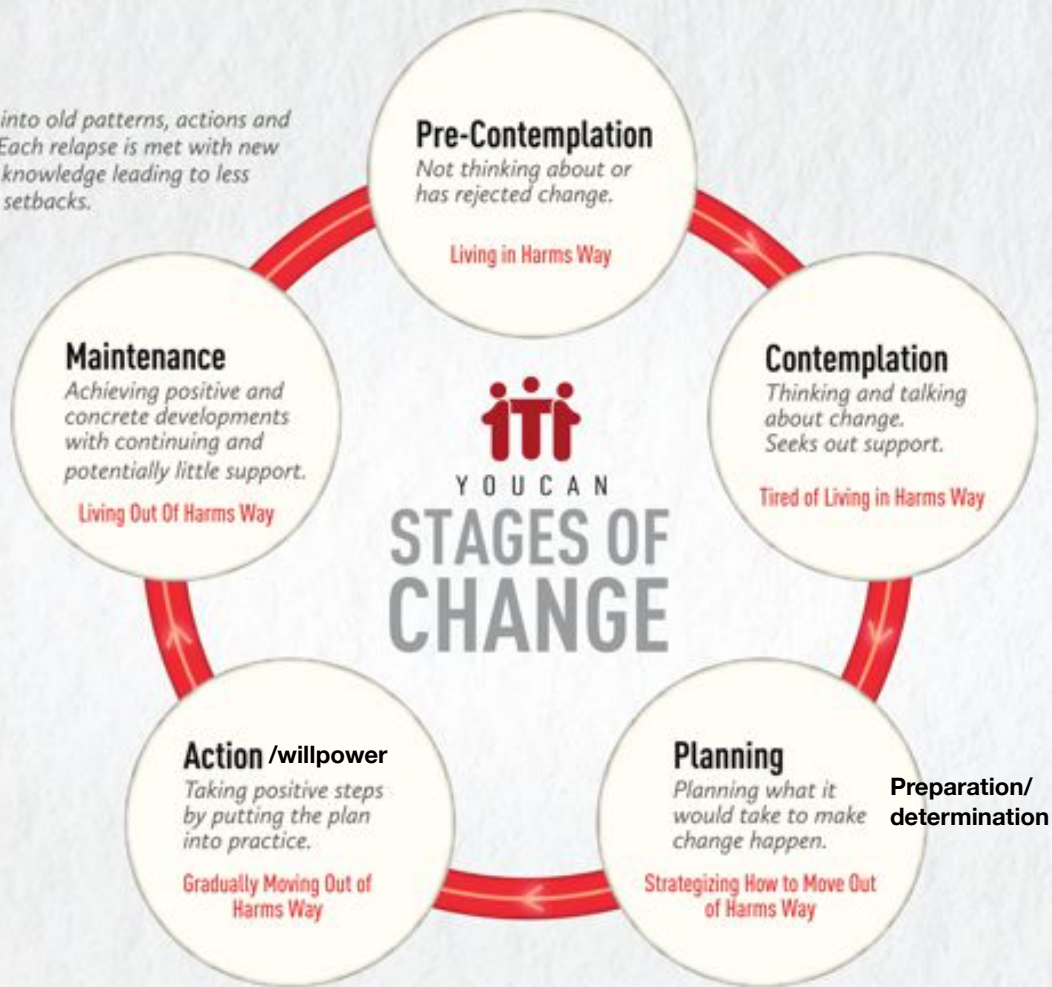
Relapse is normal and does occur, we learn from our mistakes.

Critics: Some people might be in two stages at a time.

+ Refers more to attitudes than behavior changes.

## Relapse

Falling back into old patterns, actions and behaviours. Each relapse is met with new insights and knowledge leading to less frequency in setbacks.



Adapted from Prochaska & DiClemente and Ignacio Pacheco | YOU CAN 2012

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### 3- Resources for Effective Life Change

The tools that can help us achieve effective change:

#### **M**otivation:

- Change is the most effective when we do it for ourselves.
- **Implementation Intentions** = specific strategies for dealing with challenges of the change process, motivate people more and help them.
- Short term goals + monitoring progress does motivate and help people too.

#### **S**ocial Relationships:

- Makes a difference through **social support** = information and feedback from others showing love, caring, understanding etc.
- Social support has three types of benefits:
  - *Tangible assistance* = Providing goods and service in some situations.
  - *Information* = Recommend actions and plan to help them coping more successfully.
  - *Emotional support* = Showing love and caring
- Giving support is also beneficial.

