

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH PROMOTION

Overview of principals and role of rehabilitation specialists

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Abstract :

H *health promotion approach is utilized to address the prevention , management and early intervention for stress management and also to promote positive mental and psychological health. Stress affects everyone and must be managed effectively to reduce its chronic and deleterious effects This study consists of two sections : in first section the principals of health promotion in different human existence levels , prevention of disease related to stress , the effect of stress on human well-being , and stress management were discussed. In second section the role of rehabilitation specialists (Medical Technologist , nurses , occupational therapists , physiotherapists , respiratory therapists , and social workers) in stress management were counted .*

Keywords:

Stress, stress management, health, health promotion, rehabilitation specialist

A part of the challenges of daily life are hassles , irritants , stressors , life events and changes . A health promotion approach is utilized to address the prevention, management and early intervention for stress management and also to promote positive mental and psychological health (Paula , 1994) . Health promotion is the science and art of helping people to change their lifestyle in order to achieve the optimal health level , reestablishing the harmony of each of the human existence levels (Gorin , 1998) . The public health approach to mental health complements clinical approaches . The public health perspective to mental health is based on a population and community - based approach ; these focus on the health of a population and are broader in scope than a clinical model of diagnosis and treatment and include epidemiology , health promotion , disease prevention and access to services .

Public Health competencies for providing essential public health services should emphasize skills that promote mental health of communities and populations (Walker, 2001)

Health promotion in different human existence levels :

On the physical level, represented by the human body, harmony and balance can be achieved by doing regularly physical exercises , having a balanced nutrition , by avoiding excesses in eating habits and avoiding the consume of dangerous substances .

On the emotional level balance is achieved through stress management and assistance during the emotional crises .

On the social level (also part of the emotional level) harmony is achieved by building and maintaining a proper support network. This network is composed from friends , family members , colleagues or other members from various communities that can help you during difficult moments

On the intellectual level (the concrete mental level) balance is established by having a general education and a continuous professional evolution , which is often accompanied by a defined , fulfilling and continuously developing career. On the intuitive/creative level (intuitive mental plan) by re-establishing and continuing development of creativity and capacity of anticipation of future events .

On the inner level balance can be attained through the recovery and future development of the self-esteem that leads to the capacity of dreaming and of transforming those dreams in reality . These projects will bring balance to our inner level if they will be directed to a universal good cause .

On a spiritual level , harmony will be reached by the presence of sentiments of love , approval and hope along with charity actions directed to helping every body around us (AHA & ACS 1996) .

Prevention of disease and stress:

The prevention (prophylaxis) can be done in different stages. In the primary stage (suitable for the healthy and unstressed individual) the illness can be prevented before any unhealthy signs appear , the strategy consists of promotion of health and preventing of getting hurt . In the secondary stage (when a person reacts to a stressing event) , it concentrates on the reestablishing health when physiological symptoms that occur before losing the health state or just after the beginning of the illness process. In the third stage (or the resistance to stress stage) the recovery of the persons which are already experiencing the resistance to stress stage is focused. Resistance to stress is characterized by the fading of the chronic stress symptoms as a response to a strong will that cause various hormones to be released in order to mask the stress responses . The purpose of the recovery is to bring the person in the second (reaction to stress) and then first category (Optimal health state) . This can be achieved through Stress management. In the fourth stage (stress induced breakdown) the consequences of the clinical effects which already appeared is limited . This is achieved through self help and self care programs.

Influence of stress on well being :

Stress is a complex , dynamic process of interaction between a person and his or her life . It is the way we react physically , mentally , and emotionally to the various conditions , changes , and demands of life . People react differently to Stress . How you react depends on your strategies for coping with Stress , your previous experience with

Stress , your genetic makeup , and your level of social support and how you view your social support . The greatest factor , however , is how you perceive Stress and control its outcome . What is Stressful to one person may not affect another . Stress can result from a string of specific events , the general conditions in your life , life cycle transitions and developmental stages, or conflict with your belief system .

The influence of stress on physical and psychological well being is well documented . In fact , estimates are that 50 to 80 percent of all physical disorders have psychosomatic or stress related origins (Rice , 1992) . The signs of Stress can be physical or mental . Some people call this "storing" Stress in the body (physical) or in the mind (mental) . Common physical symptoms of Stress include : Rapid heartbeat , Headache , Stiff neck and/or tight shoulders , Backache , Rapid breathing , Sweating and sweaty palms , Upset stomach , nausea , or diarrhea. Also it may notice signs of Stress in thinking , behavior , or mood. A person may become irritable and intolerant of even minor disturbances , feel irritated or frustrated , lose his/her temper more often , and yell at others for no reason , feel jumpy or exhausted all the time , find it hard to concentrate or focus on tasks , worry too much about insignificant things , doubt his/her ability to do things , imagine negative , worrisome , or terrifying scenes , and finally feels he/she is missing opportunities because he/she cannot act quickly.

