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Segment 1

Gender Roles

(Length: 3:45)

DESCRIPTION

This segment illustrates the role that gender roles and stereotypes play in our lives. The segment follows a mountaineering team that is attempting to climb Mount Logan in northern Canada. The team leader is reluctant to put a woman in the lead position climbing the mountain. The woman discusses not wanting to question the leader, but at the same time she clearly feels qualified to assume that position. The segment then switches to the text authors, the Hockenburys, who discuss how gender roles and stereotypes influence our expectations of our own and others’ behavior. They discuss the notion of a “typical” male or female, and how, based on gender, we make inferences about peoples’ personalities.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Different views on the issues of gender, gender roles, and gender stereotypes are examined. Using the example of a mountaineering expedition, role division on the basis of gender is analyzed. Gender roles and stereotypes are discussed in terms of how we expect men and women to behave and how those expectations evolve throughout one’s life. Views of the male team leader, a female team member, and several psychologists are offered.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

The segment discusses both biological and social factors in determining gender roles. To what extent do you feel that gender differences are Biological? Psychological? Social?

If the team leader did in fact consider gender in his assignment of roles, how would role division occur for an all-female or all-male climbing team? Are his considerations that he believes to be based on gender actually based on physical or psychological characteristics of individual team members?
Segment 2

Group Decision-Making

(Length: 7:27)

DESCRIPTION

This segment examines group factors in decision-making. We follow an expedition team attempting to climb Mount Logan. After a considerable effort that tired some of the group members more than others, the team of ten climbers has to decide whether to try for the summit, or to retreat from the mountain. The team leader initially decides that the group must turn back. However, four of the members are unhappy with this decision and are able to convince him to allow them to continue as a sub-group while the rest turn back. The members' ability to influence their leader is an example of a successful group interaction, as evidenced by their high morale after their decision to continue. Following the split, the group that carried on is also unable to reach the summit. They discuss the reasons for their decision to turn back, but it is clear that they feel better about their attempt to reach the summit than they would have had they not been allowed to continue.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Social psychologists in particular are interested in how groups of people arrive at decisions. One expert discusses the importance of obedience and respect for a leader in a tightly-knit group. Interestingly, in this segment we see an example of a successful interaction in which, while there was a commitment to obedience, consultative decision making ultimately won out. For this to take place, a certain degree of disobedience was required, and led to decisions that gave all team members a sense of success. The segment shows that we learn from challenges whether we “succeed” or not.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Both large, societal influences and smaller, more intimate social influences on our behavior and decision-making are discussed in this segment. Which do you think have a greater influence on your day-to-day behavior?

Why do you think that the second group of four felt so good about their experience, despite their “failure” to reach the summit? Do you think they would have felt this way had they turned back initially when their group leader recommended it?
Segment 3

Experimental Design

(Length: 7:24)

DESCRIPTION

Using the hypothesis “does playing violent video games lead to aggressive behavior” this segment illustrates the application of the experimental method. The experimental method has three main components: manipulation of variables, the use of control groups, and random assignment. More specifically, the segment explains the two types of variables involved in experimental design. The independent variable is that which the experimenter manipulates. In this case the independent variable was whether the video game that the participants play is violent or non-violent. The dependent variable is what the experimenter measures. In the illustrated study, the principle dependent variable was aggression as measure by the level of noise subjects used to punish another (fictional) player. Random assignment refers to the importance of each participant having an equal chance of being assigned to the experimental or control group. Random assignment is one tool used to ensure that differences do not exist between the experimental and control group other than those manipulated by the experimenter (the independent variable). Subsequent to the experiment, the data were analyzed. Participants who played the violent video game (those in the experimental group) were indeed more likely to respond aggressively than were those who had played a non-violent video game (those in the control group).

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The experimental method is the one research technique that allows for causal inferences. Other methods, such as case studies, surveys, naturalistic observation and correlational designs all provide useful information in the generation of hypotheses. Only the experiment, however, can truly demonstrate cause and effect. It should be noted that the experimental design is not without its drawbacks. The artificiality created by the carefully controlled environments may limit the generalizability of the findings to real world situations.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Why is the experiment the only way to prove cause and effect?

Do people base conclusions on scientific evidence to the extent that they should? Do you think that there are other valid ways to understand and draw conclusions about the world? Are there questions that scientific investigation cannot address?
Segment 4

A Case Study of Brain Damage

(Length: 5:18)

DESCRIPTION

This segment begins with a mother discussing some abnormalities she detected in her baby at a very young age. She describes how he would hold his head to the left, and how he seemed to have no strength in his right hand and leg. Her doctor conducted a CAT scan that revealed that a large stroke had destroyed the majority of her son’s left hemisphere. She was obviously very worried about the consequences of such a severe brain abnormality. At the age of ten months, he began to experience seizures and related deterioration of his right hemisphere. In an attempt to halt the problem, medications were tried, however these met with no success, and doctors advised that the child was “on his way to being institutionalized.” As a result, and with great trepidation, his mother agreed to a left hemispherectomy, in which his entire left hemisphere was removed at age 2 1/2.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

While brain surgery is clearly a treatment of last choice, in this case it appeared to be the only option. Fortunately, though not leading to a full recovery, the boy’s functioning was significantly improved. An injury, and subsequent surgery such as this allows a rare opportunity to study the plasticity of brain function. That is, to what extent can another area of the human brain “take over” functions of areas that have been damaged.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

How well do you think the boy recovered? Do you think that his recovery would have been different had he been older when the surgery was conducted?

To what extent do you think that environmental stimulation such as that provided by his mother maximized his post-operative functioning?
Segment 5

Brain Plasticity

(Length: 6:21)

DESCRIPTION

This segment follows a young man who had a left hemispherectomy at the age of 2 1/2. His physical therapist discusses her daily treatment sessions with the boy and his remarkable progress. Since the left hemisphere processes language in the majority of individuals, one might expect that, without a left hemisphere, the boy would be unable to learn language. However, as is often the case, especially with younger children, his right hemisphere successfully took over language development. However, because language came to occupy an area of the right hemisphere normally devoted to spatial coordination and abstract thinking, the boy had impairments in both of these areas. For example, he cannot count money, and despite being a teenager in high school, is incapable of abstract reasoning.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The ability of the brain to recover from trauma depends upon a number of variables. Being young, and being provided with an enriched environment are particularly important factors that contribute to successful outcomes, as illustrated in this segment. However, there are clearly limitations to the extent of recovery possible following such a major brain insult. Perhaps it would be correct to say that the amount of damage sets an upper limit regarding possible recovery and that the extent of environmental stimulation determines how close one comes to a maximum possible recovery.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

What is the impact of enriched environments upon people without brain injuries? Do you think that a good environment is as important for a “normal” child?

