

## ANXIETY AND COPING STRATEGIES

**Are we in an age on anxiety?** – A 2000 study says so; children reported higher levels of anxiety

- ☞ Some experiences with anxiety come from unconscious conflicts; neo-Freudians emphasized on CULTURAL and INTERPERSONAL role in the experience more

Ex: Sullivan would claim that anxiety could be reduced by harnessing a strong interpersonal bond with other people = *interpersonal security*

### **Types of Coping Strategies**

\*\*\*our coping strategies can be divided into two groups

#### *Repression – sensitization dimension*

- ☞ the personality dimension identified by current researchers
- ☞ our coping strategies could be placed within this scale

#### *Repression*

- ☞ people try to avoid the anxiety as much or as long as possible
- ☞ no solution is really being sought

EX: “worrying about it will do you no good” or “try to think of something else to take your mind off it”

#### *Sensitizers*

- ☞ this is when people deal with the stressful situation by finding out as much as possible, as soon as possible, and thereby put themselves in a position to take the most effective action
- ☞ preparing one’s self

EX: when collecting as much information about an upcoming anxiety invoking situation

### **Coping Tactics that we also employ**

If tensions are high about an upcoming exam, how would you reduce your anxiety?

#### *Active Coping Strategies*

- ☞ this is when people take action to improve the situation

EX: doing poorly in school results in playing an active role to perform better = you study; being late

- ☞ thinking about the situation in an effort to make things better

EX: after a break up, you think that you would have been better off in the long run or why things went wrong and how you can use this information in the next relationship

### *Avoidance Coping Strategies*

- ☞ dealing with our anxiety by keeping the issue out of our awareness

EX: not thinking about the person causing our anxiety (GF or BF); not thinking about the foreseen anxiety inducing situation and JUST WAITING FOR IT TO HAPPEN

**Strategies categorized depending on whether the person is trying to deal with it or not** (the first categorization divides the strategies according to whether the person is PLAYING AN ACTIVE role in coping or not)

### *Problem Focused Strategies*

- ☞ directed at taking care of the problem and thereby overcoming the anxiety
- ☞ the simple attempt of trying to find a solution to a problem actually makes the person feel better already

EX: financial problems (getting fired) = look for another job, or find ways to lower expenses

### *Emotion Focused Strategies*

- ☞ designed to reduce the emotional distress that accompanies the problem
- ☞ dealing with the problem by “seeing the situation in a different light”; looking for some positive aspects about the negative situation

EX: getting fired = thinking that this would allow one more time for family or to reflect upon the career path to take

Tell the class how you would usually cope with your anxiety

### NOTES

- ☞ whatever strategy we employ to reduce our anxiety, it is still BETTER than NOT to USE ANY strategy at all; denial or repression is still better for us (our ego's) than to LET the ANXIOUS feeling LINGER in our system and THOUGHTS
- ☞ for one study alone, they gave 27 different coping strategies; THERE ARE A LOT, it's just a matter of choosing which one will work BEST for us, and the current situation we are in
- ☞ NOT ALL STRATEGIES WORK EFFECTIVELY; ACTIVE strategies are more effecting in coping with stressors than AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES – at least, a solution is being sought
- ☞ Avoidance strategies may help, but only in the short-run

EX: ignoring relationship problems for a couple of days while you study for your finals

- ☞ The problem with this is that the issue is NEVER really RESOLVED, it only buys you TIME before you have to eventually deal with the problem

EX: Drinking to forget a problem = alcoholics

- ☞ Problem-focused strategies are often more effective than emotional-focused strategies

**Why do you think so?** – the solution is also not sought

- ☞ Some people employ emotion-focused strategies to ALLEVIATE the feeling of ANXIETY or the immediate effect of the stressor on one's self, but just the same, it does NOT provide a long term SOLUTION to the problem

## PSYCHOANALYTIC CONCEPTS AND AGGRESSION

- ☞ Frustration and aggression as a topic for discussion has stirred up most of the researcher being conducted up to date

### *Freud's View*

**What is Freud's explanation for our aggression?**

- ☞ It is the result of FRUSTRATED LIBIDO; energy that would not be let out by our superego, thereby being DISPLACED as aggression to our cohorts and others
- ☞ Explained this through his concept of THANATOS; ego would not let us self-destruct, and so the instinct is turned outward to other people or things

