The Foundation of Human Behavior in Health and Illness

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Overview

Section one: Understanding human behavior
- Chapter 1: Neurobiological foundations of human behavior
- Chapter 2: Biological foundations of human behavior
- Chapter 3: Emotions and emotional stress
- Chapter 4: Motivational basis

Section two: Cognitive foundations of human behavior
- Chapter 5: Thinking, reasoning, and creativity
- Chapter 6: Memorization and forgetting
- Chapter 7: Perception: receiving and processing of information

Section three: Learning and social foundations of behavior
- Chapter 8: Learning and conditioning
- Chapter 9: Human behavior and social influences
- Chapter 10: The effects of social groups, environmental surroundings, and culture

Section four: Growth and development
- Chapter 11: Growth development: influencing factors and stages
- Chapter 12: Development of basic human functions

Section five: Individual differences and personality factors
- Chapter 13: Intelligence: its concepts, measurement and determinants
- Chapter 14: Personality and temperamental differences
- Chapter 6: Dysfunctions of human behavior and their treatments
- Chapter 15: Dysfunctions of human behavior
- Chapter 16: Psychological treatments of psychiatric and behavioral dysfunctions
- Chapter 17: Behavior therapies in medicine.

Contents:

Section one: Neurobiological foundations of Human behavior

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOR
- Definition and Scope of Behavioral Sciences
- The Scientific Methods of Behavior
- Observation
- Case Study
- Survey Method
- Correlational Studies
- Experimental method

- The Multi Method Approach to Behavioral Issues
- Explanatory Views of Human Behavior
- Neurobiological Viewpoint
- Social Behavior Viewpoint
- Cognitive Viewpoint
- Developmental Viewpoint

Chapter 2: Biological Foundations of Human Behavior The Brain
- The Structure and Function of the Brain
- Neurons
- Glia Cells The Function of the Brain
- Sensory Process
- Information Interpretation
- Command for Action The Organization of the Brain
- The Brainstem
- Thalamus
- The Limbic System
- Hypothalamus
- Hippocampus
- The Cerebral Cortex
- Brain Damage
- The Two Hemispheres
- The Corpus Callosum
- The Right Cerebral Hemispheres
- The Left Cerebral Hemisphere
- The Lobes
- The Frontal Lobes
- The Temporal Lobes
- The Parietal Lobes
- The Occipital Lobes
- The Electrical Activity of the Brain
- Beta Waves
- Alpha Waves
- Delta Waves
- The Spinal Cord

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The Autonomic Nervous System
The Sympathetic Function
The Parasympathetic Function
The Endocrine System
The Endocrine Glands and Behavior
The Pituitary Gland
The Thyroid Gland
The Adrenal Gland
The Gonads
Genetic Foundations of Human Behavior
Assessment of Neuropsychological Functions
Summary

CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL STRESS
What Are Emotions?
Subjective Feelings
Emotional Experiences
Physiological Changes
Physiological Sources of Emotions
The role of The ANS responses
Sympathetic NS
Parasympathetic NS
Emotional Stress
Demands on the body as Stressors
Life Events as Stressors
Emotions and Health
Psychophysiological Diseases:
Peptic Ulcers
Anorexia Nervosa
Headaches
Hypertension
Coronary Heart Diseases
Bronchial Asthma
Summary

CHAPTER 4: MOTIVATIONAL BASIS
The Concept of Motivation
Types of Motives
Primary Motives
Stimulus Motives
Learned-Secondary Motives:
Achievement Motive
Affiliat ion Motive
Power Motive
Maslow's Needs Hierarchy
Motivational Factors in Health and Illness
Summary

Section two: Cognitive foundations of human behavior

CHAPTER 5: THINKING, REASONING, AND CREATIVITY
Thinking
Levels of thinking
Imagery
Concept Formation
Symbolic Thinking
Reasoning
Deductive Reasoning
Inductive Reasoning
Evaluative Reasoning
Creativity
Creativity Defined
Creativity Process
Creative Individuals
Creativity and Health
Summary

CHAPTER 6: MEMORIZATION AND FORGETTING
Short-Term and Long-Term Memories
Measuring Memory
Memory Scales
Techniques of Memory Measurement
Retention
Recognition
Recall
Why Forgetting
Decay Theory
Interference Theory
Retroactive Inhibition
Proactive Inhibition
Motivational Forgetting
Physiological Theories
Remembering Something Better Than Others
Level of Processing
Individual Differences
Ageing
Treatment Effects
Disorders of Memory
Amnesic Aphasia
Dementia
Korsakoff Syndrome
Hysterical Amnesia
Summary
Section three: Learning and social foundations of behavior

CHAPTER 8: LEARNING AND CONDITIONING

- Respondent Conditioning
- Pavlov and Classical Conditioning
- Principles of Classical Conditioning
- Extinction and Counterconditioning
- Generalization, and Discrimination
- Higher-Order Conditioning
- Operant Conditioning
- Thorndike and Skinner
- Reinforcement: The Core of Operant Conditioning
- Primary Reinforces
- Secondary Reinforces
- General Principles of Operant Learning
- Shaping
- Schedules of Reinforcement
- Equal Ratio Reinforcement
- Fixed Interval Reinforcement
- Variable Interval Reinforcement
- The Partial Reinforcement Effect
- Positive and Negative Reinforcement
- Punishment
- Avoidance and Escape
- Social Learning: The Learning of Complex Behavior
- Modeling Processes
- Model Effects
- Cognitive Learning
- Tolman's Cognitive Maps
- