



PART TWO

The Mind and Soul

To thine own self be true.

—William Shakespeare



CHAPTER 5

Toward a Psychology of Stress

Modern man is sick because he is not whole.

—Carl Gustav Jung

For centuries, scientists have debated the relationship between the mind and the brain. Is the mind a function of the brain, a series of biochemical reactions, or is the mind a complex dynamic of consciousness, a separate entity unto itself that uses the brain as its primary organ of choice? This question has polarized researchers to believe either that all thoughts and feelings can be explained as neurochemical messages transmitted from brain cell to brain cell or that the mind exists separately from the brain yet somehow is housed and fused with it. This one question, perhaps more than any other, initiated the discipline of psychology at the turn of the twentieth century. As the mind-body connection is more closely examined with regard to the stress response, it becomes increasingly clear that the mind is a very complex phenomenon, and not merely a by-product of neurochemical interactions. The interactions of thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and personality traits—the mind is held accountable for all of them and a bit more (Baruss, 2017). In this chapter, we will look at how the mind perceives stress so that the “antiquated” stress response can be updated or recircuited, highlighting some specific aspects of the psychology of stress.

Since the advent of the discipline of psychology, many notable figures have made significant contributions to the understanding of the mind—specifically, those regarding personality, emotions, perceptions, and a whole realm of human behaviors. From these individuals have come a host of theories attempting to interpret the complexities of emotional well-being on which stress has so great an influence. These theories have been inspired by such questions as, Why does the mind perceive some events as threatening? and What cognitive dynamics are used to deal with psychological stress? The list of those people who have contributed to the body of knowledge of human consciousness would comprise a book itself, not the least of which includes Albert Ellis (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy), Richard Lazarus (Daily Hassles), and countless others. Although no one theorist seems to explain the psychological aspects of stress in its totality, together the following theories at least begin to address several significant issues involved. The following psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists offer a glimpse of some of the greatest insights into the mind’s role in the psychology of stress.

■ Freud and the Egg

Because of his profound influence on the field of psychology (perhaps more than any other individual), the work of Sigmund Freud (**FIG. 5.1**) is chosen by many scholars as the reference point from which all other psychological theories emanate. Most recognized for his concepts of conscious and unconscious thought and their associations to sexual drive, Freud established the groundwork for understanding human behavior. Specifically, he made tangible the abstract concepts of emotional thought processes and the constructs of personality. From Freud's perspective, humans operate from an instinctual nature, or those biological and physiological impulses he referred to as the id. These impulses aim to satisfy the body's immediate needs. In Freud's opinion, there is a constant **instinctual tension** between body and mind as the mind attempts to cater to these impulses in socially acceptable ways. This internal tension can be decreased, but because of the power of human instincts, it is never fully extinguished. Consequently, Freud believed that humans have some degree of *innate* stress.

Freud developed a wonderful metaphor to illustrate the intangible complexities of the human psyche. He

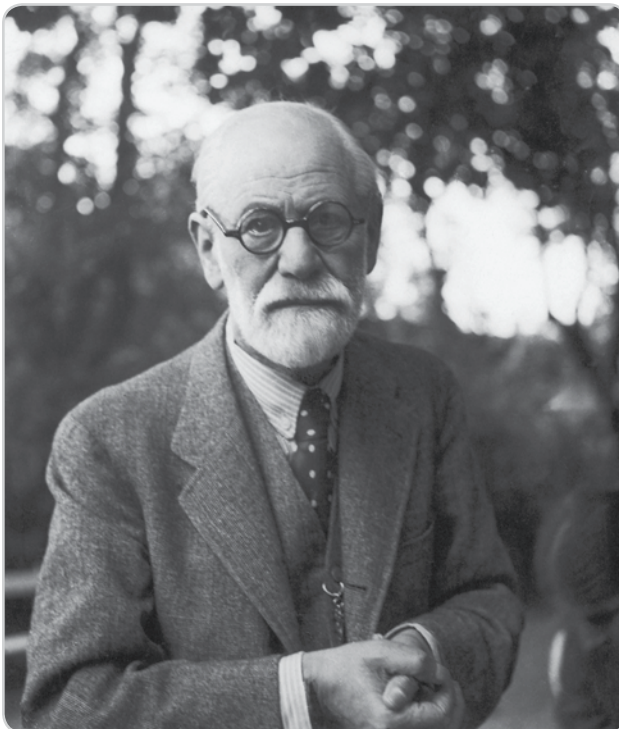


FIGURE 5.1 Sigmund Freud.

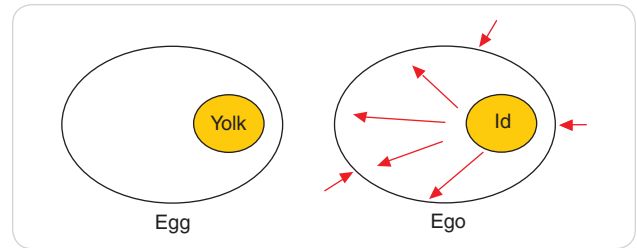


FIGURE 5.2 Freud compared the abstract human psyche to an egg. Instinctual tension is always present, Freud believed, because the id constantly releases impulses. These, along with external stimuli, threaten the integrity of the ego, which must protect itself with what Freud termed defense mechanisms.

compared the mind's innermost thoughts, memories, and feelings, components that make up one's identity, to an egg (**FIG. 5.2**). Like the contents of an egg, the human psyche is extremely delicate and fragile. And like an egg it is enclosed and protected by a sturdy yet quite vulnerable shell. According to Freud, the primary purpose of the **ego** is to seek pleasure and to avoid pain with regard to our biological impulses (a function now thought to be similar to that of the hypothalamus). That is, the ego is primarily responsible for controlling the flood of impulses from the id. The ego is also vulnerable to perceptions of outside stimuli, which constantly threaten the stability of the contents within. This, too, he observed, produces tension.

The metaphor of the egg and Freud's theory of the function of the ego have been useful to comprehend the environmental balance of the mind, specifically in terms of cognitive stress-management strategies. Understanding that stress or anxiety is aroused simultaneously by internal impulses and perceived outside stimulation (threats) means that the protection of identity (ego) is critical to survival. As if a missile were headed for the

Instinctual tension: A Freudian term used to highlight the tension between the mind's impulses and the body's response, suggesting that stress is humanly inherent.

Ego: A term coined by Freud naming the part of the psyche that not only triggers the stress response when threatened, but also defends against all enemies, including thoughts and feelings generated from within.

White House, anxiety triggers the mind's alarm system, signifying imminent danger to the existence of the ego. Defense systems are immediately activated. Should these defenses fail to function properly, panic and disaster ensue. Through his work with mentally and physically ill patients, Freud observed enough stress-related behaviors to credit excessive anxiety (unknown fears that penetrate the ego's shell and produce pain) and inadequate defenses with the primary roles in the development of neurotic and psychotic behavior.

According to Freud, the mind's defense system consists of a host of thought processes, or **defense mechanisms**, to aid in the protection of the ego's fragile contents. They act to shield the contents from harm by minimizing the impact of perceived threats. From his perspective, defense mechanisms are a collection of coping strategies to deal with stress. Because of both constant inner tension produced by instinctual impulses and stressfully perceived external stimuli, Freud believed that defense mechanisms must always be in operation to some extent. Thus, he was convinced that all behavior is defensive in nature. Freud theorized that all defense mechanisms share two characteristics: (1) they are denials or distortions of reality, and (2) they operate unconsciously. Furthermore, an individual rarely uses just one defense mechanism. Rather, each person employs a variety of ego-protecting mechanisms overall, and usually several at the same time. Freud postulated a number of defense mechanisms, including denial, repression, projection, rationalization, reaction formation, regression, displacement, sublimation, and humor. The following are most commonly used in the defense of stress-produced anxiety:

Defense mechanisms: Described by Sigmund Freud; unconscious thinking patterns of the ego to either decrease pain or increase pleasure.

Denial: One of the primary defense mechanisms noted by Freud in which one disbelieves what occurred when personally threatened.

Repression: The involuntary removal of thoughts, memories, and feelings from the conscious mind so they are less threatening to the ego.

Projection: The act of attributing one's thoughts and feelings to other people so that they are less threatening to the ego.

Rationalization: The reinterpretation of the current reality to match one's liking: a reinterpretation of the truth.

1. **Denial:** When people are confronted with circumstances they find to be a threat, they often deny association or involvement with any aspect of the situation. Young children are often caught in the act of lying (denial) when they are accused of eating cookies right before dinner or making a mess in the bathroom. Examples in adulthood include denying a drinking or gambling problem. Any stimulus perceived to be a threat to the integrity of one's identity can push the button to deny involvement or knowledge. At a conscious level, the person truly believes he or she is innocent and sees nothing wrong with the behavior.
2. **Repression:** Repression is the involuntary removal of thoughts, memories, or feelings from the conscious mind. It differs from suppression, wherein painful experiences are intentionally forgotten, in that the conscious mind is unaware of this process. Freud referred to repression as an unconscious denial of something that brings emotional discomfort or pain. Examples are memories of unpleasant family holidays, child abuse, or embarrassing moments you cannot seem to recall even when friends and family tell you in fine detail what you did.
3. **Projection:** Projection is a process in which an individual defends the ego by attributing unacceptable feelings, impulses, and behaviors to other people—or objects such as dogs, tennis racquets, swim goggles, or the weather. In this way, when an impulse or emotion is manifested, it is now less threatening because its source appears to be generated externally rather than from within. Ownership of painful feelings is minimized. According to Freud, projection is most prevalent in response to feelings of sexual desire, insecurities, and aggression. An example of projection is oversleeping, getting a late start for work, getting caught in traffic, and then blaming every dumb driver for your lateness.
4. **Rationalization:** Rationalization is the reinterpretation of the reality of one's behavior or circumstances. It's a manipulation of the truth. Rationalization can be described as a filtered lens that makes emotional pain more acceptable, even appealing, to one's emotional vision. Actions or thoughts that are perceived to be threatening are quickly reinterpreted in terms of another, more acceptable, rational explanation. For example, someone who has been fired from a job he loved might rationalize this outcome by saying, "It was

an awful job and I'm glad to be done with it." Another example would be when your boyfriend breaks up with you and you tell friends you wanted to break it off because the relationship was too great a time commitment.

5. **Displacement:** When something that causes pain to the ego is inaccessible or otherwise cannot be responded to directly, the painful feelings can be transferred to an unrelated person or object. This is what Freud called displacement. Displacement involves transferring emotional pain and its related behavior from an unacceptable object (e.g., an authority figure) to a nonthreatening object (usually children and pets). For example, your boss is a jerk and you would love to choke him, but instead you go home and shoo away the cat who begs for attention. Even though feelings of anger and aggression are most commonly cited as those that are displaced, it is also possible to displace feelings and behaviors associated with joy and love to those you perceive to be most receptive to them, rather than those you believe would not respond favorably.
6. **Humor:** Later in his career, Freud began to study the psychology of humor and jokes. Reviewing the works of several humorists, he was at first perplexed at the phenomenon but soon saw it as a device for the body to release sexually repressed thoughts through laughter. This is the rationale he proposed to explain the popularity of "dirty" jokes. Humor, remarked Freud, is a unique defense mechanism unlike the others. It simultaneously decreases pain and increases pleasure, making it the most advanced of all the defense mechanisms.