At the end of the segment, a speech therapist remarks that the child’s language skills are actually a strength. Why do you think that language “took over” as a priority over other right hemisphere functions such as spatial coordination? Do you think that it is inherently a higher priority, or that it was related to the type of enriched environment the boy was provided?
Segment 6

Neurological Disorder

(Length: 7:33)

DESCRIPTION

In this segment we see the example of a woman who is developing a neurological disorder called dystonia. She describes the initial losses of function that she began to experience. Her daughters also describe a number of motor problems that she began to develop, including difficulty eating. She tells us that no medications were helpful in controlling her symptoms. As her symptoms began worsening to the point where she could no longer drive or sing, she describes being “desperate” to do something to help her condition. Her neurosurgeon points out that normal neurons are “us,” and that malfunction of these neurons changes not only a specific aspect of our lives, but changes who we are. A description of neurons, their components, and how they communicate is provided.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

While we take the normal functioning of our neurons for granted, there are in fact a number of neuronal illnesses that we may develop in the course of our lives. Better known amongst these are Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis and stroke. As the neurosurgeon in the segment notes, neuronal malfunction affects our very being.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Given what you have learned about the neuron, how do medications for neuronal problems work?

Multiple sclerosis is a result of degeneration of the myelin sheath surrounding the axon of the neuron. Why would such deterioration cause neurological problems?
Segment 7

Brain Surgery for Neurological Illness

(Length: 3:03)

DESCRIPTION

In this segment, we see a female patient who has had brain surgery to attempt to lessen the symptoms of a neurological illness, dystonia. Her neurosurgeon has implanted stimulators deep into her brain in an attempt to help her regain control of muscle function. Prior to surgery, her tremors and muscle rigidity were such that she could no longer control head movement, eating, driving, and singing. Devices implanted in her upper chest control the surgically implanted stimulators. In the segment, we see her neurosurgeon briefly turn each of these two stimulators off using an external magnet. The resulting return of her symptoms is dramatic. Her surgeon also discusses how the remarkable (and occasionally counterproductive) healing ability of the brain could potentially lead to her “recovering” her pre-operative muscular problems. To slow this process, her neurosurgeon has her husband turn off her stimulators while she sleeps. Her neurosurgeon is optimistic that this will slow the negative aspects of her brain’s healing process.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The integrity of our neurological system is essential for normal functioning. This system is far more vulnerable than we realize, as illustrated in this segment. Neurological illnesses, as well as certain chemicals, can lead to dramatic impairments in motor, cognitive, and emotional functioning.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Brain surgery, in this case, appears to have been largely successful, with the patient reporting a much higher quality of life post-operatively. How severe would your own symptoms have to be prior to you undergoing such a procedure?

Neurosurgery is very expensive. How should a health care system prioritize it compared to treatment for other illnesses?
Segment 8

Sensation and Perception

(Length: 4:29)

DESCRIPTION

In this segment we see the example of a food critic who uses her sensory and perceptual capabilities in order to review restaurants. We see her in a Mexican restaurant and are shown how her senses of taste and smell produce her perception about the quality of the food that she is eating. It is explained that smells are received not only through the nose, but also via the palate in the back of the mouth. Receptors on the tongue known as taste buds also contribute to our perception of the taste of the food. However, the process of perception is not as simple as receiving messages from receptors. Instead, perceiving involves integration, organization and interpretation of sensory inputs. That is, perceptions are constructed via a combination of sensory data and stored experiences. While early research focused on the differences between sensation and perception, many psychologists now see the two as inseparable. Our food critic is largely unaware of the large number of automatic processes that allow her to make her judgements.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Our ability to sense, perceive, and make judgements about our environment is essential for survival. Yet the majority of this process occurs outside of conscious awareness. As we see in this segment, certain individuals can achieve a very heightened ability to make discriminations. Food critics, wine tasters, and even air traffic controllers all rely on the complex process of practiced sensory discrimination in their work.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Discuss examples where perceptual errors occur. Are some of these purely sensory misreads? Are others the result of prior experience?

Do you think that any information that we receive is “uninterpreted”? Do two individuals ever “see” the same thing?
Segment 9

Circadian Rhythms

(Length: 3:58)

DESCRIPTION

In this segment we see the example of a firefighter and how his job demands interact with his nat-ural circadian rhythms. A psychologist discusses how shift workers may have difficulty getting enough restorative sleep. In particular, she notes that jobs where there is a possibility that one may be called into work during the night inhibit fully restful sleep. This is because the brain maintains a higher level of vigilance (in preparation for the possibility of needing to be alert) that interferes with normal sleep. This can then affect how one performs at the job. Text author Don Hockenbury notes that our circadian rhythms result in us having an efficient performance peak at 9–10 a.m. and a significant drop in performance at around 3 p.m. Thus, where possible, it makes sense to structure one’s day around these highs and lows. By way of example our firefighter describes his own day and how he attempts to structure it to suit his body’s natural highs and lows. However, unpre-dictable job demands prevent consistent application of this structure.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Circadian rhythms are a built-in component of our functioning. While one can “fight” these to some extent, prolonged ignoring of these rhythms leads to disruption of performance, and to exhaustion. Workplaces need to keep in mind the reality of the human circadian rhythms, for both the safety of their employees and for maximum efficiency.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Circadian rhythms are known to produce “highs and lows” of mental acuity that vary throughout the day. In what ways can you use this information to improve efficiency in your lives?

Does our North American “nine to five” model fit what we now know about circadian rhythms? Do other cultures handle this better?
Segment 10

Classical Conditioning

(Length: 3:09)

DESCRIPTION

This segment traces Pavlov’s accidental discovery and subsequent articulation of the principles of classical conditioning. Ivan Pavlov was a Russian physiologist who was studying the process of digestion. He was examining the salivary reactions that occurred when meat powder was introduced into a dog’s mouth. He was initially frustrated to note that, after a period of time, the dogs would salivate not only when the meat powder was introduced into their mouths, but also upon his entry into the room. He described this as the dogs becoming “psychic,” that is predicting the future arrival of food. Upon reflection, Pavlov realized that he had discovered an important phenomenon that he labelled classical conditioning. In his subsequent work he attempted to deliberately induce such a response using a neutral stimulus, a metronome. While dogs normally do not salivate to metronomes, when the metronome was paired with an unconditioned stimulus (meat powder) that produces an unconditioned response (salivation), the metronome came to produce the response of salivation on its own. Thus, the metronome was changed from a neutral stimulus to a conditioned stimulus by pairing it with the unconditioned stimulus of food. Similarly, the unconditioned response (salivation to meat powder) was changed to the conditioned response of salivation to a metronome. The segment also shows some original footage of another behaviorist, John Watson, using the principles of classical conditioning to induce fear responses in a small child.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Learning that certain things “go together” is essential to human survival. In the classical conditioning paradigm, we see how reflexive responses can become associated with stimuli that do not normally evoke them. For example, phobias may result from this process of pairing a neutral and an unconditioned stimulus. For example, hearing a loud noise (unconditioned stimulus) while on an elevator (neutral stimulus) may cause one to pair the unconditioned response of fear to a loud noise with the elevator. Thus the elevator becomes a conditioned stimulus, and the resulting fear a conditioned response.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Think of one of your own phobias. Did you learn it via classical conditioning or some other process?

