IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE: UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, & ANGER IN MEN

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IT Takes one to know one: Understanding anxiety, depression, & Anger

1. The functions of anxiety, sadness, frustration, and anger
2. Understanding negative affect and neuroticism
   1. Emotional dysregulation
3. Anger in men?
   1. Sociocultural factors
4. Strategies
WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF AN EMOTION?

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS DESIGNED TO TELL US?
THE PURPOSE OF AN EMOTION

To alert us to what’s going on around us in order to get us to do things that are helpful or useful for survival.
THE THREE COMPONENTS OF AN EMOTION

THOUGHTS

PHYSICAL “FEELINGS”

BEHAVIORS
Emotions → Response directed at the perceived source of threat
THE PURPOSE OF ANXIETY?

ANXIETY SERVES AN ADAPTIVE PURPOSE
A future-oriented emotion that involves thoughts of uncontrollability and unpredictability of future events that could be dangerous.

Anxiety is also known as “preparatory coping.”
THE PURPOSE OF SADNESS

SADNESS IS ALSO ADAPTIVE
A SENSE OF DEJECTION, MELANCHOLY, AND HOPELESSNESS WHICH IS A NATURAL RESPONSE TO LOSS WHERE NO SOLUTIONS ARE OBVIOUS.

SADNESS PROMPTS US TO GATHER OUR RESOURCES SO THAT WE CAN MOURN OUR LOSS.
What is frustration?
WHAT IS FRUSTRATION?

An emotional response associated with unmet expectations

Frustration is Adaptive
THE PURPOSE OF ANGER?

ANGER SERVES AN ADAPTIVE PURPOSE
AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO PERCEIVED INTENTIONAL INJURY, VICTIMIZATION, OR MISTREATMENT

FRUSTRATION VS. ANGER
FRUSTRATION BECOMES ANGER WHEN UNMET EXPECTATIONS ARE DIRECTED TOWARD PEOPLE
THE FUNCTION OF ANXIETY, SADNESS AND ANGER

Anxiety: Focus attention on possible sources of future threat

Sadness: Focus attention on mourning and gathering resources so loss can be processed

Anger: Focus attention on defending oneself or a loved one against a threat
IF THESE EMOTIONS ARE ADAPTIVE, WHY DO WE STRUGGLE WITH MANAGING THESE EMOTIONS?
**Neuroticism**

- The tendency to experience negative emotions **frequently** and **intensely**

Neuroticism is a significant risk factor in the development of emotional disorders (Frank & Davidson, 2014)
THE PRIMARY SYNDROME: NEUROTICISM OFTEN LEADS TO EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

1. So what happens to those whose emotions are too intense for the situation?

2. People who struggle with emotional “disorders” experience core emotions in a “dysregulated fashion”
Individuals who struggle with strong emotions engage in behaviors that provide temporary relief but the behaviors backfire and lead to more negative emotions.
An Upcoming Exam

- Anxiety
  - Procrastination
    - Temporary Relief
      - Long-Term Anxiety!

An Upcoming Exam

- Anxiety
  - Studying
    - Temporary Distress
      - Managed Threat/Reduced Anxiety
VULNERABILITY MECHANISMS
Understanding Vulnerability Mechanisms (Frank & Davidson, 2014)

- Vulnerability mechanisms are genetic predispositions or risk factors that contribute to emotional disorders.
- Represent “deficits” in various brain functions, physiological arousal, and learning experiences.
- Vulnerability mechanisms lead to various responses.
VULNERABILITY MECHANISM: DEFICITS AND RISK FACTORS

- Arousal Regulation and inhibitory control
- Emotional Regulation
- Distress Tolerance
- Informational Processing
- Negative Schema
- Negative Problem Orientation
- Perceived Control
- Conditioning (Learned Associations)
UNDERSTANDING RESPONSE (MECHANISMS)
Understanding Response Mechanisms (Frank & Davidson, 2014)

- Response Mechanisms are a pattern of responses to activation of vulnerability mechanisms.
- They reinforce and “contribute to feedback loops” of the vulnerability mechanisms which worsen the presenting problems (ex: “being a hot head”).
- Response mechanisms are defining characteristics of emotional disorders:
  - Avoidance = Anxiety Disorders
  - Rituals/Compulsions = OCD
  - Attributional bias (attacking others) = Several disorders
RESPONSE MECHANISMS

- Cognitive Misappraisals
- Attributional Bias (Attacking Others)
- Emotion-driven behaviors
RESPONSE MECHANISMS

- Cognitive Misappraisals
- Interoceptive Avoidance
- Attributional Bias (Attacking Others)
EXAMPLE OF "DYSREGULATED ANGER"

Thoughts: “Are you freaking kidding me!? You could have killed me?! “

Feelings/Physical Sensations: Heart palpitations, shortness of breathe, increase in body temperature, muscle tension

Behaviors: @#!%$%^&*(
EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION IN MEN?

TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE
Anxiety Looks Different in Men

Instead of coming across as nervousness or worry, anxiety in men often appears as anger, muscle aches or alcohol use—leading many men to go undiagnosed.
Emotional Dysregulation in Men (Chapman, 2019, WSJ)

- Men may present as ‘loose cannons’ but they are worriers.
- Aggression tends to be more socially acceptable (historically) than anxiety.
  - 1 in 5 men diagnosed with anxiety disorder (often underreported).
- Anxiety and Depression co-occur and many men engage in alcohol abuse to regulate emotions.
- Men socialized to view vulnerability as weakness.
  - Hypermasculinity, sports culture, etc.
- Most men tend to seek treatment following a crisis or after urging from a partner.
STRATEGIES TO ASSIST MEN WITH SEEKING TREATMENT FOR “EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION”

1. Avoid ultimatums
   1. Can increase resistance and “stonewalling”

2. Frame therapy as a way to increase performance and pleasure
   1. “Athlete mentality”

3. Express your own distress about theirs
   1. Compassion is key
   2. “I’m not sleeping seeing you like this”

4. Avoid labels
   1. “Anger issues” or even “you’re anxious”

5. Seek a therapist who engages in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
QUESTIONS?

- Thank you!

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