These are but six of the many defense mechanisms Freud believed are most commonly used in response to anger and fear. Each mechanism, used to protect our identity, is a camouflage of reality (**FIG. 5.3**). The ego perceives uncensored threatening stimuli as attacks on the existence of our innermost feelings, perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes, so protection is often necessary, especially for children in the early stages of growth and development. However, overprotection of the ego can ultimately be as dangerous to the maturation process as lack of adequate protection. Overprotection usually results in the inhibition of emotional growth and maturation of the individual's mental and emotional boundaries, a situation analogous to a houseplant rootbound by too small a pot. When anxiety or a perceived threat enters the walls of the



FIGURE 5.3

ego, emotional pain results. With a less defensive attitude, however, this pain can enable the individual to expand his or her self-awareness and personal growth. In this case, the result is an expansion of the ego. Each time this "space" grows, therein lies an opportunity to expand one's capabilities and enhance one's human potential. It may not seem that stress always involves the ego, but in truth, it really does. Our ego is *our identity*, and whether it is fear or anger that triggers the stress response, things that cause stress typically attack the integrity of our identity and perceptions of self-worth. Freud's coping mechanisms are the front-line defense. The degree to which defense mechanisms are innate or learned behavior has yet to be decided. Perhaps because Freud understood anxiety to be an inseparable part of the individual, he left no substantial advice on minimizing it, short of psychoanalysis. Despite varying opinions of his work, Freud's theories of personality have become so well acknowledged, if not respected, it is not uncommon to find strong parallels in the concepts of other theorists.

Displacement: The transference of emotional pain (usually anger) from a threatening source (one's boss) to a nonthreatening source (one's cat).

Humor: The defense mechanism noted by Freud that both decreases pain and increases pleasure.

■ Jung and the Iceberg

The theories of Freud inspired many physicians to investigate the new clinical field of the psyche and human behavior. One such physician was Carl Gustav Jung (FIG. 5.4) of Switzerland, who was hand-picked by Freud to be his “heir apparent” and champion his theories. During the close collaboration of the two, Jung began to voice disagreement with some of Freud’s theoretical concepts. As a result, their professional (as well as personal) relationship quickly eroded. Although Jung and Freud parted company in their opinions of the mysteries of the mind, Jung has become respected as the second greatest influence on modern psychological thought. His theories involving introverts and extroverts, personality types (inspiring the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory), midlife crisis, synchronicity, anima-animus, archetypes, the shadow, and the spiritual nature of humankind sowed many seeds in the human potential movement, and his following continues to grow both within and outside the field of psychology.

Unlike Freud, who postulated that humans act by instincts, biological forces, and childhood experiences, Jung theorized human personality as a process of self-discovery and realization, a concept he referred to as **individuation**. Individuation involves not only the culmination of childhood experiences, but also a spiritual life force that shapes one’s being and life direction. Jung was convinced that self-awareness and a quest for a greater understanding of the self enhance the process of individuation, helping one navigate through the difficult passages of life. This ability to soul-search, to wrestle with personal issues, and to further the understanding of one’s life purpose, he believed, augmented psychological health. On the other hand, reluctance, avoidance, and indolence contribute to self-ignorance and perpetuate the stress associated with underutilized inner resources. Jung also disagreed with Freud’s notion that human behavior is driven primarily by sexual impulses. And although Freud placed less importance on aspects of the unconscious

Individuation: A term coined by Carl Jung to describe self-realization, a process leading to wholeness.

Personal unconscious: A repository of personal thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and memories.

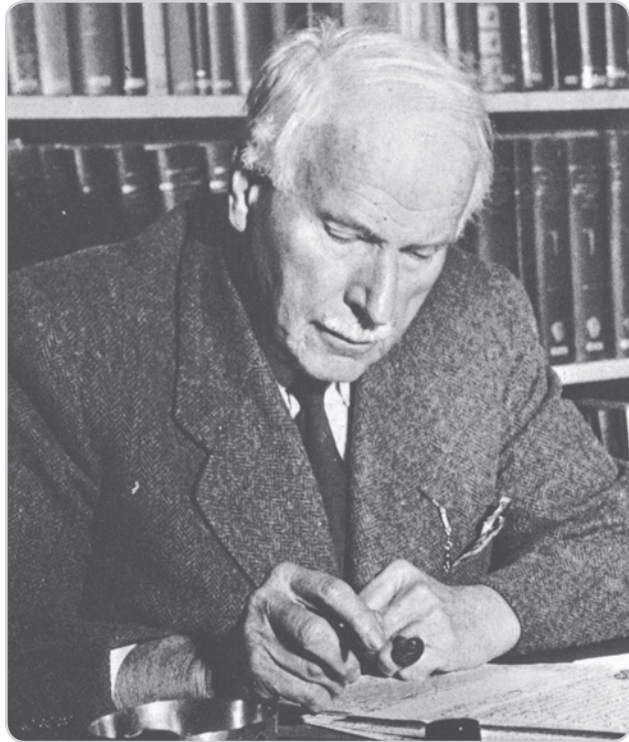


FIGURE 5.4 Carl Gustav Jung.

mind, Jung focused his life’s work on this construct, particularly in his empirical research on dreams as a means to enhance the individuation process.

Jung likened the human mind to an iceberg (FIG. 5.5). Metaphorically speaking, the conscious mind is represented by the tip above the water, while the unconscious, the greatest percentage of the mind, lies below the water. The conscious mind, with its limited awareness, focuses on specific thoughts, which compete for attention (e.g., What should I have for dinner tonight? How will I be able to afford a new car? What time is it? Will he ask me to the formal?). The unconscious mind is the receptacle for ideas, images, and concepts the conscious mind has no room to hold, as well as repressed thoughts, memories, and a host of undiscovered thoughts of enlightenment. Jung divided the unconscious mind into two levels. The first layer, the level he referred to as the **personal unconscious**, is the repository of the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and memories of the individual—everything dropped from the attention of the conscious mind. However obscure these ideas, feelings, and perceptions may be, they do not cease to exist, and in fact continue to influence conscious thought and behaviors. The second level Jung called

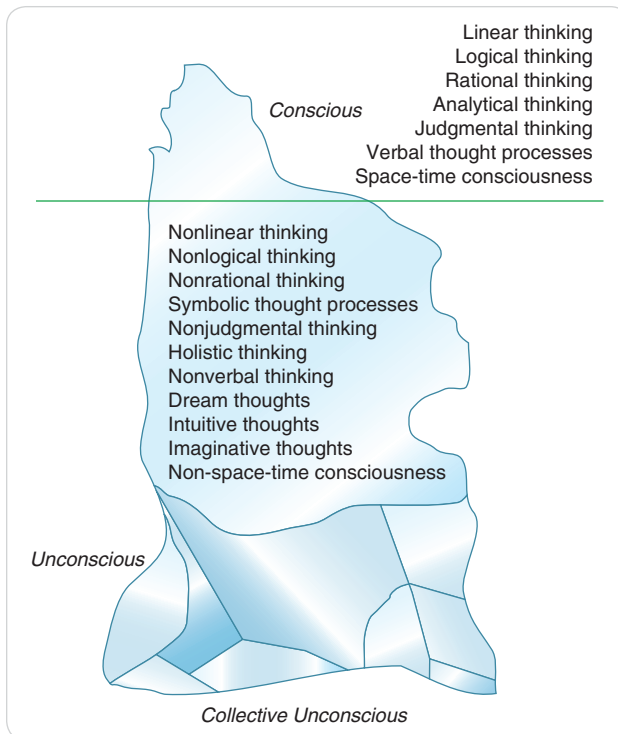


FIGURE 5.5 Jung compared the mind to an iceberg. That which is above the water represents the conscious mind, while that below represents all unconscious thought processes. Despite the fact that the unconscious mind may appear dormant at the conscious level, Jung theorized that it is perpetually active.

the **collective unconscious**, a profound and potentially inexhaustible reservoir of human thoughts and ideas integrated with ancient wisdom, which he claimed is essentially passed down from generation to generation, not unlike physical characteristics genetically passed down through generations of humanity. Jung believed that although this level was more difficult to access, the resources in this reservoir were invaluable in aiding the self-discovery process.

Jung believed that the passage of thoughts from the conscious to the unconscious mind is quite easy when compared to the difficult migration of intuitive or suppressed thoughts and dream images trying to surface to conscious attention. From Jung's viewpoint, consciousness naturally rejects anything unknown and unfamiliar. Consequently, the threshold of consciousness, like the membrane of a cell, acts as a barrier, censoring material from the unconscious mind that seems irrelevant, incoherent, inane, or ego-bruising.

From the analysis and interpretation of his own dreams as well as thousands of dreams of his patients, Jung discovered that the conscious and unconscious minds speak two different languages. The conscious mind communicates through very linear, rational, analytical, and verbal processes. Conversely, the processes of the unconscious mind are nonlinear, irrational, intuitive, and non-time-oriented processes represented through dreams in symbols and vivid colors. (It is interesting to note that Nobel Prize-winning research by Roger Sperry et al. has documented a similar division of cognitive functions in the left brain and right brain, respectively.) If you reflect on some of your own dreams, you may recall images that seem absurd—flying, swimming in red air, a herd of elk grazing in the attic, or a conversation with a college buddy and a high school sweetheart who in real life are thousands of miles apart and have never even met.

In Jung's view, daily stress is compounded by internal tension between the seemingly incompatible thought processes of the two minds. Although we are not typically aware of our unconscious minds' activities during the waking hours of the day (unlike the dream state during sleep), the unconscious mind is constantly open to sensory stimulation and countless thought processes, whereas the conscious mind only functions this way while we are awake. Moreover, the unconscious mind acts as a navigator for the driver of the conscious mind. Yet in many cases, the two are worlds apart in the front seat of the same car, with the conscious mind in a dominant role, charting its own course. In the dream state, however, the unconscious mind both navigates and drives, working to resolve issues raised in the course of the day. Confusion arises when the unconscious presents resolutions in dream symbols that the conscious mind passes off as ludicrous or unimportant. To the conscious mind, dreams hold little significance if there is no overt understanding, yet in Jung's opinion they continually offer impeccable insight into the problem-solving process.

To understand the concept of the unconscious better, imagine that while driving in a foreign country you become lost and stop to ask directions from people who speak no English. You do not speak a word of their native tongue either. They try to warn you that the road you are

Collective unconscious: A term coined by psychologist Carl Jung; the deepest level of unconsciousness, which connects all people together as one; divine consciousness.

on is unsafe, but even their pantomimes are unclear. You proceed and encounter the same situation with more natives a mile down the road. Baffled and discouraged, you shake your head, ignoring the warnings and continuing to drive on into potential danger.