Would what John Watson did with Little Albert be permitted given current ethical guidelines? Do you feel that his discoveries were important enough to warrant the trauma to the boy?
Segment 11

Operant Conditioning

(Length: 3:13)

DESCRIPTION

This segment discusses how voluntary behaviors are learned. The pioneering works of Edward Thorndike and B. F. Skinner are illustrated. Skinner coined the term “operant conditioning” which he defined as shaping and maintaining behaviors through the administration of reinforcing consequences. In some original footage, we see Skinner shaping the behavior of a pigeon. In order to condition the pigeon to turn to the left, he reinforces each (initially accidental) example of the behavior with food. Almost immediately, there is an increase in the number of times the bird turns to the left. In a more amusing example, he describes how students used the reinforcer of their attention to condition a professor (skeptical of operant conditioning) to lecture from a particular place in the classroom. The two types of reinforcement are explained. Positive reinforcement involves giving something positive following a desired behavior (for the pigeon: food, for the professor: attention). Negative reinforcement involves the removal of a negative consequence following a desired behavior. For example, a parent who stops yelling at a child once they’ve cleaned their room would be negatively reinforcing the child’s room cleaning behavior.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Operant conditioning is a powerful mechanism by which we learn behaviors. Positive and negative reinforcement are the two principles behind operant conditioning. Many people confuse negative reinforcement with punishment. However, in punishment, an unpleasant stimulus is applied following a behavior, while in negative reinforcement, an unpleasant stimulus is removed. The intent of punishment is to decrease a given behavior, while the intent of negative reinforcement is to increase a given behavior. A number of research studies show that, despite its popularity, punishment is a relatively ineffective method to change behavior.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

How could reinforcement, rather than punishment (fines), be used to improve driving behavior? If one is engaging in a behavior to avoid punishment, is in fact negative reinforcement operating?
Segment 12

Cognitive Processes in Learning

(Length: 6:25)

DESCRIPTION

While classical and operant conditioning are powerful learning mechanisms, this segment illustrates that cognitive processes underlie most types of learning. Psychologists Albert Bandura and Mike Mahoney conducted an experiment demonstrating that external rewards alone could not account for all learning (as the behaviorists had thought), but rather that internal processes are involved. In their experiment, rats were placed in a maze. No reinforcers were administered. Nonetheless, these rats did show substantial prior knowledge of the maze when then reinforced to go to certain maze locations. The segment talks about three related types of cognitive learning: latent learning, cognitive maps, and observational learning. It also points out that cognitive processes are involved in classical and operant conditioning. Latent learning refers to the fact that learning may occur but not be demonstrated until reinforcers elicit it. Cognitive maps refer to higher organisms’ ability to form mental maps of surroundings they are given the opportunity to explore. No reinforcing is required for this learning to occur. Observational learning is demonstrated in the segment at the dance studio where a dancer may learn another’s role simply by watching her perform it. This learning may not be demonstrated unless she has to stand in for the other dancer.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Early demonstrations of classical and operant conditioning by Pavlov, Skinner and others were a powerful discovery within psychology. Recent research on cognitive processes, however, suggests that these and other types of learning all require mental involvement. Since we do not always have the opportunity to demonstrate learning, research on observational and cognitive approaches to learning shows that we may indeed know far more than we realize.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Do you think that there can be learning that is independent of mental processes? Do reflexes involve mental processes?

Do you think that the “typing dog” in the segment truly became a “self-regulator”? Why do you think the dog took out only one piece of meat from the fridge? What had he “figured out”?

Segment 13

What Is Memory?

(Length: 3:10)

DESCRIPTION

This segment shows that memory is not simply a storage bin of experiences from which we retrieve information. Rather, the stages of the memory process are each susceptible to contamination and error. We meet Harry and Charlotte, an elderly married couple, who retrieve memories of their earlier lives, such as the day they decided to get married. Their minor differences in memory for this event illustrates the subjective nature of memory even for salient events. Psychologists discuss the three stages of the memory process: encoding (receiving information and preparing it for storage), storage (storing and keeping the information) and retrieval (accessing the information). Failure to remember or errors in remembering can occur from processing problems in any of these stages. Dramatic events, particularly those associated with strong emotions, often lead to vivid, long lasting memories. The segment mentions as an example a memory of a shell going off in a battlefield being triggered decades later by the explosion of a firecracker during a celebration.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Despite many people’s view that eyewitnesses accurately recall crimes they have witnessed, memory research suggests that these (and all) memories are susceptible to contamination. Similarly, research finds that different people will remember an identical event differently. This may be the result of the influence of prior experience and context on how one encodes, stores and retrieves memories.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Post-traumatic stress disorder involves unwanted and recurrent memories of a traumatic event. How would memory researchers explain the phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder?

To what degree do you think memory is subjective? Do you feel that the use of eyewitness testimony is appropriate in the courtroom?
Segment 14

Flashbulb Memories

(Length: 3:54)

DESCRIPTION

This segment discusses a particular type of episodic memory known as a flashbulb memory. Flashbulb memories are created when a particularly dramatic, and usually emotional, event is experienced. Examples such as the death of President John F. Kennedy and the Challenger explosion are given in the segment. Other more recent examples may include hearing the verdict in the O.J. Simpson case, or perhaps the Columbine tragedy. People can often remember where they were, time of day, and who they were with when they experienced such events. Characteristics of flashbulb memories include their persistence over time, and the degree of detail compared to other memories formed at a similar time. We see a number of World War II veterans discussing their memories of especially dramatic events during that war. Clearly these experiences continue to be powerful, detailed memories for these individuals decades later. Nonetheless, though vividly recalled, even flashbulb memories are susceptible to distortion and decay. The segment closes with the example of a group of people who saw the Challenger explosion together. They all had vivid, detailed memories of the event, however they were somewhat discrepant.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Research on flashbulb memories shows that we are capable of storing a large amount of information about a particularly dramatic event. Nonetheless, flashbulb memories are not the same as “photographic” memory. In fact, existence of the latter is not supported by psychological research. Instead it appears that all memories, regardless of how vivid, or how confidently believed, are susceptible to inaccuracies.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Some psychological research finds little relationship between the confidence with which you believe a memory to be true and its accuracy. Are you sure your important lifetime memories are accurate? Are there particular aspects of older memories that are more likely to be inaccurate?

The vivid memories of the WWII veterans in this segment are assumed to be the result of their flashbulb nature. Is it possible, however, that these veterans’ regular reunions (in which they reminisce about their war experiences) are a factor in the persistence of their memories? Do you think that this reminiscing increases or decreases the memories’ accuracy?
Segment 15

Animal Language

(Length: 3:14)

DESCRIPTION

Whether or not animals truly have language ability has been a topic of debate in psychology for many decades. The segment begins with some examples of non-verbal animal communication such as the warning flash of a white-tailed deer, and the intricate “dances” of bees that indicate the location of a food source. A psychologist argues that there is no clear division between human language and that of other species, but rather that the differences are a matter of degree. One of the difficulties in evaluating animal language is that most species lack vocal cords. Research efforts with animals, therefore, focus on non-verbal methods of communication. We see research on efforts to teaching human language to dolphins. Some of these dolphins have been able to learn up to sixty words and to process these words in 2000 sentences. Chimpanzees also have been shown to be capable of language processing. In the segment, we see a chimpanzee communicating with a researcher via a symbol board.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

While we may have thought that our language abilities are what make us uniquely human, researchers have found that animals are capable of quite sophisticated communication. The level of communication that animals engage in with one another is obviously well suited to their communication needs. As we make efforts to cross the language barrier and “talk to the animals” it is exciting to think how much we may learn from these interactions.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Would you feel differently about your pet if it could tell you how it felt about you?

