

Chapter 6:

The Experience of Disability, Chronic Pain, and Chronic Illness



What would you guess is the medical model for "disabilities"?
(e.g., how is it defined)

- medical model: a disability exists when there is something physically or mentally wrong that needs to be fixed if possible—a deficit

Who determines what is "wrong",
i.e., what is considered a deficit?

physicians

What about the social model?
(e.g., how is disability defined)

- social model: a disability exists when an individual experiences an inability or restriction to perform "normal" tasks due to a physical or mental condition.

- social forces, attitudes and costs influence a person's ability to overcome restrictions (and consequently create a disability)
- example: the inability to walk is a disability to the extent that it restricts a person's movement. Wheel chairs, ramps, etc. can reduce the disability or make it a non-disability

Who are most likely to be disabled
(that is, what are their demographic characteristics)?

- Low-income
- Older
- Female

How are "disabled" people viewed by society?

Physically and morally inferior

What is a stigma and how might it be related to a disability?

- Typically thought of as the social disgrace of having a deeply discrediting attribute (e.g., HIV/AIDS has a negative social stigma)
- A disabled person may be viewed (stigmatized) as inferior

How do people react to someone who is stigmatized (stigma first reported by the ancient Greeks)?

Exclusion, rejection, devaluation, avoidance

How does a person react to stigma or the possibility of being stigmatized?

1. May attempt to hide disability
2. May not seek help so no one will know of the disability
3. May turn to the U.S. constitution that protects people from being treated less than equal (e.g. Americans with Disability Act)
4. May become depressed, suicidal

The "looking glass self"
What might this be?

1. We imagine how other people are viewing us (they are the mirror/looking glass)
2. We imagine how others are judging us
3. As a result we have a feeling about ourselves, that is, a self-image whether it is "pride," or "humiliation" or any other feeling.

Consequently, people with disabilities can be very self-conscious about their handicap

"Situations that are defined as real by an individual are real in their consequences for that individual."

What might this mean?

If we believe a person who tells us we are "inferior," even if we are not, we act as if we are inferior (the consequences of believing it is real)

Another example: if we believe our significant other cheated on us, even if they did not, we will still act as if they did (e.g., divorce them)

"Labeling Theory"
What might this mean?

When applied to a disability the theory suggests:

Prior to being labeled, a difference that someone has from the average person does not make them better or worse than the average person, that is, their difference has no positive or negative meaning.

Any such meaning applied to it is a consequence of the definition or "label" applied by others.

Example:

Example: a research study where researchers had themselves admitted into a mental institution without the staff knowing that they were researchers.

The researchers then acted their normal selves once institutionalized.

The psychologists and nurses working in the institution did not recognize that the researchers were actually normal because they had been "labeled" mentally ill.

Interestingly, the mental patients in the institution did recognize that the researchers were normal.

What is the purpose of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how is it carried out?

- outlaws discrimination against the disabled
- requires accessibility in employment, public services, and public accommodations (including restaurants, hotels, and stores).
- somewhat unsuccessful because it all depends on who is defined as disabled (e.g., is a person with carpal tunnel disabled?)

How are those with a disability similar to a "minority group"?

- the disabled experience prejudice (i.e., negative attitudes toward or dislike of a group)
- the disabled are stereotyped (i.e., generalizing about a group)
- the disabled are discriminated against (i.e., unequal treatment of a group)

What's the difference between prejudice and discrimination?

What would you guess is the most common underlying reason/cause for a disability?

chronic pain,
i.e., pain that does not heal
but persists and worsens
over time

How would you define pain that persists over a long period of time (hint: "c__ pain")?

chronic pain

What physical, psychological, and social problems does chronic pain cause in a person? That is, how does chronic pain affect someone?

- sleep deprivation and exhaustion
- increases depression, anxiety, and the risk of suicide
- damages social relationships
- high health care costs

What are some of the treatments for chronic pain?

- drugs
- physical therapy, strength training
- meditation
- psychological treatments that focus on how to think differently about the pain
- marijuana

What conditions encourage a person to seek help for pain that sh/e has been having (referred to as illness behavior)?