Similarly, Jung proposed that internal tension develops at the interface of the conscious and unconscious minds because of the inability of these two entities to communicate effectively. In an attempt to minimize this tension, Jung explained that the conscious mind acts as a censoring mechanism that limits access to unconscious thought processes trying to bubble up from below. This explains why many people initially cannot recall their dreams or make sense of them if they do remember them. Although the censoring process may seem effective in the short term, the inability to decipher the language of the unconscious perpetuates internal stress in the long run.

New languages may be difficult to master at first, but with practice comes fluency. According to Jung, the conscious mind can be trained to interpret the dream symbols created by the unconscious mind by manipulating and playing with these images. Based on five decades of dream analysis, Jung made the following observations about dreams:

1. Dreams should be treated as fact, not as fabrications of the mind.

Psychic equilibrium: A term coined by Carl Jung to describe the balance of thought (and subsequent health-wholeness) between the conscious and unconscious minds, by having the conscious mind become multilingual to the many languages of the unconscious mind (e.g., dream interpretation).

2. Dreams have a definite and purposeful idea or theme expressed in unique symbols.
3. Dreams make sense when time is devoted to understanding their meaning.
4. Recurring dreams may represent a traumatic life event, be an attempt to compensate for a personal defect in attitude, or signal an event of importance in the future.
5. Dream interpretation is individualistic in that no dream symbol can be separated from the person who dreams it (e.g., the meaning of a plane crash is specific to the person who dreamed it).
6. Dream interpretation is essential to the resolution of stress and anxiety. In his last published book, *Man and His Symbols*, Jung wrote, “For the sake of mental stability and even physiological health, the unconscious and the conscious minds must be integrally connected and thus move in parallel lines.”

Jung’s concept of individuation emphasized the importance of self-reflection: quality time spent in solitude dedicated to expanding one’s conscious awareness as well as learning the language and wisdom of the unconscious mind. His travels to Asia, during which he studied the concepts behind meditation, reinforced his belief that self-reflection was essential to mental health. Jung was convinced that when you take the time to examine the depths of your own mind, a unity of conscious and unconscious thought processes occurs, which helps you to resolve personal issues and leads to a greater sense of inner peace. This unity he called **psychic equilibrium**.



FIGURE 5.6 Dreams offer a source of insight and information that we often don’t get any other way. For this reason it is important to pay attention to our dreams.

Stress with a Human Face



Pattie is a middle-school teacher who is currently working on her master's degree in psychology at the University of Northern Colorado. One day, after hearing a lecture on dreams and dream therapy, she became very intrigued with the notion of accessing the wisdom of the unconscious mind through dream interpretation. It didn't take long for her to decide the focus of her term paper for this course. It would be on the study of dreams and dream therapy.

Like most people, Pattie confides that she doesn't remember her dreams, yet knowing that all people have dreams, she was curious to learn more about herself and what wisdom would be revealed to her by making a more concerted effort to remember her dreams. The research paper became a catalyst for self-exploration.

Based on information she researched, Pattie knew that it was possible to train the conscious mind to remember dreams and uncode the language of dream symbols. She bought a notebook specifically to record her dreams and made a habit of practicing a relaxation technique before she went to bed, a technique she noted as an important step in the dream therapy process. Just as one would learn any skill, the first few attempts to record dreams were fruitless, but Pattie persisted.

One night, after listening to a relaxation tape, Pattie fell asleep. When she awoke, she recalled having a dream so vivid, so real, that she remembered the entire dream

sequence. Taking pen in hand, Pattie recorded the dream in her notebook.

"I dreamt I was in my classroom and a student came by and popped her head in the door and smiled. She was much older than my typical students and, although I didn't recognize her, I knew her. In analyzing the dream, I came to understand that she was actually a composite of several former students, and her appearance in my door was a message. She had come back to tell me that my teaching had had a positive influence on her life, and her smile to me was an acknowledgment of her gratitude. I interpreted her visit as a vote of confidence in my teaching skills and the dream served as a reminder that my job is worthwhile, and my work is having a positive impact on my students.

"Through my research I really learned how valuable dream therapy is to people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and through my own experience I learned how valuable dream interpretation is. It has had a positive impact on my life."

In describing her dream experience, she added, "I would like to pass along a quote from Carl Jung: 'No dream symbol can be separated from the individual who dreams it, and there is no definite or straightforward interpretation of any dream.'"

To assist his patients toward the goal of psychic balance, Jung employed what he called **active imagination**. This is a process where, in a conscious yet relaxed state, an individual uses creativity to manipulate dream fragments and complete the dream experience. This technique is most useful with recurring dreams, where the dreamer gives a desired ending to the neglected issues represented in these unfinished stories. Active imagination has been adapted to many coping and relaxation techniques alike, including mental imagery, journal writing, and art therapy. Jung was of the firm opinion that sickness, both mental and physical, was the result of the inability to bridge the gap between conscious and unconscious minds as a way to share knowledge to resolve inner tensions. In fact, he was once quoted as saying, "Modern man is sick because he is not whole," with wholeness being a peaceful union of the conscious and unconscious minds.

Jung suggested that each individual become introspective and dive below the waters of the conscious mind to gain insight into the causes of specific anxiety and stress. Once this awareness is gained, the source of anxiety can be confronted and handled at the conscious level, where it can lead to resolution and strength of the spirit. Throughout his life, Jung was devoted to the development of human potential, which begins with self-awareness. Many of Jung's followers have augmented and developed his concepts for application to psychotherapy, specifically

Active imagination: A term coined by Carl Jung describing a mental imagery process where, in a lucid dream state or relaxed state, you consciously imagine (and resolve) the end of a recurring dream. Active imagination is a form of visualization.

dream therapy. All in all, Jung's theories are quite profound, and they invite us to continue the exploration of the mysteries of the mind.

With the groundwork established by Freud and Jung, other theories were added throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to the collective body of psychological knowledge. With each new insight we gain a stronger grasp of the psyche, particularly the influence that stress has on it. The following theories only begin to touch on aspects of emotions, behavior, and personality. Yet when combined with those of Freud and Jung, they give a wider perspective on the factors associated with the psychology of stress.

■ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: The Death of Unmet Expectations

When the Social Readjustment Rating Scale was designed, it became obvious to its creators that the death of a spouse is the most stressful event a person can experience. The death and dying process, be it your own or that of someone you are close to, is very traumatic. Similarly, the death (grieving) of any unmet expectation is stressful and hence relates to this theory. One person who brought the issue of death to the forefront of human consciousness is Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (**FIG. 5.7**). A Swiss psychiatrist, Kübler-Ross stepped onto the global stage in 1969 with her pioneering work studying and counseling terminally ill cancer patients. Through her work she taught the world about the emotions and mental processes associated with death. Her work was inspired by her experiences as a teenager assisting in first-aid stations in Poland and Russia after World War II with survivors of Nazi concentration camps. From the carnage of the war and the concentration camps, Kübler-Ross realized that humankind had a great need to understand and cope with the problems of death and dying. She soon learned that the fear of death is universal, and that the death and dying process brings with it an abundance of emotional baggage. Not only grief, but guilt, shame, fear, and anger are all associated with the death experience.

Relocating to the United States after earning her degree in psychiatry, she was asked to join a group of physicians

Stages of grieving: A process outlined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross regarding the mental preparation for death, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.



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FIGURE 5.7 Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

conducting a research seminar involving interviews and counseling sessions with terminally ill cancer patients. In the course of this work, she noted similarities in the patterns of emotional behaviors among the patients, which led her to outline a process of mental preparation for death applicable to everyone. In her most acclaimed book, *On Death and Dying*, Kübler-Ross refers to these stages as the psychological **stages of grieving**. Although these stages were observed among dying cancer patients, the same stages apply to any type of loss, including the death of unmet expectations. The following is a description of the five stages with examples she observed among her cancer patients. Also included are examples of how each stage applies to the death of an unmet expectation—a more common stressor—the discovery that one's wallet has been stolen.

1. **Denial:** The refusal to accept the truth of a situation—a rejection of the truth. Kübler-Ross observed denial in her patients who, upon learning of their diagnosis, were often heard to exclaim, “I don’t have cancer. This isn’t happening to me.”

It cannot happen to me. I'm too young to die. I won't let it happen." Denial is also described as shock. In the case of a stolen wallet, the comparable reaction would be observed, "My wallet must be at home. I couldn't have misplaced it. Perhaps it's in my other pants (purse)."

2. *Anger:* The anger stage is a fit of rage that may include yelling, pounding, crying, and/or deep frustration manifested in a physical and emotional way. In this stage, anger is the physical expression of hostile feelings. Kübler-Ross typically saw anger directed not only at clinicians and family members but also toward a "higher power," even in those people who claimed not to believe in one. Similarly, a stolen wallet can provoke an outward expression of anger, where everyone becomes a suspect in its disappearance.
3. *Bargaining:* Kübler-Ross described this phase as a very brief but important one. Bargaining is an agreement between the conscious mind and the soul involving an exchange of offerings—primarily, a negotiation for more time to live. With cancer patients it may be expressed as, "If you let me live, I'll never smoke again." In the case of the stolen wallet, the negotiations would be something along the lines of, "Go ahead and take the money—but please don't use my credit cards."
4. *Depression:* Kübler-Ross divides the depression stage into two categories: reactive depression, when a patient grieves for a specific anatomical loss resulting from surgery (as with breast or bone cancer), and preparatory loss, feelings of impending losses related to the cancer, including personal freedom, time, family, and perhaps one's own life. Preparatory-loss depression is best described as a quiet or passive mood of uneasiness while feeling overwhelmed with thoughts and responsibilities at the same time. With depression there is very little, if any, perceived hope. In the case of the wallet, not only is there depression over the missing article, but also a feeling of being overwhelmed by having to arrange the replacement of its contents.
5. *Acceptance:* If and when a person has moved through the previous stages of the grieving process, then and only then can he or she arrive at the final stage, acceptance. Acceptance is an approval of existing conditions, a receptivity to things that cannot be changed. Acceptance is *not* giving in or giving up. It is *not* a surrender to the circumstance. Rather, it

is acknowledgment of the particular situation in which you find yourself. Acceptance allows you to move on with your life. With acceptance comes hope. For those cancer patients who arrive at this stage, their frame of mind can be described as, "Okay. So this is the way it is. I'm going to keep living my life as best I can. I'm going to put up a good fight." In the case of the stolen wallet, "So I lost my wallet. I'll get a new license, credit cards, ATM card, and a new wallet." In the acceptance stage there is no trace of anger or pity. Kübler-Ross indicates that this stage is very difficult to arrive at; in fact, many people never reach this stage in the course of their grieving. A significant component of the stage of acceptance is **adaptation**—consciously adapting to the new situation with thoughts and actions.