As we improve our ability to communicate with other species will this affect how we view them and how we treat them?
Segment 16

Language Centers in the Brain

(Length: 3:39)

DESCRIPTION

In this segment we see the case of Paul who is about to have brain surgery to remove a tumor from his lower temporal lobe. This tumor has been giving him grand mal seizures and language impairments. Researchers explain that the tumor is located near the bottom of the temporal lobe near the part of the brain that allows us to name objects. Because the exact location of this “naming center” varies from person to person it will be necessary to map this area of Paul’s cortex prior to removing his tumor so as to avoid removing any of the brain tissue involved in object naming. In order to do this mapping Paul must remain awake. His scalp and skull are anesthetized but his brain has no pain receptors and needs no anesthetic. For the mapping a portion of Paul’s skull is removed and various parts of his left temporal lobe are stimulated with an electrical probe while he is asked to name various objects. Once Paul’s language centers are mapped surgeons are able to remove almost all of his tumor with little damage to brain areas necessary for normal language functioning.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The exquisite complexity of how the brain makes normal language is something we take for granted until something goes wrong. Researchers are slowly learning how the multitude of sub-functions that allow us to receive and produce language are distributed in the brain. Knowledge of the location of these critical areas allows neurosurgeons to remove brain tumors with a minimum of damage to healthy brain tissue.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Would a person with Paul’s condition, but 20 years younger, be likely to make a better or worse recovery? Why?

What medical advances that might allow surgeons to replace Paul’s removed brain tissue are you aware of?
Segment 17

P ros and Cons of Intelligence Tests

(Length: 6:29)

DESCRIPTION

This segment traces the history of intelligence testing. It begins with Alfred Binet and his commission from the Paris school board to develop a test that could distinguish between children who were functioning normally and those who were having difficulties. The test focused on elementary skills such as attention, memory, and the ability to identify similarities and differences. Binet observed that brighter children tended to function similarly to children of an older age. Based on this, he developed the concept of mental age, which he defined as the cognitive level at which a child functions. While Binet’s intent was to develop a test to assist with remediation, his test was adapted by Lewis Terman at Stanford University and came to be known as the Stanford-Binet. Terman believed intelligence to be an inborn, fixed characteristic, and that tests should be administered to the general population to identify those with “high” and “low” intelligence. By this time, intelligence was now being defined by an intelligence quotient (IQ) score. IQ scores were computed by dividing a person’s mental age by their chronological age, and multiplying by 100. This allowed for a single summary score that supposedly characterized an individual’s intelligence. The segment discusses the negative consequences that followed the widespread use of IQ testing. For example, IQ tests were used as a screening tool for potential immigrants without recognition of cultural and language differences. A third test discussed in this segment was developed by David Weschler. Weschler recognized that the “cookie cutter” approach to intelligence testing was inappropriate. He returned to Binet’s notion of intellectual strengths and weaknesses. For example, the Weschler test examines verbal and performance intelligence separately.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

While we all have a sense of what we believe intelligence to be, defining and measuring it is difficult. Depending on our definition, various testing approaches can be taken. Recently, psychologists are emphasizing that intelligence is really one’s ability to function well within an environment. Thus, testing cannot be isolated from cultural context. For example, to be intelligent in a scientific laboratory may be very different than to be intelligent in a rural environment. In particular, Terman’s idea that a single number can be used to rank individuals from different cultural environments is clearly inaccurate, and has led to harm.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Do you think intelligence testing should be abandoned? Are there situations where IQ tests do more good than harm, and vice-versa?

What do you think will be the future of intelligence testing?
Segment 18

What Is Motivation?

(Length: 4:08)

DESCRIPTION

This segment follows a middle-aged Dairy Queen owner who becomes unhappy with his level of fitness and his weight, and decides that he wants to become a marathon runner. The segment discusses three aspects of motivation. The first of these is activation, which is the process of making a decision to engage in a new behavior. The second is persistence, or the ability to persevere with the new behavior. The third aspect of motivation is intensity, which is how hard one will work at the new behavior. The segment discusses these three aspects of motivation, and provides examples by way of the marathon runner.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Adopting a new positive behavior is a challenging process. The motivation to do so and to stick with the new behavior has eluded many of us. By better understanding the subcomponents of the motivational process, we may be better equipped to successfully enact long term positive changes in our lives.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Think of a specific example of a positive behavior that you have tried and so far failed to adopt. What do you think has prevented you from succeeding so far?

Is all of the success in adopting a new, positive behavior based on motivation? What other factors are involved?
Segment 19

Self-Efficacy

(Length: 5:00)

DESCRIPTION

This segment discusses the important motivational concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is described as having an attitude that “you can if you think you can.” It applies to the achievement of both big goals (such as landing on the moon) as well as more personal accomplishments (such as completing a marathon). Psychologist Albert Bandura believes that self-efficacy is a very important concept that underlies much of human successes and failures. He points out that persons with high self-efficacy are much more likely to redouble their efforts when faced with obstacles than are those with low self-efficacy, who will tend to be discouraged and give up in the face of obstacles.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

While motivation has both intrinsic and extrinsic components, the attitude that one does have the resources to succeed plays a major role in whether goals are actually reached. Bandura makes the interesting comment that one can’t “afford to be a realist” about one’s abilities, but that instead a sense of optimism (whether realistic or not) can actually increase one’s probability of succeeding.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Learned helplessness, or the belief that one cannot prevail in the face of adverse circumstances, has been linked to depression in psychological research. Where do you feel individuals suffering from depression fit in terms of self-efficacy and motivation? Do you think that depression causes low self-efficacy, or vice-versa?

How would you go about helping a friend increase their self-efficacy?
Segment 20

The Physiology of Emotions

(Length: 3:04)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins at a soccer game with parents describing some of the physical sensations that accompany their emotions. We then switch to a psychologist who discusses some of the earlier work on emotions that focussed on their relationship to the autonomic nervous system. He mentions that attempts to differentiate among different emotions using measures of autonomic arousal (such as heart rate, sweating, etc.) were only partly successful. More recent research into emotion has focused on its relationship to the central nervous system, more specifically on which parts of the brain are involved in specific emotional experiences. Another researcher goes on to explain that our left hemisphere is more related to positive emotions, while the right hemisphere is more related to negative emotions. He describes a phenomenon in which individuals who have had a stroke in their left hemisphere have a tendency to be more “cynical and sullen” in their demeanor, whereas individuals who have had a right hemisphere stroke tend to express more of a “what, me worry?” attitude.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Once again we see how brain specificity relates to human experience, and how damage to certain brain areas can effect a specific change in personality. Since the autonomic nervous system is after all under the control of the brain, it makes sense that researchers would turn their attention to the role of the central nervous system in emotion.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

In what situations do your emotions “control you”? Is “you” therefore more related to your cognitive and rational thinking processes? When it comes to controlling one’s emotions, are there different rules for males than for females?