#### **R**eligious Faith:

- Promote moderation and frown excess.
- Warmer community (support)
- Sense of purpose and meaning in life

## 4- Toward a Healthier Mind (& Body): Controlling Stress

### Stress and its Stages:

- Stress = individual's response to environmental stressors (usually implying significant changes).
- Hans Selye, founder of stress research, any stimuli has the same stress symptoms:
  - loss of appetite
  - muscular weaknesses
  - decreased interest in the world
- **General Adaption Syndrome (GAS)** = common effect of stressful demands on the body, consisting of 3 stages respectively in order:
  - **Alarm** stage = stage of shock, very weak against illness and stress quick release of hormones.
  - **Resistance** stage = Hormones to defend the body (those of inflammation too)
  - **Exhaustion** stage = state of exhaustion, vulnerability to disease, heart attack or death might increase.
- **Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA axis)**, (plays the greatest role in GAS) = interactions among the hypothalamus, the pituitary and adrenal glands that regulate various body processes and controls reactions to stressful events. (along acute stress -> cortisol hormone V/S chronic stress -> activation of the HPA axis can remain activated over the long haul).

### Stress and the Immune System:

- **Psychoneuroimmunology** = discuss the link between the immune system and stress.
- Stress can influence the immune system, by weakening it...
- Stress causes disease because: low efficiency of the immune system, stress promotes some disease, activates some dormant viruses.
- Sheldon Cohen, the greater the stress the greater the risk of having a disease.

### Stress and Cardiovascular disease:

Stress increases the risk for cardiovascular disease due to adrenaline, blood clots...  
But also due to stress-related behavior like overeating, smoking...

### Stress and Cancer:

With poor health due to stress, cancer risk increases (low NK<sup>1</sup>-cell activity)

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<sup>1</sup>Natural Killer, not abundant in patients with cancer

**C**oping with stress can be done in 2 types:

- **Problem-focused coping** = coping strategy of facing the troubles and trying to solve them.
- **Emotion-focused coping** = coping strategy of managing your own emotional reaction (avoiding the source of stress, denying it, refer to religion like praying for it...)
- The first one usually works best.

**S**trategies for Successful Coping:

- Sense of personal control, healthy immune system, personal resources, and positive emotions.
- Optimism plays a great role.
- **Hardiness** = Coping with stress when considering it a challenge rather than stress.

**Stress Management Program** = Teach individuals how to develop skills for coping with stress, and putting them into real-life use.

## 5- Toward a Healthier Body (& Mind): Behave as if your Life depends upon it

### Becoming Physically Active:

- Increases your life expectancy
- Reduces cardiovascular problems and metabolic diseases like diabetes
- Reduces anxiety
- Improves cognition skills...

-> Why? Telomeres lose part of their chromosome with time (**Biological clock**), physical activity preserve the telomere length.

-> Environmental factors that encourage physical activity are also associated with health and wellness.

-> 30 minutes of Moderate exercise daily, is convenient for adults.

### Eating Right:

- = Healthy Food, balanced meal, nutrition plan.
- Not only to lose weight.
- Provides more energy, lower blood pressure, lessen the risk of cancer and tooth decay.
- **Social proof Heuristics** = informing what people (other than us) would do in similar circumstances.
  - > If it is applied as the majority would go for healthy options, we would too. (bias can be beneficial sometimes)



### Quitting Smoking:

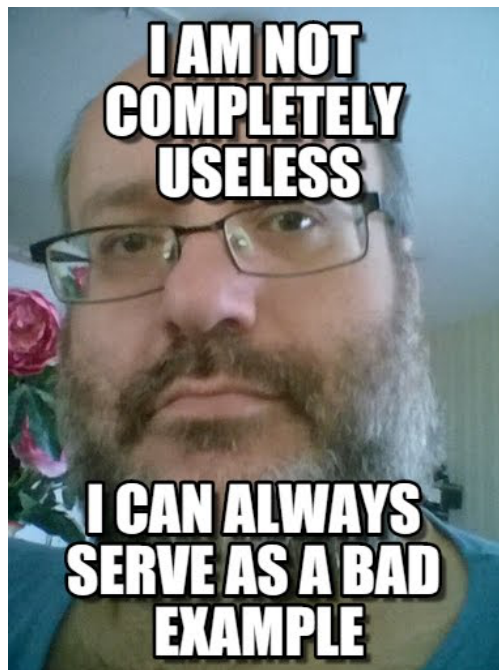
- Enormous health benefits, specially decreasing the risk of fatal lung cancer.
- How? Three common methods:
  - **Going Cold Turkey** = They simply stop (easier for lighter smokers).
  - **Using a Substitute Source of Nicotine**
  - **Seeking Therapeutic Help**
- > Combination of these methods is the best strategy.

## 6- Psychology and your Good Life

### BASIC BULLSHIT GOODBYE

-> All psychological areas converge to Health concerns.

-> 'Placing even the most ordinary moment in the framework of a human life renders it remarkably complex and undeniably fascinating.'



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