Kübler-Ross states that these stages are experienced by virtually every terminally ill patient. By no coincidence, these same stages are observed, to a greater or lesser degree, among people who go through other losses, including relationships (the end of a romantic relationship, divorce, or separation), identity (unemployment, retirement, new location, or new job), possessions (a lost/stolen wallet, damaged car, or fire-damaged house), as well as less tangible items (a failed exam, poor athletic performance). Actually, it could be the loss of anything significant. This mental-preparation-for-death process happens hundreds of times in one's lifetime. As Kübler-Ross explains, the stress associated with the mental stages is a catalyst to provide a greater mental awareness of several or all unresolved emotions. As an individual passes from one stage to the next, he or she enters a deeper level of mental awareness. In later years, Kübler-Ross amended her original theory to suggest that, in some cases, one of the first four stages may be skipped. She has devoted her whole life to assisting people so that they may complete the final stage peacefully.

To paraphrase Kübler-Ross, acceptance is your ability to acknowledge the emotional chains that bind you to your primary cause of stress, and acceptance allows you to free yourself from their bondage. Complete, unconditional acceptance, a full resolution without any resentment, animosity, or pity associated with these emotional potholes,

Adaptation: A behavior and attitude considered the epitome of the acceptance stage of grieving, where a person adapts to the new situation and no longer views him- or herself as a victim.

leads to what Kübler-Ross calls essential inner peace. The process of acceptance, resolving pent-up feelings or frustrations, is not an easy one. In fact, it can be quite emotionally painful. In her work, she observed some people with a stubborn streak who would rather leave matters unresolved than face the fear of this process. Others were unsure how best to resolve these emotions and eventually became hostage to them.

Typically, individuals repress or rationalize painful feelings that are perceived to be a threat to their inner self. As Kübler-Ross notes, the defense mechanisms of the ego serve, function, and manipulate well on a short-term basis but cause utter chaos in the long run. Through repression and rationalization, unresolved feelings, like phases of the moon, come full circle and ultimately resurface to haunt the conscious mind. To leave these emotional debts unresolved is what she refers to as the unfinished business of the soul. Kübler-Ross suggests that the process of addressing and completing unresolved feelings should not be delayed; rather, it should take top priority on a daily basis. The best way to initiate this resolution process, she says, is to grant yourself some quality “alone-time” to learn to recognize unresolved feelings between yourself and others, and perhaps most importantly within yourself, and then attempt to resolve them. There may be several strategies for resolution, including accepting a situation that is unchangeable and continuing to live with this fact. In any case, without a doubt, unconditional acceptance promotes inner peace.

■ Viktor Frankl: A Search for Life's Meaning

Stressors come in all shapes and sizes. Little problems, like small potholes on a dirt road, are easily avoided, but major stressors obstruct your progress in the journey of life and can stop you dead in your tracks. Whatever the events in your life you perceive as stressful, few, if any, can match the intensity of the suffering experienced by psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (**FIG. 5.8**) as a Nazi concentration camp prisoner and survivor. Frankl's experiences prior to and during his 3 years in Auschwitz led him to the development of a form of psychoanalysis he refers to as **logotherapy**, an existential analysis simply defined as a search for the meaning of life.

Logotherapy: A term coined by psychiatrist Viktor Frankl describing the search for meaning in one's life.



Austrian National Library/Interfoto/Alamy Stock Photo.

FIGURE 5.8 Viktor Frankl.

In his most acclaimed book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl illustrates the depth of human suffering in the Nazi concentration camps. From this basis of personal experience and observation, he augmented his understanding of the human quest for the meaning of existence. Having been stripped of every possible possession including clothes, jewelry, and even hair, camp prisoners were left with what Frankl calls the last human freedom: “the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances.” Of the prisoners who were fortunate enough to avoid the gas chambers and crematoriums, Frankl noted that it was largely the ability to choose one's attitude that ultimately distinguished those who lived from those who later perished from disease and illness in the concentration camps. Those who found and held onto a reason to live were able to survive the ghastly conditions, while those who saw no substantial meaning for living became physically and spiritually weak and succumbed to death.

Many of Frankl's psychological theories center on the concept of human pain and the meaning of suffering. Unequivocally, suffering is a direct consequence of profound stress. One does not have to experience the horrors of Auschwitz to feel suffering. Any experience that promotes feelings of emotional trauma, according to Frankl, contains the essence of a purposeful meaning.

The death of a child, severe illness, major debt, retirement, a change of jobs—these are all candidates for inducing personal suffering. Frankl was convinced that suffering is as much a part of life as happiness and love, and that like love, suffering has a purpose in the larger scheme of things. From his own observations, Frankl realized that suffering is a universal experience. Therefore, he reasoned, it must have some significant value to the advancement of one's human potential or spiritual evolution. In *Man's Search for Meaning* he writes, "If there's meaning in life then there must be meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, and death. Without suffering and death, human life would not be complete." Frankl did not advocate avoiding suffering, but rather suggested that the cause of emotional pain be examined to try to make some rational sense out of it—to find a meaningful purpose in suffering. This search for meaning is not a defense mechanism, a rationalization of pain, but the search for a truthful understanding. In fact, writes Frankl, meaning is not a fabrication of the mind, but a truth uncovered by the soul.

A tool to augment the search for meaning, as defined by Frankl, is **tragic optimism**. Tragic optimism he defined as the ability to turn suffering into a meaningful experience, and to learn from this experience with a positive perspective on life's events. The history of humanity is filled with inspiring examples of people who completed their grieving by finding meaning in their stressful suffering. One such person was Candy Lightner, who after losing her young daughter to the recklessness of a drunk driver, assembled her creative energies and formed the national organization Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Another example is Bethany Hamilton, who in 2003 overcame the emotional anguish of losing her left arm in a shark attack while surfing. She continues to compete and win professional surf competitions. In fact, many contemporary heroes and role models are individuals who overcame obstacles of biblical proportions, and soon became the epitome of human potential in action for others to emulate.

Finding meaning in a painful experience is not easy. Frankl notes that many people in contemporary society look upon victimization as more prestigious than personal achievement. Quite often people tend to wallow in self-pity beyond the point where it serves any beneficial purpose. So how does one begin a quest for the meaning of one's own life? Frankl suggests that the best time for this to occur is when you feel mental anguish or emotional suffering of any kind. When these conditions surface, you

must journey into the garden of your soul and examine your conscious mind. A mental examination quite often leads to questioning your ideals and values, and testing your will to fulfill or abandon them. Frankl notes that the will to find meaning in most people is *supported* by something or someone, not based on faith alone. It is also important to note that each person must find his or her own unique meaning, not a universal one, and that one cannot be borrowed or adopted from others. In fact, as people age there will be many different meanings to be searched for and recognized in their lifetimes. And suffering awaits in between the periods of life's meanings.

Frankl was convinced that, to an extent, stress plays an important role in mental health. Like Freud and Jung, Frankl believed that internal tension is inevitable among humans, but he held that mental health is dependent on the tension that exists between past accomplishments and future endeavors. A sense of boredom is what he called an existential vacuum, a state of tension where the current meaning to life is as yet undiscovered. In his experience, this reason outnumbered all other reasons combined for bringing people to psychotherapy and counseling. Frankl coined the term **noo-dynamics** to describe a process to resolve this existential vacuum by using the tension of boredom to search for life's meaning. Whereas Freud placed emphasis on childhood experiences, Frankl was concerned with the present and future as if to say, "So, what happened, happened. What are you going to do with your life now? Where are you headed from here? What new contribution can you make to humanity?" In logotherapy, Frankl advocates the concept of goal-setting to aid in the search for personal meaning in one's life. Setting and accomplishing goals involve creativity, to visualize where you are going, and stamina, the energy to get you there. The fundamental purpose of personal goals, Frankl states, is to enhance one's human potential. Furthermore, pleasure should be a consequence of meaning, not a purpose in and of itself. Frankl also suggests that a quest for true meaning has a spiritual quality to it. (*Logos* in Greek translates not only as "meaning" but also as "spirit.") In this case, however, the term *spirituality*

Tragic optimism: A term coined by psychiatrist Viktor Frankl to explain the mindset of someone who can find value and meaning in the worst situation.

Noo-dynamics: A term coined by Viktor Frankl describing a state of tension, a spiritual dynamic, that motivates one to find meaning in life. The absence of noo-dynamics is an existential vacuum.

has less of a formal religious connotation; rather, it refers to the human dimension of inner balance between faith in self-reliance and individual will. Spiritual health is imperative in the search for one's own meaning in life and in dealing with the suffering brought about by various life experiences, regardless of their cause. In his autobiography, Frankl spoke of those who, in the midst of a crisis, lost their belief in the future, in themselves, and their spiritual hold. Without spiritual health they were subject to mental and physical deterioration and eventual premature death.

Although Frankl's theories may seem rather abstract, the fundamental messages are clear: (1) one must continually search from within for life's meaning to achieve inner peace, and (2) in the absence of everything but one's body, mind, and soul, one has the ability to choose one's attitudes; in so doing one either perpetuates or resolves each circumstance. He writes, "We had to learn from ourselves and we had to teach despairing men that it did not matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us."

Wayne Dyer: Guilt and Worry

Relaxation is said to be achieved when the present moment is fully experienced and appreciated; this belief has been passed down for more than 2,000 years by wise people of all cultures (FIG. 5.9). Yet for many people, the present moment is a scary and insecure place to be. Feelings of discomfort, boredom, and inadequacy arise. In the earliest years, all a child knows is the present moment. But as the child matures into adulthood, the ability to enjoy the present moment seems to become ever more elusive. Instead, the mind becomes willingly preoccupied (often paralyzed) with either past or future events. The fact that many people spend their conscious thought processes in either the past or the future has not gone unnoticed. Psychotherapist Wayne Dyer (FIG. 5.10) observed this phenomenon in virtually all his clients. His most present works integrate the mind and the soul, but his earliest work is as solid today as it was decades ago.

In his best-selling book *Your Erroneous Zones*, Dyer states that to be occupied with the past or future can diminish, even extinguish, our appreciation of the present moment, thus robbing us of the ability to relax and be at peace with ourselves. The zones Dyer describes highlight certain stress-prone emotional responses—those unhealthy defensive processes learned very early in life as cognitive survival skills. In his theory of unproductive emotions and their related behaviors, Dyer states that one of two



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FIGURE 5.9 Learning to live in the present moment.



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FIGURE 5.10 Wayne Dyer.

emotions, guilt or worry, is associated with virtually every stressor perceived by people in America. Guilt is an expression of self-anger; worry, a manifestation of fear. When these emotional responses are triggered, they tend to immobilize rational thought processes, resulting in clouded thinking, delayed reactions, and poor decision making. Dyer goes as far as to say that guilt and worry are in fact the most ineffective coping techniques for stress management because they perpetuate the avoidance of stress-related issues needing resolution.