We tend to think of demeanor as at least somewhat under voluntary control (think of your grumpy neighbor or relative who you wish would just cheer up!). Does the research on stroke victims presented in the segment make you feel differently about this individual?
Segment 21

Attachment

(Length: 5:03)

DESCRIPTION

This segment discusses attachment, which is defined as the emotional bond between a child and adult. Attachment in infancy and childhood forms the basis for other emotional bonds later in life. The segment discusses two types of attachment: secure and insecure. Securely attached infants believe that their basic needs will be met, and have a tendency to feel comfortable to explore their environment. Insecurely attached infants, on the other hand, lack this sense of certainty and tend to be either clingy or standoffish with caregivers. Quality of attachment in infants is often measured using the Strange Situation, as shown in the segment. The segment also discusses the importance of measuring attachment to fathers and other alternative caregivers, a topic largely ignored in psychological research until recently. The segment points out that an infant may have a secure attachment to one caregiver and an insecure attachment to another. The potential implications of different attachment styles for later life, such as the tendency for insecurely attached infants to have later social difficulties, are discussed.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Quality of attachment is a strong predictor of functioning later in a child’s life. Parental skills and effort play a major role in the attachment formation process. Also, however, temperamental attributes of the child may make it more difficult for parents to achieve a secure attachment with some children than with others. Further research into how to ensure that all children become securely attached is needed. In addition to parental skills and the child’s temperament, societal factors will also have to be examined.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

How would you describe your own attachment to your primary caregiver(s)? How has the type of attachment you formed affected you in your adult life? Is it too late to modify the consequences of your attachment type?

In your view is having multiple attachment figures better or worse for children than having a single, primary attachment figure?
Segment 22

Adolescence: Independence from Parents and Identity Formation

(Length: 4:48)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins by introducing a young man on the cusp of adulthood. He talks about the importance of his family in his life, and yet has clear personal goals. We see his father who talks about his views on how and when adult status is achieved. Erickson’s psychosocial theory is introduced. According to Erickson, developing a sense of identity is the central issue of adolescence. Because of this, adolescence is a time of exploration in order to determine how one feels about issues such as vocation, sexual orientation, and goals for the future. In other words, it is a time in which one’s values and beliefs become more solidified. Conflict with parents is exceptionally common during adolescence. An adolescent’s search for identity and independence may lead them in directions that worry parents. The parental desire to protect often comes into conflict with the inevitable need to “let go” of their children. The segment closes with a discussion of parents’ receding influence in their child’s life.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

To feel that one’s influence over a child’s values and behavior is waning can be very worrisome for parents. “Unsuitable peers,” risky behaviors, and so on, have kept many a parent awake nights. However, research shows that while peers may have a powerful influence on more superficial aspects of teenagers’ lives (such as choice of music and clothes), parental influence on core values remains encouragingly strong. Moreover, there are many benefits of peer interaction for a developing adolescent. In fact, achieving independence from parents typically involves a stage of greater dependence upon peers prior to more stable, independent living.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Was your own adolescence marked by periods of conflict with your parents? Could they have handled things better? How about you?

What do you feel were the central issues surrounding conflict with your parents during your adolescence? What changes have you made or will you make with your own children?
Segment 23
Stages of Adult Development

(Length: 3:07)

DESCRIPTION
This segment begins with a middle-aged couple discussing their lives. They talk about being in their early twenties when becoming parents, and the father discusses his vocation as a gardener, and how he used to make more money than he does currently. This is clearly a difficult issue for him in particular because he wants to help his teenage son advance his boxing career. The segment then defines the three stages of adult development: early, middle and late adulthood. Central issues in early adulthood include finding and maintaining intimate relationships, and beginning one’s career. In middle adulthood, issues of generativity are central. A desire to have children is common, though not ubiquitous in this stage of life. Passing on one’s knowledge and skills to others is another form that generativity can take on. In middle adulthood, issues of change are central, such as having one’s children leave the home, becoming a grandparent, and so forth. In late adulthood, issues such as the loss of a partner become more common. While some bonds in late adulthood become closer, others become more distant. The segment mentions that women tend to adapt better to the loss of a partner and can be better at maintaining friendships and, thus, social support.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
Some may think of development as primarily completed by the time one reaches adulthood. However, upon examination, it is clear that development continues to take place throughout one’s lifetime. At each stage of life new challenges present themselves, and one must learn to successfully navigate through these obstacles.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
Teenagers often think that their parents “have it made” because supposedly they can do anything they want. Is adulthood as difficult as adolescence? Why or why not?
What is it about gender roles that may make loss of a partner harder for men than women?
Segment 24

**Gender Role Stereotypes**

(Length: 5:24)

**DESCRIPTION**

In this segment we are introduced to a married couple Geoffrey and Stacy. We are told that one is an airline pilot and the other is a first grade teacher. As the segment develops we are told that Geoffrey is the teacher and Stacy the pilot and are asked why we may have assumed the opposite. A psychologist explains the terms gender and sex and indicates that people are often uncomfortable with the word “sex” because it can also refer to sexual activity. The concept of gender role stereotype is also explained. Stacy then talks about her childhood experiences and, though she came from a traditional family, how she never felt limited by being female. Geoffrey also talks about his childhood and tells us that among 70 elementary school teachers in his district he is the only male. He describes his multiple involvements with children while growing up including a very rewarding job as a camp counselor.

**INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS**

A number of forces operate upon us to steer us toward “appropriate” gender role behavior. In the past pressure to conform to a narrowly defined gender role was very strong. Interests and abilities, however, are not divided into two discreet sets, one for males and one for females. Fortunately, today much greater freedom to self-actualize exists for all of us.

**SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

Do males who select traditionally female occupations seem more “feminine”? Does this mean they have less male hormones than other men or is it our own stereotypes that may cause us to see them this way? How about women in traditionally male professions?