- frequent, persistent, visible, and severe to interfere with daily activities
- lack of alternative explanations for their symptoms
- family and friends encouragement
- no barriers to seeking help, e.g., economic

Self-diagnosis is becoming more common. How might someone go about obtaining a self-diagnosis?

- internet sites
- support groups that provide details on an illness
- paying health care companies directly for diagnostic tests rather than via a doctor

Some people do NOT comply with conventional recommendations. Why might this be?

- don't believe they really have a problem.
- don't believe compliance will help and/or don't trust the medical professionals
- have one or more barriers such as lack of funds, transportation, can't leave work, inconvenient, etc.
- Too much trouble/requires much effort-Example would be someone with diabetes
- don't understand what s/he is supposed to do in order to comply

What are the advantages and disadvantages to using "alternative" therapies/medications (e.g., high doses of Vitamin C; herbs, acupuncture)?

Advantage: the alternative may provide cure for the illness with fewer side effects.

They are "alternatives" because pharmaceutical firms won't test for their effects since they cannot obtain patents for their use and so cannot make \$ from them.

Disadvantage: alternative therapies have not typically received vigorous testing and, therefore, could be dangerous

Have you been given a "placebo" and if so what effect did it have?

What is a "placebo"?

How many people have used the internet to get health care information?

- 59% of Americans used the internet to get health information
- 35% used the internet to diagnosis themselves or others

How do chronic illness and disabilities affect social relationships? (Strengthen them? Weaken them?)

- strengthen relationships as family and friends pull together to help
- can strain relationships over long periods
- growing feeling of burden of gratitude
- no longer participating in social activities hurt relationships
- financial stresses can strain relationships

What are some chronic illnesses that often create a stigma? What do these people experience?

- HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis
- for some such illnesses, uncontrollable bowels, urine or other body functions (e.g., stuttering)
- cognitive problems
- person might be socially viewed as immoral or bad (e.g., epilepsy)

How is stigma avoided or overcome?

- hiding or otherwise deflecting attention from the problem
- fighting back by demonstrating what one can do in spite of the disability such as becoming a part of the Olympics for the disabled
- fighting for civil rights
- social movements—equal rights

How do men feel differently than women about their disability?

- men have lower self-esteem since the American culture expects men to be emotionally, physically, and financially independent--more difficult when disabled
- women are generally not expected to be as independent so their self-esteem may not be hit as hard
- these value differences are changing; becoming less distinct between genders

Social Movements are collective efforts to change society, including civil rights, women's rights, LGBT rights (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender).

What might a social movement in health focus on?

Equal access to health

What's wrong with me? Absolutely nothing | Gabi Ury | TEDxSanDiego (12:30 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDbN8R6Gb6Q>

How the food you eat affects your brain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyQY8a-ng6g>

What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness | Robert Waldinger (12:46 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KkKuTCFvzI>

How economic inequality might affect a society's well-being (health) (8:22 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFpida_dvTvs

(25 minutes for both)

- Lorimer Moseley 'Body in mind - the role of the brain in chronic pain' at Mind & Its Potential (start at 1 min show first 11 mins: gene pool)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYoGXv22G3k>

Dr John Sarno Healing Lower Mid Back Pain Sciatica Psoas Pain Causes Relief 20/20 episode (start at 2:40; 14:47 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2B2IE0o7diU>

How I Deal with Chronic Pain (11:13 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3uF3EpSZMw>

Same Woman in a happier state (first 3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnT3FgV7pzU>

Lorimer Moseley 'Body in mind - the role of the brain in chronic pain' at Mind & Its Potential (start at 1 min show first 11 mins: gene pool mentioned)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYoGXv22G3k>

Dr John Sarno Healing Lower Mid Back Pain Sciatica Psoas Pain Causes Relief 20/20 episode (start at 3:00; 14:47 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2B2IE0o7diU>

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<http://www.create.kahoot.it/#login?next=>

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