The Sin of Guilt

Dyer defines guilt as the conscious preoccupation with undesirable past thoughts and behaviors. Guilt feelings surface in our internal but conscious dialogue in the form of “should haves.” Guilt feelings can easily be produced by thinking about something you said or did just as easily as by something you didn’t say or do but feel you should have. Dyer is of the opinion that guilt contains a perplexing element of cultural respect, like that recorded by those who fled religious persecution in Europe to become this nation’s earliest settlers. Three hundred years later, guilt, he observes, is still a socially acceptable way to express the responsibility of caring. Yet true, productive caring, Dyer believes, should never be confused with this immobilizing emotion. When guilt is the overriding emotion, all thoughts and behaviors are influenced by it. Guilt is so powerful an emotion that it can have a paralyzing effect on all other thoughts and feelings and prevent a positive behavior or action from taking place. According to Dyer, guilt experienced to any extent can result in mild to severe depression. He states that, for the most part, guilt is fruitless because no amount of it can change the past. Although guilt appears to be a “natural” human emotion, Dyer is convinced that it serves no functional purpose beyond fostering recognition of important lessons to be learned and issues to be resolved. If and when these lessons are learned, guilt disappears.

From observations he made counseling his clients, Dyer created a dichotomy of guilt. **Leftover guilt** he describes as remnant thought patterns originating in early childhood, primarily through parental disciplinary tactics as, for example, shame imposed by an authority figure for naughty or unapproved behaviors. What worked as an inspirational force during childhood (approval seeking to avoid guilt), however, produces significant stress when carried into adulthood, yet the same unhealthy behaviors are usually continued. By contrast, **self-imposed guilt** is described as the guilt placed on oneself when an adult



FIGURE 5.11 Freud’s analysis of guilt.

moral or ethical behavior, based on the constructs of one’s personal value system, has been violated. Examples are missing church on Sunday or saying yes to something because it seemed like the right thing to say, then later regretting having agreed to it because you were never committed to it. Dyer notes that guilt is also used as a conventional tool for manipulating other people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions, a behavior that inappropriately transfers stress to others. He advocates avoiding using guilt and shame on others, and most important, avoiding using it on yourself.

The Art of Worrying

While guilt, like Dickens’s *Ghost of Christmas Past*, is associated with keeping the mind hostage with thoughts and behaviors from the past, worry infiltrates the mind to immobilize thought processes regarding events yet to

Leftover guilt: A term coined by psychologist Wayne Dyer explaining the ill effects of unresolved guilt left over from an early childhood experience.

Self-imposed guilt: A term coined by psychologist Wayne Dyer to describe the guilt one places on oneself when a personal value has been compromised or violated.

come. Dyer defines worry as the immobilization of thinking in the present moment as a result of preoccupation with things that may, or may not, occur in the future. Like guilt, Dyer notes that worry is looked on by many as an act of compassion. In reality, it too immobilizes cognition, clouds rational thought processes, and cultivates stress. The practice of worrying, like guilt, can lead to severe depression. Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who helped Jews escape from the Nazis during the Holocaust, said that “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.” The bottom line is that worry is a misuse of your imagination.

Dyer believes it is essential for everyone to distinguish the difference between worrying about the future and planning for the future. Worrying paralyzes and overrides present-moment thought processes and dilutes self-control. Then the imagination goes wild, creating a series of worst-case scenarios, all of which can seem very real and threatening. Dyer is convinced that worrying tends to produce a rebound effect, first resulting in a less effective means to deal with a given situation, which then produces more worry. Ironically, Dyer notes that people typically worry about matters over which they have no control. In addition, many seemingly insurmountable worries are later regarded as quite trivial (the making-a-mountain-out-of-a-molehill syndrome). Unfortunately, the knowledge of hindsight is ignored when worrying thoughts surface again. Unlike the worrying process, the constructive thought process of planning contributes to a more effective and productive future, minimizing potential stressors. Planning for the future, for example, by setting goals, making a strategy, and evaluating progress, provides a sense of empowerment.

To illustrate this difference, consider a person who worries about finding a job after graduation: He sits and stewes about not finding a job and the hazards of being unemployed. Conversely, planning involves drafting a résumé, making phone calls, writing cover letters, networking, following up with contacts, and making appointments. Although planning a strategy of options for future events does not guarantee a “smooth ride,” it does provide a base of security, whereas worrying leaves one in the driver’s seat with no keys, gas, or tires.

Love: The emotion studied and advocated by Leo Buscaglia as being the cornerstone to self-esteem and ultimately altruism.

As mentioned earlier, Dyer suggests that American culture breeds the emotion of worry by equating it with caring and love. He discovered that many of his clients emphatically prove their love by demonstrating the worry process. Several other psychotherapists note a similarity between this characteristic and the stress-prone codependent personality.

What the emotions of guilt and worry share is the *distraction* of one’s present mental processes. Both guilt and worry are what Dyer calls negative or nonproductive emotional states of cognition, and he confirms that these emotions are a waste of energy. As a therapist, Dyer counsels that the first step to removing these two erroneous zones is the awareness that they are used as ineffective coping techniques. When the practice of employing guilt or worry enters your awareness as a result of perceived stress, Dyer suggests removing guilt or worry by reframing your perception either to find the lessons to be learned from the past or to start planning strategically for future events that are occupying your attention. Like other leading psychologists, Dyer advocates acceptance of past events as an important stress-management strategy to enable you to move on with your life. Dyer is in the company of several prominent psychologists and scholars who concur with his theories of guilt and worry, two emotions responsible for more visits to psychologists’ offices than all others combined.

Since his first book, *Your Erroneous Zones*, Dyer has written several other best-selling books that focus on the theme of moving from a motivation of fear to a motivation of love. In his book *Your Sacred Self*, Dyer continues the theme of erroneous zones, with guilt and worry both manifestations of fear. Ultimately, Dyer says, the ego is the cause of these two “erroneous zones,” and the sooner the ego is tamed, the sooner we move to a place of love.

■ Leo Buscaglia: The Lessons of Self-Love

Of all the psychological theories developed over the past century, most, if not all, have been influenced by anxiety as the primary force of human motivation. This narrow focus has eclipsed several equally motivating emotions, particularly love. Until the start of the twenty-first century, science had remained reticent on this subject. To paraphrase the words of psychologist Abraham Maslow, “It’s amazing how little time the empirical sciences have to offer on the subject of love.” One might assume that the concept of **love** has been perceived to be either

unimportant or too complex an emotion to adequately define and study. Both assumptions hold elements of truth. In the past, love was left to poets, philosophers, actors, and songwriters to be explored, explained, and elaborated; psychology maintained a hands-off approach. Although this approach continues today, love as a viable motivational force and healing tool has recently moved out of the anthologies of poetry and Hollywood cinema and into classrooms, corporate boardrooms, and operating rooms. Upon taking a closer look at the theory and application of this enigmatic emotion, love is now recognized as a powerful inner resource much too important to ignore (Johnson, 2003). In simple terms, love is the epitome of eustress; its absence, distress. In recognition of the importance of love and health, the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love was created in 2000 as a joint collaboration between the Fetzer Institute and Sir John Templeton so that the merits of love, expressed as altruism, could be studied.

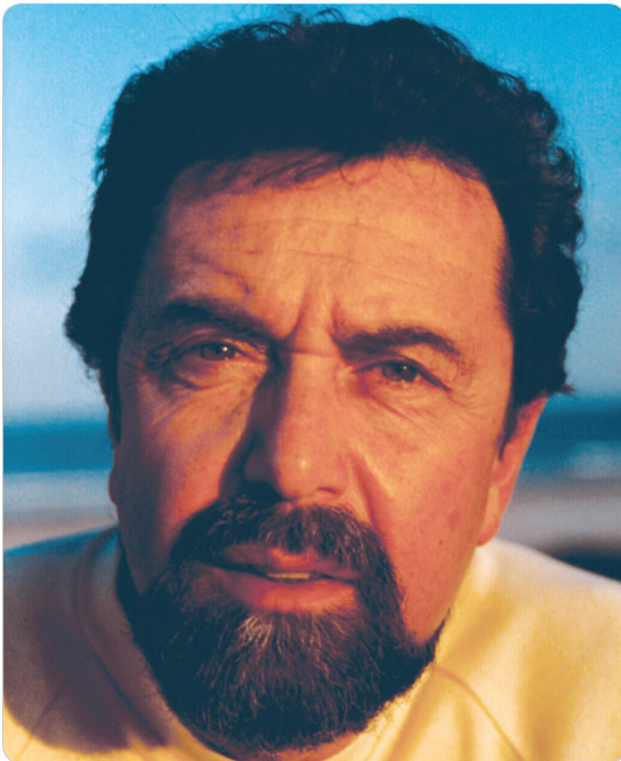
One man to bring the theoretical concept of love into the respectable forum of academia was Dr. Leo Buscaglia (FIG. 5.12). Buscaglia developed an experimental undergraduate course at the University of Southern California in the late 1960s called the “love class.” Through his

investigations, he brought forth some simple yet profound concepts of this elusive emotion, with many implications for both eustress and distress. Furthermore, he gave credibility to a component of emotional well-being that had been long overlooked.

Buscaglia is quick to admit that love is very difficult to define. First and foremost, he states, “Love is a response to a learned group of stimuli and behaviors.” An infant learns to love primarily through contact with his or her parents in the home environment. Love—specifically, self-love—is not innate, but taught. Yet, unlike many other subjects, it is taught neither in school nor in church. Buscaglia notes that as children we are taught to control our emotions (e.g., don’t cry, stop laughing, wipe that smile off your face). As a result, the ability to express our emotions fully is denied, including the emotion of love. The emotional pain of rejection, or denied love, only compounds this inability. That is, ego defenses strengthen to prevent or minimize recurrences. As a child matures to adulthood, love often diminishes to the point of dormancy. Sadly enough, Buscaglia indicates, most of us never really learn to love at all. This, he believes, can have dangerous repercussions later in the growth process, when one forms lifelong relationships. And this may be the reason, he explains, why the divorce rate is hovering around 50 percent.

One reason why love is so hard to define, Buscaglia admits, is that so many people equate it with related concepts: sex, romance, attraction, needs, security, and attention. Love is also perceived to comprise a wide spectrum of feelings, including ecstasy, joy, irrationality, dissatisfaction, jealousy, and pain. In Buscaglia’s opinion, however, there may be many degrees of love, from joy to grace, but there is only one love, that which leads to the positive growth process of self-discovery. Love is love, he proclaims. In his best-seller, *Love*, he writes, “for love and the self are one, and the discovery of either is the realization of both.” Love brings with it change, and change requires adaptation, which like other types of stress can produce either pleasure or pain. Despite fairy-tale endings in which love conquers all with relative ease, Buscaglia repeatedly states that love takes much work, continuous work. There is much responsibility with love. Left unattended and unnurtured, it will evaporate and disappear. Buscaglia also compares love to knowledge, which you must have before you can teach it. Likewise, you must feel and experience love before you can share it. There are no exceptions.