Give examples of interests you have which your grandparents would think of as gender inappropriate.
Segment 25

Sexual Orientation and Activity

(Length: 3:17)

DESCRIPTION
This segment begins with a discussion of sexual orientation. It explains that sexual orientation is about emotional and physical attraction. Thus heterosexuals are emotionally and physically attracted to the opposite sex, homosexuals to the same sex and bisexuals to both. A psychologist explains that sexual behavior may not always reflect sexual orientation, particularly when homosexuality is widely disapproved of. The existence of sexuality through the lifespan is discussed. A psychologist explains that it is only our “ageism” that makes us uncomfortable with the thought of older people being sexual. The segment ends with a couple, both of whom are in non-traditional occupations for their gender.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
In the absence of strong societal strictures three sexual orientations emerge with heterosexuality most common, homosexuality second and bisexuality third. Just as left-handed people may have behaved right-handed when society disapproved of left-handedness so many homosexual and bisexual people have historically pretended, or even tried, to be heterosexual. Once society no longer cared if people were left-handed and exhibited left-handed behavior the expressed rate of left-handedness rose to approximately one in eleven people and has stayed there. Similarly, homosexual and bisexual behavior is now rising and will level off at its natural rate.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
Do you mind if people are hetero-, homo-, or bisexual? Why or why not?
Do facilities for older people, usually staffed by younger people, actively or passively discourage sexual activity among seniors? If you end up in such a facility would you like these practices changed?
Origins of Personality

DESCRIPTON

The segment begins with a discussion of the three main approaches psychologists have taken to studying personality: the psychoanalytic, the humanistic and the social/cognitive. We then see footage of Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela and are asked what factors contributed to the development of such an outstanding personality. Some of Mandela’s great challenges in his quest to remove apartheid from his country are discussed. Within four years of being released from 26 years in prison he became President of South Africa and in the eyes of many lived up to and exceeded his hero status. Human personality is presented as a combination of inborn factors and formative environmental experiences. The study of personality also helps us understand the wide range of individual differences.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

An individual like Nelson Mandela with such a determination to achieve a goal is certainly to be admired. Psychologists have developed three main approaches to studying personality with the social/cognitive the most recent. Because it is derived from research, while the others were formulated via certain individuals’ clinical experiences, it has become the dominant mode. The social/cognitive approach has validated some of the concepts of the psychoanalytic (parental influence) and the humanistic (self-actualization) theories.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Can you think of other people who, like Nelson Mandela, persisted in their pursuit of a goal despite tremendous challenges? Do you think their personalities were more inborn or the result of childhood experiences?

Do you in part choose your personality after some experimentation?
Segment 27

The Social/Cognitive Model

(Length: 5:43)

DESCRIPTION
This segment begins with an explanation of the origin of social/cognitive approach to personality within behaviorism. While B.F. Skinner pushed the role of environment in personality formation to the extreme, Albert Bandura argued that factors other than reinforcement are involved. Bandura posited that observational learning also plays a major role in personality formation. Later he articulated the important contribution of cognitive processes, particularly self-efficacy. He has come to believe that self-efficacy is the foundation of human motivation and action. We are shown the example of Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela who freed his country from apartheid. Mandela’s role model of his father’s stubbornness and his very high sense of self-efficacy allowed him to stick to his goal despite tremendous challenges.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
Acquiring competencies vicariously (observational learning) and believing that one can succeed (self-efficacy) are powerful forces in the development of our personality. Thus providing the opportunity for children to interact with positive figures and helping children learn that they can succeed are key factors in child rearing. Interestingly Skinner’s belief that reinforcement is the most effective way to change behavior, and Freud’s view that mother and father figures are powerful influences, fit very well with the current social/cognitive model.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
What are the most powerful role models in your life so far? Are there people you have deliberately modeled yourself after?

Is your own sense that you can prevail no matter what (self-efficacy) high or low? Why?
Segment 28

Personality Testing for Career Choice

(Length: 3:59)

DESCRIPTION
This segment introduces us to Norman who was formerly in the Marine Corps and now works at UCLA as a career counselor. In trying to decide what to do after he left the military Norman took a number of personality tests to determine his personality traits and what sort of career they might fit with well. He talks about how surprised people were to hear that a former Marine is now a counselor. He points out that actually there are a number of similarities. For example, once again he is working with young people who are away from home for the first time.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
Personality tests effectively measure the personality traits we currently possess. To the extent that such traits remain stable, personality tests are quite accurate and can help us with selecting a career. Their predictive validity, however, rests upon the odds that we will not undergo substantial further personality change.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
If Norman had been younger when he underwent personality tests would the career suggested by the testing have been as good a predictor?

Do all people that are happy within a certain career possess similar personality traits? Are factors other than personality important in suitability for a particular career?
Segment 29

Personality Traits

(Length: 3:32)

DESCRIPTION

This segment begins by posing the age-old question whether personality is more a function of heredity or environment. It then examines how many traits compose human personality. Cattell’s 16 Personality Factor (16-PF) model is explained as is Eysenck’s view that personality can be described by the three factors of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Eysenck is a strong proponent of the view that the three personality traits he proposes are “hard-wired” (hereditary) into the brain. The segment concludes with a description of the 5-Factor Theory, which is quite well supported by research. The five factors are: Openness to New Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The scientific process of identifying the core traits that make up our personality has a long history. Furthermore the notion that such traits are inherited and stable continues to be examined. Recent research suggests that our personality is to some extent situation-specific and that we may behave quite differently in different contexts. The personality expectations of certain roles we play may make us appear to have certain traits while playing a particular role. Thus our behavior may be more a result of role expectations than heredity to some extent.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Of the five traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, which do you think is most influenced by upbringing? Which is most influenced by heredity?

How different would your personality be if a family very different from your own had raised you?
Segment 30

Social Cognition and Person Perception: The Blind Date

(Length: 6:16)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins with a discussion of the fascinating field of social psychology. The sub-field of social cognition is defined as how we form impressions of other people, how we interpret the meaning of other peoples' behavior and how our behavior is affected by our attitudes. We meet Julie and James who are about to meet each other for the first time on a blind date. Each of them will engage in a process of person perception, that is form an attitude toward the other, using a variety of cues. How much data is necessary to make a judgement? How much will each of them change to please the other? These and related issues can be observed as James and Julie get to know each other.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

How quickly and how accurately we can make judgements about others is an important skill. Problematic is the trade off between speed and accuracy. We don’t want to judge someone positively too quickly as further data may prove us wrong. Similarly we don’t want to judge someone negatively too quickly as we may have missed the opportunity to spend time with a wonderful person. On the other hand certain situations do require fairly quick decisions, for example when interviewing someone for a job. In other situations we can take the time we need to increase the likelihood of an accurate judgement.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Discuss examples of times when your person perceptions have been very accurate and then when they have been very inaccurate.

What do you see as the pros and cons of speed dating (several very short blind dates spread over an evening)? If you were in charge of a speed dating service how would you set things up?
Segment 31

Attitudes and Prejudicial Behavior

(Length: 6:06)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins with a reminder of America’s history of treatment of African Americans. Less well known is the story of the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. A Japanese-American woman recalls how at age 6 she and many others were loaded on to crowded trains, ordered to close the blinds and imprisoned in remote camps. A Japanese-American doctor tells how the FBI came to his family’s house and took his father away. His father was held for 3 1/2 years yet was never charged with a crime. It is noted that of the various nations at war with America during WWII only Americans of Japanese origin were interned. There was already anti-Japanese-American sentiment prior to the war probably because they, like African-Americans, were a visible minority. A psychologist explains that attitudes are collections of thoughts and beliefs that are created around specific items in our environment. Once formed we then use attitudes to organize information. The concept of in-group and out-group is explained as developing because the more we see people as similar to us the more we tend to like them. Most Japanese-Americans did not even see themselves as an out-group and were horrified by being suddenly stripped of their legal rights.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The process by which humans form attitudes can easily lead to us designating certain types of individuals as belonging to out-groups. As world wide human history has and continues to reveal once people are placed in an out-group atrocities including murder may be committed against them. Thus we need to remain vigilant against our tendency to group and simplify leading to the dehumanization of our fellow homo sapiens.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

We are horrified to hear stories of Nazi Germany where Jews were herded onto crowded trains, interned in concentration camps and murdered. How close did we come to enacting a similar holocaust on our Japanese-American citizens?