Stress Management :

Stress is a fact of everyday - a fact which nobody can deny it . Any change in life demands adaptation. Most people think of

all stressful occurrences as being negative in nature (dis-stress) , such as physical or psychological injury , illness , or the death of a loved one. However , stress can also be positive in nature. For example , falling in love , changing jobs , getting a new home or a promotion are stressful situations , which , if properly managed , are positive and motivating (Davis, 2000) . Stress management refers to various efforts used to control and reduce the tension that occurs in these situations . Stress management involves making emotional and physical changes . The degree of stress and the desire to make the changes will determine the level of change that will take place. Stress management refers to various efforts used to control and reduce the tension that occurs in these situations (Gordon , 2001) .

The role of specialists in Stress Management :

(1) Medical Technologist

-- Perform laboratory testing that identifies underlying causes of stress .

Certain endocrine disorders cause hormone abnormalities that may result in states of depression or extreme anxiety . For example , many with thyroid disease (hypothyroidism) suffer from depression . A disease that affects the adrenal gland (pheochromocytoma) results in increased levels of catecholamines (adrenalin) causing feelings of high anxiety and stress. In each of these disorders , laboratory testing is used for screening , diagnosis and monitoring the treatment of the underlying disease (Rice, 2000) .

-- Perform laboratory testing for stress-related disorders .

(2) Nursing Role

Nurses participate in health promotion and disease prevention activities as a part of usual nursing activities. Those activities are holistic in nature , rather than focusing on a specific body part or function . Since stress occurs across the life span , the goals of stress management depend upon the age and needs of the client and the knowledge and skills of the nurse. Clearly , stress management is a part of the nursing role in almost every setting. In order to work with clients to manage stress, all nurses would do the following :

1- Complete a nursing assessment in order to:

- a. Identify health assets and life style strengths.
- b. Identify health related beliefs.
- c. Identify health beliefs and behaviors that put the client at risk.

2- Determine with the client/and or family what they'd like to change to improve health. This is done by:

- a. Identifying health goals and related options for changing behaviors.
- b. Listing specific desired health and behavioral outcomes.
- c. Reiterating the benefits of change.

3- Develop a specific plan for change :

- a. In the case of stress management, this may include a broad range of activities . Most often , however , it focuses on three general areas :
 - I. Minimizing the frequency of stress inducing situations
 - II. Increasing resistance to stress
 - III. Counter - conditioning to avoid physiologic arousal. (Pender, 1996, P.239) .
- b. Minimizing the frequency of stress inducing situations may require that the client, family and sometimes the society itself make changes to the society. Excessive stimulation , work expectations and societal values all affect stress levels and may need to be moderated . Using specific approaches such as avoiding constant change , time blocking and other time management strategies may help.
- c. Increasing resistance to stress may be as straightforward as increasing exercise , or as complex and enhancing self-esteem and self-efficacy . Activities like developing alternative goals and building specific coping skills may also help.
- d. Finally , counter-conditioning most often includes progressive relaxation in a variety of forms.

- e. In all cases nurses must work with clients to develop plans that include mechanisms to maintain change.
- f. Perhaps most importantly, because nursing skills vary, nurses often refer clients to other health and wellness professionals as necessary.
- g. The plan should include:
 - I. A time frame for implementing the overall plan and each of its steps.
 - II. Some form of commitment to behavioral change. That may be a written agreement of contract with a health professional, and/or a self-contract.
 - III. Some specific measure of success.

4- Implement the plan in cooperation with the client .

5- Periodically revise the plan , based on a schedule for periodic review .

6- Evaluate the outcomes with the client , using the measures of success .

(3) Role of Occupational Therapy

Teach coping skills - a psycho-educational approach is the basis for teaching skills needed for coping with life stressors (McKenzie , 1997) .

May include identifying problem solving strategies to deal with stressful situations Identify healthy ways to cope with anxiety such as relaxation, fun activities , ways to expend energy .