In Buscaglia’s words, “To love others, you must first love yourself,” and this is no small feat. As youngsters,



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FIGURE 5.12 Leo Buscaglia.

we experience some degree of love from our parents, yet self-love is rarely taught and thus remains a foreign concept to many people. In fact, self-love is misrepresented as egotistical selfishness and is strongly discouraged. Humbleness *is* advocated, but often at the risk of sacrificing self-love. The Christian ethic commands that you “love your neighbor as yourself”; however, Buscaglia observes that this equation is rarely balanced. Through his research, Buscaglia has found that most people are deficient in their capacity to love themselves unconditionally, and that they are restrained from expressing self-love by their low self-esteem. Moreover, he cites several deterrents to self-love. The greatest of these are the conditions we place on ourselves for self-acceptance, primarily physical appearance and capabilities—in short, everything that prevents perfection. A recurring pattern of “not completely liking myself because . . .” creates a negative-feedback system that perpetuates a lifetime of unhappiness. This phenomenon is more descriptively referred to as chronic stress, and it is associated with low **self-esteem**.

Buscaglia offers an alternative to this self-defeating attitude. He suggests that you take an honest look at yourself from within. Be prepared to openly accept all that there is to see, for better or worse, and exclude nothing. From this honest look, begin to accept yourself as you really are. This means accepting all those qualities you cannot change (e.g., height, eye color, parents) while pushing the limits of those qualities that allow room for growth (e.g., creativity, humor, intellect, love). Then, take the initiative to enhance those qualities that will help you reach your highest potential. In addition, Buscaglia emphasizes the need for each individual to focus on his or her individuality rather than aiming for conformity by comparing oneself to others. He coined the term the **X-factor** to symbolize a prized quality that makes each person special and unique. People need to focus on this quality to move toward unconditional self-acceptance and unconditional self-love.

In Buscaglia’s quest for love, he has searched for every color of love’s rainbow to comprehend and share his

understanding of this often misused, misunderstood, and misacknowledged emotion. His attempts to understand the fundamental concepts of love have taken him to the shores of nearly every continent. Unlike the approach of Western culture, which is geared toward the achievement of happiness through external pleasures, Buscaglia has turned toward the East, adopting a philosophy that supports unconditional self-love. The philosophy of many Eastern cultures is one in which the individual focuses inward to understand him- or herself; the continuous journey toward self-understanding yields inner peace. Inner peace, in turn, creates universal harmony. Harmony, in turn, promotes happiness. And happiness nurtures love. Buscaglia illustrates this concept with the Hindu greeting *namaste*, which literally translated means, “I honor the place in you where, if you are at peace with yourself, and I am at peace with myself, then there is only one of us.”

Buscaglia argues that for love to be an inner resource it cannot lay dormant. It must be acted out and acted on continually. And for love to exist there must be a will or desire to love. The will to love is an attitude of choice. Poets, film directors, and songwriters often make love seem too dynamic, distant, or elusive, sometimes even unattractive. But love of the self begins and grows with positive feelings toward the self, which each person is capable of creating. Buscaglia’s message of self-love is directly tied to self-esteem, for we value only those things we love and feel positively about. When we do not love ourselves completely, or place conditions on our self-love, our self-esteem is compromised and thus deflated. And low self-esteem makes us vulnerable to, and almost defenseless against, the perceptions of stress.

From all his research, Buscaglia has developed six hypotheses regarding love as a motivating influence:

1. One cannot give what one does not possess. To give love you must possess love.
2. One cannot teach what one does not understand. To teach love you must comprehend love.
3. One cannot know what one does not study. To study love you must live in love.
4. One cannot appreciate what one does not recognize. To recognize love you must be receptive to love.
5. One cannot admit what one does not yield to. To yield to love you must be vulnerable to love.
6. One cannot live what one does not dedicate oneself to. To dedicate yourself to love you must be forever growing in love.

Self-esteem: The sense of underpinning self-values, self-acceptance, and self-love; thought to be a powerful buffer against perceived threats.

X-factor: A term coined by psychologist Leo Buscaglia to describe that special quality that makes each one of us unique. By focusing on our X-factor and not our faults and foibles, we enhance our self-esteem.

Buscaglia's attempt to validate love as a crucial component of human motivation has been met with both enthusiasm and apathy. His work is accepted by many professionals who implement his concepts in counseling and therapy with their clients, but for the most part, the topic today remains ignored by researchers. Be that as it may, the focus on love in psychology is slowly gaining momentum as the field of psychospirituality begins to unfold.

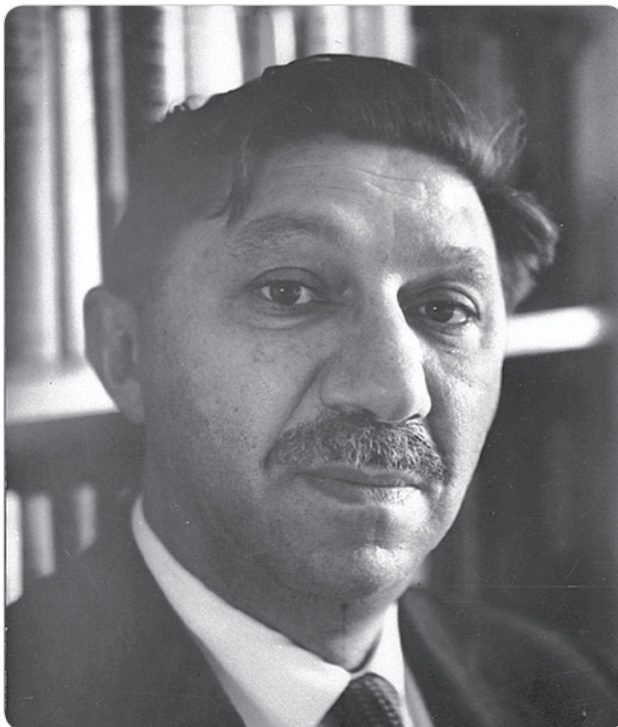
■ Abraham Maslow: The Art of Self-Actualization

Perhaps the most optimistic of all psychologists who have made contributions to modern psychology is Dr. Abraham Maslow (FIG. 5.13). While his predecessors and contemporaries studied mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, and maladjusted individuals to form the basis of their theories of human behavior, Maslow chose to study examples of men and women who epitomized the height of human potential, individuals exhibiting the unique combination of creativity, love, self-reliance, confidence, and independence. Despite the atrocities of World War II, Maslow was convinced of the existence of a brighter side of human nature, and he became committed to the development of a theoretical construct to

support this hypothesis of a humanistic approach to psychology. Maslow's faith in humankind led him to believe that by understanding individuals with positive personality characteristics and admirable traits, he could devise a framework to serve as a model for others to follow in their pursuit of self-improvement. Unlike other psychologists, who attempted to describe how personality and behavior are affected by stress, Maslow placed emphasis on personality traits, those reflections of inner resources that seem to help people cope with stress and achieve psychological health. In other words, certain personality traits he observed in this special collection of people combine to act as a buffer in personal confrontations with stress.

Maslow's concept of behavior and personality is referred to as the **theory of motivation** for the nature of the characteristics he studied. This theory suggests that human beings operate on a **hierarchy of needs** that influence behavior. When the needs at one level are met, then needs at higher levels can be addressed in a linear, stair-step approach. In this hierarchy, the more advanced needs will not appear until lower needs have been acknowledged and addressed. In addition, when lower needs, such as hunger, reappear, all higher needs momentarily vanish.

This hierarchy of needs consists of six tiers or levels (similar in many ways to the chakras). Once described in terms of climbing a ladder, it is now usually illustrated as a series of steps (FIG. 5.14). The first tier comprises the most basic physiological needs to ensure survival of the human organism. These include food, sleep, and sex (and, in some cases, the need for drugs or alcohol when chemical dependency is involved). The second tier, safety needs, also contributes to survival and includes those factors that provide security, order, and stability, including clothing, money, and housing. Maslow called these first two tiers lower, or deficit, needs, while the remaining levels of the hierarchy he referred to as growth needs. Affection and strong bonding relationships constitute the third stage, belongingness and love needs. The fourth tier he called personal esteem needs, or the need and



Courtesy of the Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections Department, Brandeis University.

FIGURE 5.13 Abraham Maslow.

Theory of motivation: Maslow's theory associated with personality and behavior, based on his theory of the hierarchy of needs.

Hierarchy of needs: Maslow's concept of a stair-step approach of consciousness (thoughts and behaviors), ranging from physiological needs to self-transcendence.



FIGURE 5.14 Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Note the similarity in the levels of self-actualization to the chakra system.

desire to seek or prove self-worth. The fifth level Maslow called the need for **self-actualization**, a stage of personal fulfillment in which ego boundaries and attachments are virtually eliminated, and a feeling of oneness with the universe is experienced, thus allowing one to maximize one's human potential. Ideally, self-actualization is the fulfillment of one's highest human potential and capabilities. Maslow writes in *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, "Self-actualization is the point where one is ultimately at peace with oneself." In later years, Maslow added a sixth stage, which he referred to as the highest stage: **self-transcendence**, where one offers oneself to the service of others or dedicates oneself to a bigger cause for pure altruistic purposes.

According to Maslow, to progress from one level to the next, each area or need must be fulfilled and satisfied. What is important to note is that there is often fluctuation between levels when needs in the lower levels reappear. Even a person who has reached the level of self-actualization does not stay there indefinitely. What makes the level of self-actualization so challenging to attain is the requirement that one lower the walls of the ego and explore the unknown with anticipation, not fear. In fact, Maslow

states that the need to know (curiosity), and a desire to take risks and actively pursue an understanding of oneself are essential to reaching self-actualization.

In his quest to understand this highest level of needs, self-actualization, Maslow studied the lives of thousands of people, including students, acquaintances, public figures (Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Albert Schweitzer), and historical figures (Thomas Jefferson, Jane Addams, and Abraham Lincoln), finding a number he considered both healthy and prime examples of quality human beings. From his research, cited in *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow noticed many characteristics common to people he identified as being self-actualized. It is this collection of characteristics that appears to contribute to the resilient nature of people who possess psychological health. To the untrained eye, these people appear to have no stress in their lives, but upon closer scrutiny of the makeup of their personalities, they do in fact have stress but know how to deal with it effectively. According to Maslow, self-actualized people display the following characteristics (or coping techniques):

1. *A highly efficient perception of reality:* Self-actualizers are individuals who are able to maintain a clear and objective perspective on themselves and others. Their perceptions are not clouded or disturbed by egotistical influences; rather, they are unbiased by prejudice and supposition. Maslow found that these people had a strong sense of qualitative judgment.
2. *Acceptance:* People in this class of individuals are aware of not only their strengths, but their weaknesses as well. Like everyone else, they have faults

Self-actualization: The fifth level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs where one experiences a sense of personal fulfillment.