We think of a country’s constitution as providing protection against arbitrary arrest and detention without charges. Do our current laws ensure that what happened to Japanese-American citizens couldn’t happen again?
Segment 32

Ethnocentrism and Prejudice

(Length: 5:06)

DESCRIPTION

A Japanese-American citizen describes his arrival at an internment camp where he and his fellow Americans of Japanese descent were imprisoned during WWII. The so-called “apartments” in the camp were actually military huts made of tin and wood. Another internee shows a piece of barbed wire from the camp where he was held and notes that if the machine gun towers were to protect the people in the camp why were they pointed into and not away from the enclosed area. He also wonders why, since America was also at war with Germany and Italy, American citizens from these countries were not also interned. Ethnocentrism is defined and offered as a partial explanation for this. That is, the less we perceive people to be like us the less we like them. An African-American psychologist explains that racism is ethnocentrism with the power to enact it. A German-American woman from the same era says more was done against Japanese-Americans because they were easier to pick out. The segment concludes with footage showing how ultimately young male internees were released to fight for America in the war and did so with great distinction.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

As dramatically illustrated in this segment, humans need to be very careful to guard against ethnocentric tendencies. Physical differences, in particular, seem to rapidly lead us to designate people as being part of “our” in-group or part of an out-group. Knowledge of this process should help “lest we forget” and once again strip our fellow citizens of their constitutional and human rights.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

In what other situations is an apology for the past actions of our government appropriate? In what cases is financial compensation also appropriate?

If our species has such a strong tendency to make in-group, out-group distinctions what could public schools do to reduce the development of ethnocentrism?
Segment 33

Conformity

(Length: 6:03)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins with Floyd Cochrane who was formerly a spokesman and recruiter for the Aryan Nations. He is now an activist in the anti-racism movement. He explains how the Aryan Nations justifies pro-white racism by believing that people of color have no soul and that Jews are descended from the devil. He goes on to explain how the Aryan Nations use people’s desire to belong and tendency to conform to increase their racist attitudes and behavior. A psychologist explains how all of us experience social influence even when only interacting with a single other person. For example he notes how, if sitting with friends, we tend to adjust our language and posture if an older person comes into the room. Clearly not all conformity is bad, he explains. How could our roads and freeways function, for example, if everyone “did their own thing”? The segment closes with the former Aryan Nations spokesman indicating the sanctions that would occur in their compound if someone resisted conforming to the group’s attitudes and behavior.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Our desire to belong and tendency to conform to those we respect is a powerful part of our human nature. While society cannot function without a certain degree of conformity, a lack of critical thinking and individuality can allow one to come under the influence of dangerous groups. Thus pressure to conform should always be viewed carefully, to be sure we are not being manipulated to help someone else achieve goals that may be wrong.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Think of some groups you belong to. What would their members do to you if you expressed attitudes or engaged in behaviors the group didn’t approve of?

Does becoming educated help you to avoid mindless conformity? Does your educational institution demand too much conformity of you?
Segment 34

Obedience:
The Milgram Study

(Length: 4:04)

DESCRIPTION
A psychologist notes that after WWII people were looking for an explanation of how the holocaust atrocities could have occurred and how others could have looked the other way while they did. Stanley Milgram of Yale University conducted some ingenious experiments on obedience to authority and concluded that what happened in Nazi Germany “could happen here.” Milgram arranged an experimental situation in which volunteers were taken to a laboratory where they were instructed to “teach” word pairs to others and to administer increasingly strong electric shocks when the “student” made errors. The “student,” of course, was not actually receiving shocks but the “teacher” did not know this. Milgram found that fully two thirds of people in the “teacher” role would work right up to 450 volts, which was labelled as an extreme shock. The segment closes with a former member of the Aryan Nations who explains how that group would convince members to commit atrocities against non-whites.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
We seem to believe that we, personally, are immune to social pressure to hurt others. Milgram’s research would suggest that two thirds of us are wrong. While children are often brought up to “obey their elders,” the abuse of power we have witnessed by authority figures is leading many parents to modify their advice. Similarly, college courses on critical thinking encourage students not to merely take things on authority.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
Would the Milgram paradigm get different results if conducted on a college campus today? Why or why not?
How does the concept of “academic freedom” protect the right to hold non-conforming views? Is academic freedom worth protecting?
Segment 35

What Is Stress?

(Length: 4:17)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins with a psychologist explaining that stress has three components. The first of these is the type of event we encounter. In most cases these stressful events have a negative connotation. We then meet a woman who describes when she first noticed an abnormal feeling in her breast that was later diagnosed as cancer. Because her daughter was soon to deliver a baby the woman did not tell her daughter of the breast cancer until the day after the baby was delivered. The daughter describes her feelings on that day. We are told that a second component of stress is that it is a discrepancy between what the situation demands and what you think your resources are. Our breast cancer patient describes her physical and mental reactions when her doctor gave her her diagnosis. Finally we are told that the third component of stress is the physical reactions, produced by the sympathetic nervous system, that accompany it.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Clearly while some events will be stressful for all people and some events will be stressful for no people, many events will be perceived as stressful by some of us and not by others. The greater the discrepancy between what the event demands and our resources to cope with it, the greater the stress.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

What is the most stressful event in your life so far? What made it so stressful?

How could you increase your coping skills to cope with events in your life that are stressful right now?
Segment 36

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

(Length: 2:57)

DESCRIPTION
In this segment we meet Lisa who is suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). She describes her need to check and recheck things such as whether she has turned the stove off. A psychologist explains how demanding this disorder is, with sufferers constantly fighting doubts and uncertainties. We hear how Lisa washes her hands multiple times per day and takes long showers that can result in missed appointments. Lisa’s sister describes some of Lisa’s behavior as a child such as her constantly checking for spiders. We meet Lisa’s therapist who describes the current treatment for OCD known as “exposure and response prevention.” In this therapy Lisa is helped to remain in situations that evoke high anxiety until that anxiety diminishes. She is also given support to make decisions.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
OCD falls within the cluster of psychological disorders known as the anxiety disorders. It is characterized by unwanted recurrent obsessive thoughts and by the perceived need to engage in compulsive, ritualistic behaviors. While anxiety is a normal, and even useful, mental state, carried to excess it causes considerable distress. Treatments for the anxiety disorders have improved tremendously in recent years.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
Have you ever felt irrationally compelled to engage in a repetitive, ritualistic behavior? Have you had recurrent unwanted thoughts? What sort of self-treatments have you tried to deal with this? How much of OCD do you think is inherited? What life experiences do you think might bring it on?
Segment 37

Three Anxiety Disorders

(Length: 4:08)

DESCRIPTION

The segment begins with a psychologist explaining the difference between specific phobias (irrational and excessive fear of a single thing or experience) and social phobias (fear of humiliation or negative feedback in a social situation). It is explained that we used to think phobias resulted from a single negative experience such as being bitten by a dog or trapped in an elevator. Psychologists now know that a combination of heredity, environmental experience and cognitions come together to produce phobias. The segment also defines Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which is characterized by almost continual high arousal levels. The segment ends with a discussion on Panic Disorder. Panic Disorder can be triggered by an overvigilance to one’s physiology, which then leads to catastrophic thinking. This, in turn, increases the originally distressing physiological systems.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Like all the Anxiety Disorders, high levels of anxiety not warranted by the situation characterize Phobias, GAD and Panic Disorder. Highly effective treatments are now available for these conditions and sufferers need to seek out therapists well trained in these procedures.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Have you or someone you know ever had a panic attack? What techniques reduce the severity of symptoms? Is hyperventilation a contributor?