Unique Contributions of OT

Relate coping to the occupational context
 Use active learning via meaningful activities to gain skills, versus didactic methods
 Focus on stress management as a feature of adaptive assumption of life roles

Examples of Psycho-educational OT in Stress Management

Use of assessment tools to evaluate coping skills
 Education of clients : the mechanics of stress and effect on humans
 Identification of stressors and their impact
 Identification of the signs of stress
 Identification and application of strategies to manage stress
 Prescribe activities designed to "practice" coping skills

Therapeutic Applications

Prescription of occupation
 Facilitate healthy routines - balance of work, rest and play
 Establish health habits of sleep, exercise , diet
 Identify support systems
 Identify healthy fun and leisure activities
 Explore relaxation strategies
 Engage in productive occupations
 Provide positive avenues for emotional expression

(4) Role of Physical Therapy

The physical therapist is able to :
Diagnose and manage movement dysfunction and enhance physical and functional abilities .

Restore , maintain , and promote not only optimal physical function but optimal wellness and fitness and optimal quality of life as it relates to movement and health .

Prevent the onset , symptoms , and progression of impairments , functional limitations , and disabilities that may result from diseases , disorders , conditions , or injuries.

In the realm of patient/client management all levels of prevention can be addressed by the physical therapist - primary prevention, secondary prevention , and tertiary prevention . Screenings are conducted to determine the need for each level of prevention. These may include identification of lifestyle factors that could include amount of exercise , stress , and weight problems that may lead to increased risk for serious health problems . The management is patient/client specific and might include any of the following strategies separately or in combination . The goal is to develop a plan that the individual will be interested in and at the same time addresses the person's specific problems . This cadre of treatment approaches may be specific to neuromuscular , musculoskeletal , cardiovascular and pulmonary , and integumentary rehabilitation or habilitation, as well as prevention strategies . Any of these strategies can assist in the management of stress in an individual's life (Murray , 1997) .

Intervention strategies can include any of the following:

Therapeutic exercises such as stretching , strengthening , walking , jogging/running , bicycling, and/or swimming .

Teaching of movement strategies in order to conserve energy.

Relaxation exercises such as progressive relaxation , visualization , deep breathing , and biofeedback techniques .

Back schools , workplace redesign , postural training to prevent and manage low back pain .

Education about stress and recognizing possible stressors .

Broad-based consumer education and advocacy programs to prevent problems such as promoting helmets .

Play therapy for children .

Re-education of activities of daily living .

Ergonomic redesign , postural training to prevent job-related disabilities .

Gait training , balance and coordination exercises to reduce risk of falls .

(5) The Role of Respiratory Therapy in Stress Management

1-Areas in which Respiratory Care Practitioners are involved :

- a. Asthma-education programs ;
- b. Pulmonary-rehabilitation programs ;
- c. Smoking-cessation or nicotine intervention programs ;
- d. Home Care .

2- A practitioner facilitates an asthma-education program .

3- A practitioner facilitates/teaches smoking cessation classes .

Stress and depression lead to increased smoking. In these classes, the focus is on a "holistic approach" to better health and living. Relaxation/breathing strategies.

4- A practitioner participates/educates patients in pulmonary rehabilitation programs .

The vicious cycle of disease, reduced physical activity , and deconditioning and the resulting impact on patient helplessness and uncertainty . These factors will lead to increased stress , depression and suicide (Paula Fuller, 1994) .

(6) Social Work Role in Health Promotion & Stress Management

The unique contribution that social work can make to an understanding of stress and stress management lies primarily in its person-in-environment perspective . This perspective emphasizes that in order to understand an individual's problems , both their personal characteristics and the characteristics of their family, community , and the broader society within which they live must be considered .

Guided by this perspective , social work methods of treatment for individual problems , like anxiety or stress, are likely to vary from that of other professions , such as medicine or nursing . For instance , stress management would likely include both individually-focused stress reduction techniques as well as group/community focused approaches . Therefore , a stressed individual may be directed to seek both individual therapy and participate in community activities , such as joining a voluntary neighborhood association . A recent study (Rietschlin , 1998) demonstrates the stress-reducing effects of participation in voluntary associations . Such participation is particularly critical when the stressor lies within a person's community , such as in the case of an environmental hazard

because addressing such a stressor typically requires group organization, rather than individual effort .

Conclusion :

Stress affects everyone and must be managed effectively to reduce its chronic and deleterious effects . A preponderance of research indicates that stress management offers diverse interventions that promote healthy lifestyle changes . Effective stress management encompasses understanding the meaning of stress and its potential consequences , assessing personal stress and appraisal systems, and developing a personalized self-renewal plan . Ultimately, successful stress management involves a willingness to change one's appraisal systems and mobilize resources and inner strengths that promote health and a sense of holistic well-being .

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