Self-transcendence: The sixth and highest stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where one offers oneself altruistically to the service of others. Mother Teresa, Jane Goodall, Jimmy Carter, and Desmond Tutu serve as examples of this stage.

and imperfections. But they harbor no guilt, animosity, or shame about the failings or shortcomings in themselves or others. These people accept their shortcomings and do not victimize themselves with their less-than-desirable traits. They work to move beyond them.

3. *Naturalness and spontaneity*: Self-actualizers are themselves, and they feel very comfortable with themselves. They display no false facade, nor are they rigid in their mannerisms. They are open, frank, and present natural, unfiltered behavior in most, if not all, situations and circumstances. Most important, they go with the flow and are unthreatened and unfrightened by the unknown. They can think on their feet and react favorably to changes in a spontaneous fashion. They are not easily stressed when plans or circumstances change abruptly.
4. *Problem centering*: People who exhibit the traits of self-actualizers have a strong sense of commitment and dedication to their jobs and other responsibilities. They see themselves as part of the whole, not the whole. When problems arise, these people do not get bogged down in petty personal issues. They confront issues, not people. Because of this strong sense of commitment and purpose in life, self-actualizers work very hard, yet they derive much pleasure from their work. Maslow was once quoted as saying, “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.” Self-actualizers have many tools for problem solving.
5. *Solitude and independence*: Self-actualized people can find as much pleasure in being by themselves as in the company of friends, without feeling lonely. They like their moments of privacy and make time for them. Solitude is considered a blessing, often a time to recharge. Satisfaction is derived from within, as opposed to being dependent on others. Alone-time is often a time of reflection and a time to draw on inner strengths. There is a strong element of autonomy and free-spiritness.
6. *A continual freshness of appreciation*: Grasshoppers, falling leaves, the Big Dipper—these people “stop and smell the roses” along the way. Not only do self-actualizers continually find unexpected wonder and awe in the simplest of surroundings, but like children they typically face daily living with freshness and a bigger-than-life attitude. These people know how to live in the present moment, minimizing feelings of guilt and worry. Rarely do they take anything for granted, and they count their blessings regularly.
7. *Creativity*: Self-actualizers are highly creative individuals who bring imagination, inventiveness, originality, and energy to the thought process. They are able to conceive an idea, visualize it, and then implement it. They are inquisitive and open to new possibilities in their thinking. They are not afraid to fail because they know that failure leads to success. In his book *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Maslow writes, “My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualized, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing.”
8. *Interpersonal relationships*: To be self-actualized does not mean one has hundreds of friends. Rather, the circle of friends is small, but those in this circle are very similar in interests and compatible. Self-actualizers develop closeness to individuals who stimulate them and who contribute to their own growth and human potential. Relationships are selective and based on the ability to inspire rather than influence.
9. *Human kinship*: Self-actualizers appear compelled to assist in social and moral causes, and they are willing to help all levels of humanity. According to Maslow, they take on a brother or sister role toward other people. Above all, these people have a genuinely unselfish desire to help the human race.
10. *A democratic character*: People who display this characteristic find they have something to learn from everyone. They do not come across as condescending or “uppity.” These people have the ability to relate to people from all walks of life.
11. *Strong sense of ethical values*: Maslow found that people he considered self-actualized consistently demonstrated knowledge of right and wrong in their own terms. “These people,” wrote Maslow, in the book *Motivation and Personality*, “rarely show the confusion and inconsistency, or the conflict that are so common in the average person’s ethical dealings.”
12. *Resistance to enculturation*: Self-actualizers are their own people. They are not likely to conform to or follow trends of fashion or politics. Although

they may greatly appreciate aspects of other cultures, they do not adopt them as their own. They are directed more by their own nature rather than by the influences of cultural tides.

13. *A sense of humor:* Self-actualizers possess the ability to appreciate the flood of incongruities and ironies in life as well as laugh at their own foibles and mistakes. A light and happy heart is a common trait; these people do not employ sarcasm or hostility in their repertoire of humor. There is a strong spontaneous and playful nature to their sense of mirth.
14. *Mystical or peak sensations:* A peak experience is considered by Maslow to be the climax of self-actualization. A peak experience is any experience of real excellence, real perfection, or of moving toward a perfect justice or perfect values. He found that people who described a peak experience often analogized it to spiritual orgasm. A **mystical (peak) sensation** is a very spiritual moment when you feel one with the world and very much at peace with yourself.

If all of this sounds like the Wonderful World of Disney, it is, because there are very few people who completely fit this description. Maslow estimated from his research that approximately 1 percent of the human population has ever reached this level with any great frequency. And even then, people who do fulfill this need don't tend to stay at this level for their entire lives. Most of the people he classified as self-actualizers were over 30 years old. Teenagers, he found, were too busy polishing their identity to reach this level in high school, or even college. What Maslow came to realize is that individuals are not born self-actualizers. Instead, they must evolve through a multitude of human experiences, smooth the rough edges, and polish the surface of their personal existence. Those who succeed have developed a remarkable human potential and, in the process, a healthy example for others to follow. Yet, to be sure, people who show the traits of self-actualization don't *always* exhibit these characteristics. Maslow noted that, on occasion, they get angry, bored,

depressed, selfish, and perhaps, on occasion, even rude. They, too, have ups and downs, and must address the other needs of their existence as well. Overall, though, it is their desire to be all they can be that puts them in this select group of individuals. Self-actualizers are not angels, messiahs, or prophets. They have imperfections and flaws like the rest of Earth's inhabitants. But unlike other people, they don't dwell on them. Basically, self-actualizers are people with a strong positive outlook on themselves and life in general. They hold a tremendous amount of faith in themselves and their work. They live life with a passion, not a grudge. They know themselves inside and out, and without a doubt, they are their own best friends.

It is interesting to note that Maslow often talked about the relationship between emotional states and disease. In a presentation to a group of people at the Esalen retreat center in California, he spoke of the concept of **meta-disease**, where disease and illness are the results of unresolved emotional states of consciousness.

The exciting aspect of Maslow's theory of self-actualization is that we all have this potential. We all have the ability to access our inner resources, and we are all capable of becoming self-actualized. Unfortunately, Maslow states, we limit our capabilities, and these limits stifle our evolution to self-actualization. We place barriers (defense mechanisms) around ourselves for emotional protection. But the barriers around emotional security often cause us to stagnate and eventually inhibit the growth of this remarkable human potential. Self-actualizers have learned to collapse the barriers, lower the walls of the ego, and welcome the opportunity for growth. In a society where stress is becoming more and more apparent, Maslow's theory is an illuminating torch in the field of psychology, so much so that several psychologists have taken his lead and advocated his "hardy" characteristics as being among those conferring the ability to resist the effects of stress.

■ Martin Seligman: Optimism and the Art of Being Happy

For the past several decades, the field of psychology has been greatly influenced (some say co-opted) by the pharmaceutical industry, with a proliferation of medications for depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and so on. At the same time, however, several people championed a different perspective of psychology. In the wake of Maslow's theory of self-actualization and human potentials, comes

Mystical (peak) sensation: A euphoric experience during which one feels a divine or spiritual connection with all life.

Meta-disease: A concept by Maslow that depicts origins of physical disease as being based in unresolved emotional issues.



FIGURE 5.15 Martin Seligman.

Martin Seligman, Ph.D. (**FIG. 5.15**), a renowned psychologist, who, like Maslow, opted to look at the brighter side of human potential rather than its darker side. Seligman first gained notoriety for his work on the topic of learned helplessness and the traits associated with the helpless-hopeless personality. It was this work that created the platform for his landmark theories of **positive psychology** and launched two best-selling books, *Learned Optimism* and *Authentic Happiness*. Seligman was so well respected by his colleagues for his work that he was elected president of the American Psychological Association (APA) by the widest margin in its history. It was in this position as president of the APA where he began to shift the focus of the field of psychology to include positive aspects of the human psyche. In doing so, many colleges across the country now offer courses and degree programs in this specialty.

Seligman writes in his book *Authentic Happiness*, “For the last half century, psychology has been consumed with a single topic only—mental illness.” He explains further that psychosis and neurosis are rooted in rotten-to-the-core religious dogma and that over the years the field of psychology, so greatly influenced by pharmacology, became derailed in its efforts to nurture people’s highest

potential. By focusing on the negative aspects of human psychology, little if any limelight has been placed on those aspects that make life worth living. In an effort to move beyond a theory of happiness to a documented science that supports this theory, or what Aristotle called the “Good Life,” Seligman set out to prove that positive thoughts and emotions are an inherent part of the human condition and a birthright for everyone. Moreover, it is these traits we need to cultivate, nurture, and enhance during times of stress.

According to Seligman, the field of positive psychology is based on three aspects: (1) the study of positive emotions (e.g., happiness, joy, trust, gratitude, forgiveness); (2) positive personality traits (what Seligman calls strengths and virtues); and (3) the study of positive institutions (e.g., democracy, strong families, free inquiry). Seligman believes that the time has finally arrived for a science and paradigm that seeks to understand positive emotions, build strength and nurture the virtues for optimal living, and provide a workable structure to help people achieve a balanced life. Positive psychology reveals the pathway to live in what he calls “the upper reaches of your set-point of happiness.” The events of September 11, 2001, only reinforced his belief that the suffering during troubled times does not trump the understanding and building of happiness. In the preface to his book *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman shares what Hans Selye discovered in the last decade of his life: “Experiences that induce positive emotion cause negative emotions to dissipate rapidly.”

One concept that Seligman expounds upon is the “happiness thermostat,” an abstract emotional control made tangible through real thoughts, perceptions, memories, and personal experiences. This thermostat is one that can be programmed through our thoughts and intentions. It also can be programmed through our inherent strengths and virtues, which include wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence.

As president of the APA, and well beyond his term in this position, Seligman has devoted much time to shifting the paradigm of Western psychology from a disease-based model to a more holistic model that includes the

Positive psychology: A field of modern psychology that focuses on three aspects: (1) positive emotions, (2) positive personality traits, and (3) positive institutions.

prevention of mental illness and a greater understanding and application of authentic happiness. Seligman's talk on positive psychology isn't just fluff. He backs up his words with research, whether it's the landmark happiness and longevity study on 180 Catholic nuns, or countless research studies on optimism. His work has also inspired others (Emmons, 2007) to explore the topic of gratitude as a pathway toward authentic happiness. Suggesting that his happiness theory has fallen short of positive psychology's potential, Seligman has revised his theory to include five measurable constructs that he describes in his new book, *Flourish*: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, a purposeful life meaning, and achievements/accomplishments. Augmenting the base of the human potential movement, Seligman now dedicates his life work to teaching others how to amplify their strengths and virtues; human assets in times of strife pay an immeasurable dividend, allowing people to enjoy the good times even more. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, whom Seligman quotes often: "The constitution only gives you the right to pursue happiness. Ultimately, you have to catch it yourself."