Do you have a phobia? What do you do to cope with it?
DESCRIPTION

This segment discusses the two mood disorders: major depression and bipolar disorder. Depression is defined as persistent feelings of sadness and despair with no realistic reason for these feelings. Depression will affect about one in four women and one in eight men during their lifetime. Depression is conceptualized as developing from an interaction between a genetic predisposition and environmental stressors. Recent studies suggest that the rate of major depression may be rising. The segment also describes the mood disorder known as bipolar disorder, formerly called manic-depression. Manic episodes are accompanied by big ideas, racing thoughts and impulsive behaviors. There is a general speeding of cognitions, emotions and behaviors. Manic episodes are followed by a phase of extreme depression.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The propensity to develop a mood disorder is prevalent within much of the population. Since environmental factors trigger an actual episode people would be wise to practice preventative mental health practices such as learning stress management techniques. Also, since excellent medications and psychotherapeutic techniques are now available for mood disorders, people should seek professional assistance.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Do you know anyone with bipolar disorder? What have been your experiences with them? How do you manage your own highs and lows?

Why might it be difficult to get a family member with major depression to seek help? What would you say to such a person to encourage them to seek treatment?
Segment 39

Schizophrenia

(Length: 5:00)

DESCRIPTION

The segment introduces us to Robert who suffers from one of the many types of schizophrenia. The first signs he noticed were when he began to get anxious around people. He spoke to a counselor at his college and eventually was given a diagnosis after he was referred to a mental health professional. Schizophrenia is characterized by severely distorted beliefs, perceptions and thought processes. Robert describes how uncomfortable he was with his diagnosis given his own and society’s stereotypes about the disorder. Because symptoms don’t usually become noticeable until early adulthood, and because there is such variability in symptoms, diagnosis is tricky. We are told, though, that all persons with schizophrenia share a significant functional impairment.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The symptoms of schizophrenia vary from sufferer to sufferer and wax and wane in any individual with the disorder. Better medication and treatment have helped many, but unfortunately many sufferers are not functioning nearly as well as Robert. The biological severity of the disorder interacts with environmental factors like the presence or absence of family support and the availability or lack of treatment resources to determine the course that the disorder follows.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Do you know someone with schizophrenia? What has been your experience with them?

In days gone by schizophrenics were incarcerated in mental hospitals. More recently we find them on the streets among the homeless. Is there a middle ground that would be more compassionate than either of the above approaches?
Segment 40

Problems in Living

(Length: 2:51)

DESCRIPTION

This segment begins by mentioning some of the more serious psychological disorders and then talks about other distressing events that may cause people to seek treatment. We are introduced to Linda who is recently divorced and who is having trouble coping with the dramatic change in her life. She expresses bitterness toward her ex-husband and describes some of the negative coping strategies she has been engaged in such as overeating. The segment talks about earlier days when so-called “psychological treatments” were worse than the symptoms of the disorders they were supposed to treat. Psychotherapy and medication are greatly improved since days gone by and now offer a very real opportunity to obtain relief from psychological distress. Psychotherapy is defined as a helping relationship between an individual and a mental health professional. The segment closes by mentioning the major approaches to the treatment of psychological disorders.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

While many seek assistance for quite severe psychological disorders people also visit psychologists for assistance with problems in living. Coping with the psychosocial aftermath of divorce is one such example. While we have moved away from some of the bizarre and cruel treatments of the past to a more compassionate model, psychological researchers are also using the methods of science to improve our treatment techniques for problems in living.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

How have you coped with interpersonal and romantic relationships that have come to an end? Were you surprised by the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aftermath of such endings?

Other than divorce what other “problems in living” might one seek professional assistance for?
Segment 41

Empirically Validated Therapies

(Length: 3:29)

DESCRIPTION

This segment begins with psychologist Dr. Christine Padesky explaining that psychological research has now progressed to a point where we have empirical evidence showing which therapies are effective for which psychological disorders. Thus well-qualified therapists no longer follow a school of thought but rather are aware of which therapies are efficacious for which problems and are trained in how to enact these. For example, Dr. Padesky discusses the three treatments that have been proven effective for depression. Similarly for anxiety disorders there are well-validated approaches. Biological therapies are also empirically validated. For many psychological disorders biological therapies are particularly useful for single episodes, however, psychotherapies can allow treatment gains to persist when medication is stopped. The segment also points out that psychotherapies need to be tailored to a culture’s belief systems.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

Psychology has come a long way from the days when therapists practiced treatment based on a school of thought “that felt right to them.” With the application of the same scientific rigor that is used to study the safety and efficacy of medication, psychological researchers have been able to find and to fine tune psychotherapeutic approaches that are demonstrably effective. The public needs to be aware of this major step forward in the field and to ensure that their therapist is aware of and trained in such methods.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

How would you go about ensuring that your therapist is qualified to diagnose and treat a psychological disorder you might develop?

Why should a psychologist take time to understand a client’s belief system and culture prior to beginning treatment?
Segment 42

Psychological Principles in Everyday Life

(Length: 6:18)

DESCRIPTION
In this segment we see a group of five psychologists watching and commenting on a young mother as she goes about her day. They make note of the thousands of ways that psychological principles and research interact with daily living. Looking at the mother interacting with her two-year-old, one psychologist notes that even the early work of Freud helps us to understand the socialization of children around neatness issues. A second psychologist links the same segment to Erikson’s work on autonomy. In commenting on the toys in the family’s home, a third psychologist notes how their design is based on psychological knowledge. Even the design of a high chair, as a transition to adult seating, reflects knowledge of psychological principles. In a final segment we see children brushing their teeth and the group notes how psychological knowledge has improved pediatric dentistry.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS
In looking out for them, the astute psychology student can see the multiple ways that psychological knowledge interacts with our lives. While this is obviously true in psychotherapy, it is also the case that psychology interacts with us throughout our day.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
Since becoming a student of psychology do you notice more examples of the application of psychological research? Give examples from your day so far.
Some among the public worry that psychology is used to manipulate people. Does psychology do more harm than good, or vice versa?