

Healthier, Longer, & wiser?

This lecture will attempt to draw some practical conclusions – what can health psychology do?

Longevity and mood?

- Can HP add to our understanding and prediction of longevity

Mood -

- Patients with MND who have a positive mood state live longer
 - May reflect positive health behaviours/immune system effects.

Longevity and personality

7 decade longitudinal study of childhood longevity

- Conscientious people live longer (size of effects is equivalent to blood pressure and cholesterol on longevity).
- Why – maybe risk avoidance and health promoting behaviours

personality

- Personality and CHD/cancer
- Type D personality = negative affect plus the tendency to inhibit expression in social interactions.
- More likely to die from cancer and CHD

Longevity and perceived control

Perceived control

- Nursing home residence given either a talk on responsibility and given a plant to care for, or no talk and a plant watered by staff.
- 18 month follow up 50% reduction in death rates in experimental group.
- These interventions have to be maintained

Perceived control

- Perceived control
- These effects may be do to increased positive outlook, greater activity and zest for life, and reduced cortisol levels.
- ESRD increased survival for those with greater 'life happiness' and leisure activities.

Longevity and demography

- Children of divorced parents have a 1/3rd increased mortality rate. Death of parents had little effect.
- Being divorced, separated or on a 2nd marriage increases mortality.
- Scientist live longer

Longevity and self-disclosure

- HIV + gay med who do not conceal their homosexual identity have a 21% reduction in time to death from AIDS

Longevity and IQ

- IQ at 11 predicts death up to age 76
- IQ lower by 1 SD 79 survival & 2 SD 63% survival
- WHY?
 - IQ & poverty
 - IQ & biological integrity
 - IQ & health behaviours
 - IQ & type of work

Longevity & sexual behaviour

- Higher levels of teenage sexual activity are linked to increased mortality
- WHY?
 - C
 - Alcohol use
 - Education
 - Behavioural risk factors

Longevity & aging stereotypes

- People with a positive stereotype of aging lived 7.5 years longer than those with a less positive stereotype
- This is partly mediated through the 'will-to-live'

Wiser?

- Implicit theories
- Wisdom is
 - distinct from (1) intelligence, maturity and creativity
 - An exceptional level of human functioning
 - Coordinated and balanced inter-play of affective and motivational states
 - Interpersonal competence (ability to listen and give advice)
 - Used for one's own and others **well-being**

Wiser?

- Cultural and philosophical analyses
- Wisdom is related to knowledge
 - Superior knowledge
 - Addresses important questions about the meaning of life
 - Limits of knowledge and uncertainties of the world
 - **Knowledge** of extraordinary scope
 - **Synergy of mind & body**
 - Knowledge for the good one's own and others **well-being**
 - Easily recognised

Wiser?

- Explicit theories
 - Personality (creativity?)
 - Neo-Piagetian
 - Expert system
 - Expertise in the conduct of the meaning of life
 - 'fundamental pragmatics of life'
 - Knowledge = life, goals, well-being, one's limits of coping, translating knowledge into behaviour cf. socio-cognitive models
 - Spirituality – mind-body dynamic and the existence of God.

Wiser?

- Study wise people
- Rate responses to scenarios
- Evidence
 - Age unrelated (**no wise old one**)
 - Personality 2%
 - Intelligence 2%
 - Creativity 15%
 - Life experience 26%

Wiser?

- Study proverbs
- Proverb related knowledge - Selection (goal setting), optimisation (means to reach a goal) & compensation (means evoked when other means to reach a goal fail)
 - 'Jack of all trades, master of none' (selection)
 - 'practise makes perfect' (optimisation)
 - 'When there is no wind grab the oars' (compensation)

Wiser?

- Proverbs 'Old wives tales'
 - 'feed a cold, starve a fever'
 - 'early to bed & early to rise, makes you healthy, wealthy and wise'
 - 'put butter on a burn'
 - 'a dog's lick helps wounds to heal'

Wiser?

- Creative personality
 - Independent, non-conformist, bohemian, wide interest, openness, behavioural and cognitive flexibility, risk taking
- Inverted U shaped association with age

Longer, healthier & wiser?

- Interventions (longer)
 - Sustained Control and responsibility
 - Self-disclosure
 - Enhance positive mood
- Interventions (Healthier)
 - Relaxation
 - Stress-management
 - Hypnosis
 - Implementation intentions
- Interventions (Wiser)
 - ?

Instilling wisdom

- Contextual information (average reading age = 11)
- Target life skills not just facts and knowledge
- Teaching rules
- Learn by experience
- Tutelage

End-note

- Effect sizes
 - Control = 50% reduction in death rates
 - Implementation interventions = 4 X more likely to take up health protective behaviours
 - Health & personality typical correlation = .20, this is of the same size and smoking and CHD
 - Personality and longevity = same size as cholesterol and CHD