### *Frustration-aggression Hypothesis*

- ☞ Aggression is always a CONSEQUENCE of frustration
- ☞ Aggression ceases when we experience CATHARSIS (release of tension)
- ☞ Also supposed that frustration that is not manifested as aggression to the cause can also be indirectly expressed to other people or things (e.g. displacement, sublimation)

## RECENT STUDIES ON FRUSTRATION AND AGGRESSION

- ☞ Increased stressors which cause frustration (i.e. unemployment, social and political conditions such as war, etc.) INCREASE the LIKELIHOOD that people would DISPLAY aggressive ACTS such as domestic violence
- ☞ NATURALLY, frustrated people act more aggressively than non-frustrated people
- ☞ People tend to get more frustrated when they are CLOSE TO A GOAL, thereby increasing the likelihood

that they would also act aggressively (e.g. cutting in line experiment)

- ☞ More recent studies point out that it is not simply the frustration that predisposes one to aggress, but the UNPLEASANT feeling (e.g. heat, crowdedness and noise can increase the amount of aggressiveness of people)

EX: if failing in an exam does not really matter to you, then you would not feel as frustrated; no increased tendency to be aggressive

- ☞ These suggest that FRUSTRATION FACILITATES AGGRESSION only to the extent that it is perceived as UNPLEASANT – that's why we don't act aggressively every time we get frustrated
- ☞ Our THOUGHTS can also DETERMINE whether we would act AGGRESSIVELY towards our frustration or not (e.g. ROOMMATE driving away with our textbook with his KNOWLEDGE about it versus without his knowledge)

## DISPLACING AGGRESSION

- ☞ We usually DISPLACE our frustration to UNDERSERVING people because it is generally SAFER for us to do so, than to ATTACK the actual cause of our frustration with aggressive behavior (e.g. frustrated people gave more electric shocks to the cause of frustration as well as to strangers)

EX: feeling frustrated about you boss, you would not usually lash out on him directly

- ☞ When ALREADY FRUSTRATED, we are MORE LIKELY to displace AGGRESSION when we ENCOUNTER a minor source of ANNOYANCE, which we would USUALLY IGNORE or tolerate
- ☞ The common knowledge that to LET OFF STEAM to release tension has been proven INEFFECTIVE by more recent studies; behavior gets REINFORCED and there is a tendency to lead to a kind of *DISINHIBITION* – getting used to being aggressive

## ATTACHMENT STYLE AND ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

- ☞ PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS has an effect on the QUALITY of adult relationships

## OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AND ATTACHMENT THEORY

### **Object Relations Theory**

- ☞ Emphasis on early childhood experiences; infant RELATIONSHIP with SIGNIFICANT people
- ☞ Child develops an unconscious representation of significant objects in the immediate environment

EX: family is supposed to be loving and caring, stranger usually do not care; males as more physically capable, etc..

- ☞ The ways a child INTERNALIZES the mental representation of the significant person, serves as a basis for how the child thinks of others when he or she enters into future relationships

## **Attachment Theory**

### **Attachment Styles:**

#### *Secure Attachment*

- ☞ Attentive and responsive mothers
- ☞ Infants understand that their mothers are caring, understanding and responsive, EVEN WHEN NOT PHYSICALLY PRESENT
- ☞ They are happy and self-confident

#### *Anxious-ambivalent Attachment*

- ☞ relationships (opposite) result in insecure feelings of the child; they are anxious when mother is not present (crying, etc...) and are difficult to calm by others; afraid of unfamiliar situations

#### *Avoidant Attachment*

- ☞ relationships are the result of non-responsiveness of mother
- ☞ child develops ambivalence to presence of mother, and does not react to her leaving

### **How might Erikson explain this?**

## ATTACHMENT STYLES AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

### Secure Attachments Styles

- ☞ secure adults had a long history of stable and satisfying relationships
- ☞ people with secure attachment styles regarded their current relationship as having a great deal of love, commitment, and trust
- ☞ they are also able to accept their partners personal faults more easily
- ☞ they are also more ready to ask for and more receptive of help when they most need it
- ☞ communication is much more easier between couples
- ☞ they also offer more support to their partners when they need it