■ A Tibetan Perspective of Mind and Stress

Long before Freud coined the terms *ego* and *id*, millennia before Jung realized the importance of synchronicity, and eons before anyone ever dreamed of drugs like Prozac and Ritalin, the concept of mind (and the stress associated with it) was examined by a young man who tried to understand the nature of human existence, particularly human suffering. Today that man is referred to as the Buddha (the enlightened one), and his introspection of the human mind is studied extensively throughout the world. It is believed that the philosophy of Buddhism arrived in Tibet more than one thousand years ago. When Tibet was invaded by China in 1959, however, not only did its citizens flee to all corners of the world, but they took with them the ancient wisdom of inner peace they

had practiced for hundreds of years and have now begun to share it with the world.

In the past decade, many Tibetan lamas, including the Dalai Lama, have spoken and written extensively on the topic of stress as viewed through the perspective of the mind. Based on the concept of the four noble truths, suffering (stress) is believed to be a consequence of **desires** with strong attachments. In the words of the Dalai Lama, "I think there are two kinds of desire. Certain desires are positive, a desire for happiness. It's absolutely right. The desire for peace. The desire for a more harmonious world, a friendlier world. But at some point, desires can become unreasonable." Expectations, conditions, and fears associated with desires become negative, as a result of the ploys of the ego. Initially, these teachers didn't make reference to the ego. Instead, this concept was referred to as the **self** (lowercase). Over the years, however, Western vernacular has been adopted to share this message in a context that can be more easily understood.

In the acclaimed book *The Art of Happiness*, the Dalai Lama writes, "Hatred, jealousy, anger, and so on are harmful. We consider them negative states of mind because they destroy our mental happiness."

Sakyong Mipham is a Tibetan lama who was raised in India and educated in the United States. In his book *Turning the Mind into an Ally*, Mipham describes the nature and complexities of the mind and the training it takes to find a place of balance (mental stability). Laziness, procrastination, and desire are the strengths of the ego, which Mipham suggests needs taming so that the smaller mind can connect with the higher mind to reach one's full potential. Meditation is advocated as a means to "domesticate the ego" and cultivate the mind's potential.

A tamed mind, detachment from desire, and a connection to the higher mind (higher self) set the stage for healing and inner peace. Tulku Thondup is a Tibetan rimpoche (teacher) who describes stress as the mind's grasping for things that it cannot own, but merely enjoy. With a dualistic perspective, the mind creates judgments and anxiety as one differentiates between oneself and others—good from bad, rich from poor, and so on. As the mind clears itself from the limitations of ownership (attachment) and sees the oneness of everything, however, inner conflict ceases. Happiness begins, and the true nature of the collective mind is revealed.

Desires: In the Buddhist perspective of stress, desires are conditions and expectations that are associated with goals. Desires with attachments cause stress.

Self, the (two versions, Tibetan psychology): The *Self* is the higher self or the true self; the *self* is identified as the false self or the ego-driven self.

Some Theoretical Common Ground

From these theories, we can see that the mind creates several strategies to deal with stressful stimuli. Many of these strategies fall in the realm of defenses used to protect the mind from the threat of painful or dangerous events in our lives. Whether these defenses are as specific as those described by Freud and Jung, or more general, like those described by Kübler-Ross, Frankl, Dyer, and Buscaglia, they appear to be a very real, if primitive, part of the coping process to deal with stress. When one looks at these theories, it becomes evident that self-awareness is a critical process to move beyond defensive action and into the realm of resolution (**FIG. 5.16**). In fact, the premise of psychotherapy is to put the client back on track through the process of self-awareness, as painful as it may be. Moving from a stance of defensive thoughts and actions toward more positive coping styles based on the strength of our inner resources is thought to be the most effective strategy to deal with stress. It is these inner resources that Maslow began to identify with his theory of self-actualization. His theory indicates that we all have the potential to move beyond the primitive defense mechanisms outlined by Freud, which stunt our human potential.

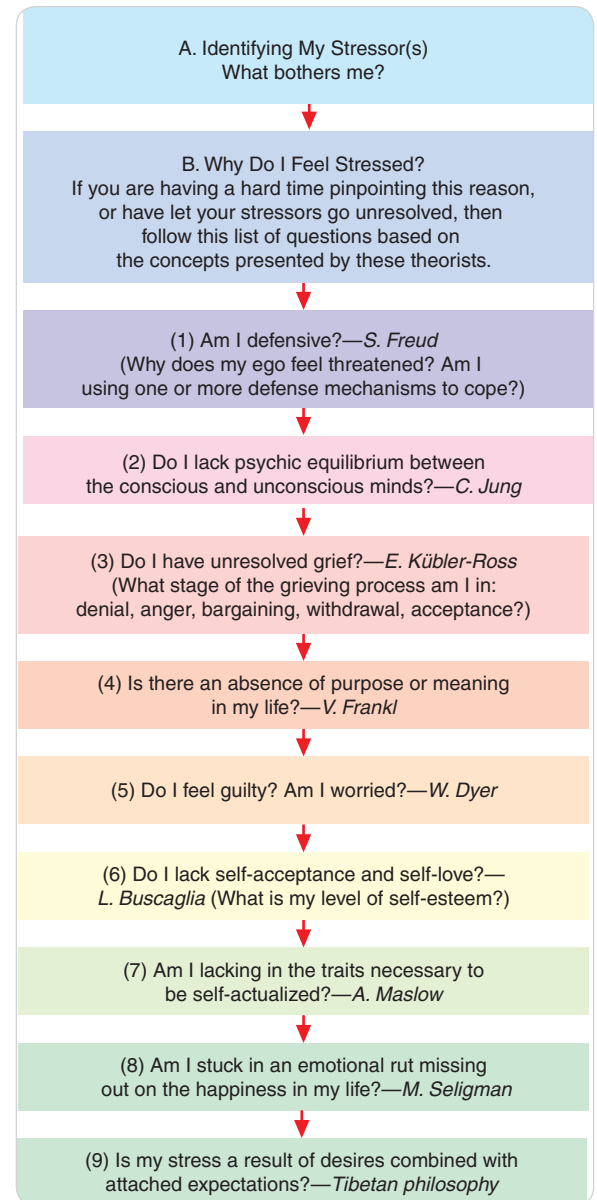


FIGURE 5.16 Stress awareness chart. Select a problem you are confronted with and ask yourself the questions suggested by each theorist.

SUMMARY

- Many theories attempt to explain the psychological nature of stress or, more specifically, how humans attempt to deal with the problems they face. These theories are based on the many aspects of psychology, including personality, emotional responses, perceptions, and a wide range of human behaviors.
- Freud believed that humans maintain a level of (instinctual) tension that arises from both internal sources (instinctual impulses) and external sources that attack our ego or identity. The ego copes with stress through the use of a host of defense mechanisms, including denial, repression, projection, rationalization, displacement, and humor.
- Jung suggested that there is a certain level of innate tension, psychic tension, which exists because of the language barrier between the conscious and unconscious minds. This tension can be reduced through the process of individuation, a continual soul searching that builds a bridge of understanding between the conscious and unconscious minds. Jung advocated self-awareness through dream analysis because he believed that the unconscious mind works to resolve issues and problems, but the conscious mind, which does not understand the language of symbols presented in dreams, tends to ignore them.
- Stress can also be aroused through the death of unmet expectations, which produces a series of mental processes described by Kübler-Ross. These are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Resolution of emotional baggage leads one to the final stage, acceptance, which in turn enhances inner peace.
- Viktor Frankl's logotherapy was founded on the belief that for life to be complete there must be suffering, but that there must also be a search for the meaning of the suffering to resolve the issues of emotional stress.
- Stressors fall into two categories, according to psychologist Wayne Dyer: guilt and worry, which are two emotional states that immobilize the thought processes, distract one from the present moment, and thus make one unable to conquer stress and attain inner peace.
- Self-love is the critical inner resource described by Leo Buscaglia to cope with life's hardships. Self-love is unattainable, however, without unconditional acceptance of who you are (self-acceptance). To share love, you must first possess love.
- People who are able to achieve self-acceptance and self-love are what Abraham Maslow called self-actualized people. They are well centered, balanced, and enjoy an unparalleled appreciation of life, proving self-acceptance and self-love to be sound tools to deal effectively with stress. This chapter listed fourteen characteristics Maslow found to be common among self-actualized people. These characteristics seem to allow them to interpret situations in a nonstressful manner and buffer themselves against undue stress.
- Authentic happiness is not a gift but a birthright for all humans. Increasing one's level of happiness to balance the scale of emotions is not only possible but encouraged in this stress-filled world, according to Martin Seligman.
- Eastern philosophy (Tibetan Buddhism) explains stress as the tension between the self (ego) and the greater mind (higher self), with desired expectations and outcomes pointed to as the specific cause of this tension.
- Common themes among the theories are the concepts of self-awareness and self-acceptance, two inner resources that become the most important coping skills to manage personal stress effectively.

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. According to Freud, what does the mind do to defend against stress?
2. According to Jung, what should the mind do to resolve stress?
3. According to Kübler-Ross, what process does the mind use to cope with stress?
4. According to Frankl, what aspect needs to be addressed in coping with stress?

5. According to Dyer, which two aspects perpetuate emotional stress?
6. According to Buscaglia, what is essential to cope with and resolve personal stress?
7. According to Maslow, what inner resources can be used to cope with stress?
8. According to Seligman, what aspect constitutes positive psychology?
9. What can be learned from the Tibetan culture about the mind and stress?
10. What do the views espoused by these theorists have in common?

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CHAPTER 6

The Stress Emotions: Anger, Fear, and Joy

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”

—Nelson Mandela

Sandy Hook Elementary School, Virginia Tech, Ft. Hood, the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater, and Columbine High School are more than locations on a map. These places, and several others like them, have become synonymous with episodes of uncontrolled rage, senseless violence, and carnage. Though we may never know the full rationale behind these acts of violence, experts remind us that as stress continues to escalate on the national stage, this renowned list of locations across the country will likely grow to include many others.

Human nature may be slow to change, but the horror of senseless violence is never diminished. Sadly, with memories of the Great Depression and the hardship of two World Wars retreating into the background, there is a cost to forgetting the past. Sociologists have observed that the Western lifestyle has become a little

too comfortable for the “Millennials.” In this age of abundance, the “Entitlement Generation” has arrived for whom expectations are high, and unmet expectations generate a wellspring of unbridled stress emotions: anger and fear.

Emotional well-being, as defined in the wellness paradigm, is the ability to feel and express the entire range of human emotions and to control them, not be controlled by them. This sounds like a tall order, yet it is not impossible. It takes some unlearning, relearning, and implementation. At an early age, we are socialized to behave in a certain way. We are told to calm down, chill out, never talk back, not cry, and wipe that smile off our face. The implied message that we receive is that it is not socially acceptable to exhibit various emotions. Consequently, as adults we carry a lot of unresolved emotional baggage with us. Many health-related problems are thought to