

The importance of social support on health

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{NAME} The Importance of Social Support on Health {INSTRUCTOR} {DATE}

Although social interaction is complex, some believe that it is vital to human health, both mentally and physically. The nature of social behavior is that many people find it hard to open their hearts and share their feelings and problems. However, social interaction where people can talk out their problems and feel accepted and understood is very beneficial to mental health. It is influenced by the number of interactions we have and the bonds we form within our social group.

The term social support has been defined in several ways. It consists of a number of different domains, including emotional support, appraisal and affirmation, informational assistance, intimacy, comfort, and physical affection. Researchers have documented a positive association between social support and physical health and social support has been implicated in the etiology of disease and the success of treatment following illness. (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage 2005). In theory, social relationships are linked to better health in several ways.

They may provide emotional benefits, which include intimacy, a sense of belonging, and self-esteem. They may also offer instrumental and material benefits by providing tangible assistance, such as money, services, goods, guidance, and advice (Kanaiaupuni, Donato, Thompson-Colon, & Stainback 2005). One of the earliest studies on social networks and health was Durkheim's (1951) work on the association between social isolation and suicide. Since then, many studies have documented the health-enhancing effects of social integration.

Social support and social engagement reduce mortality risks and disability, improve disease recovery rates and promote cognitive development and function (Berkman 2000). Biological and personality endowments may also affect social relationships, but social relationships have positive effects on health that are independent of these endowments. Although studies focus on healthful effects of social relationships, networks may also contain relationships that negatively affect mental and physical health (Beckerman 2000).

In this study the interest in exactly how social networks and social support affect Mexican health has gained considerable attention in recent years. Strong social ties are thought to help promote the health of Mexicans in the United States, who fare better than other groups with similar characteristics. However, most evidence on this point has been speculative. For example, a study on the health of immigrant children by the National Research Council reported, “ healthful behaviors may be reinforced by strong family bonds among immigrant groups and communities that sustain cultural orientations that lead to healthful behavior”.

Along these lines, many studies have pointed to cultural factors (such as strong ties among Mexican families) that may diminish the deleterious effects of poor socioeconomic status on health (Kanaiaupuni, Donato, Thompson-Colon, & Stainback 2005). The availability of social support is assumed to affect the individual in many ways, including his/her psychological state, cognition, behavior, and response to stress/ It has been shown that social support is beneficial for the cardiovascular, endocrine, and

to the physical, and that both main and stress- buffering effects exists (Stberg, & Lenartsson, 2007).

Researchers have documented a positive association between social support and physical health and social support has been implicated in the etiology of disease and the success of treatment following illness Essentially, people function best when they are living in socially supportive environments. However, although the literature illustrating a link between social support and physical health provides insights into the general benefits of social support are critical.

A study of first-year college students found that those who perceived less family support reported more physical symptoms than those who reported higher levels of family support after beginning college. 13 Similarly, a study assessing college students' stress, support, and health found that 3 support components, (1) structural support, (2) satisfaction with support, and (3) perceived support from family, predicted physical symptoms, with higher levels of social support related to fewer physical symptoms (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage 2005).

There are three contemporary theories which address the goals of social behavior and health. First, a biopsychosocial model which is an integrated perspective toward understanding consciousness, behavior, and social interaction. It assumes that any given behavior or mental process affects and is affected by dynamically interrelated biological, psychological, and social factors. The psychological aspect refers to the role that cognition and emotions play in any given psychological phenomenon—for example, the

effect of mood or beliefs and expectations on an individual's reactions to an event. Santrock, 2007). Next, is a behaviorist view where theories of learning emphasized the ways in which people might be predisposed, or conditioned, by their environments to behave in certain ways. (Coon, & Mitterer, 2010). In the United States, behaviorism became the dominant school of thought during the 1950s. Behaviorism was founded in the early 20th century by John B. Watson, and embraced and extended by Edward Thorndike, Clark L. Hull, Edward C. Tolman, and later B. F. Skinner. Classical conditioning was an early behaviorist model.

It posited that behavioral tendencies are determined by immediate associations between various environmental stimuli and the degree of pleasure or pain that follows. Behavioral patterns, then, were understood to consist of organisms' conditioned responses to the stimuli in their environment. The stimuli were held to exert influence in proportion to their prior repetition or to the previous intensity of their associated pain or pleasure. Much research consisted of laboratory-based animal experimentation, which was increasing in popularity as physiology grew more sophisticated (Kuhn, 2008).

Skinner behaviorist and would state that classical conditioning, could condition society to depend on social networks to support better health. Everything we do is a behavior so why not condition us to depend on others (Schlinger, 2008). Lastly the humanistic view where Maslow created a visual aid to explain his theory. The Hierarchy of Needs, is a pyramid depicting the levels of human needs, psychological and physical. When a human being ascends the steps of the pyramid he reaches self-actualization.

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At the bottom of the pyramid are the “ Basic needs or Physiological needs” of a human being, food and water and sex. The next level is “ Safety Needs: Security, Order, and Stability. ” These two steps are important to the physical survival of the person. Once individuals have basic nutrition, shelter and safety, they attempt to accomplish more. The third level of need is “ Love and Belonging,” which are psychological needs; when individuals have taken care of themselves physically, they are ready to share themselves with others.

The fourth level is achieved when one feel comfortable with what they have accomplished. This is the “ Esteem” level, the level of success and status (from self and others). The top of the pyramid, “ Need for Self-actualization,” occurs when individuals reach a state of harmony and understanding. (Santrock, 1995). Maslow argued, the way in which essential needs are fulfilled is just as important as the needs themselves. These define the human experience. To the extent a person finds cooperative social fulfillment, he establishes meaningful relationships with other people and the larger world.

Beyond the routine of needs fulfillment, Maslow envisioned moments of extraordinary experience, known as peak experiences, which are profound moments of love, understanding, happiness, or rapture, during which a person feels more whole, alive, self-sufficient and yet a part of the world, more aware of truth, justice, harmony, goodness, and so on. Self-actualizing people have many such peak experiences (Santrok, 1995). Once such experiences could support the theory that a good social foundation can lead to good health. References: Abbott, S. , (2009).

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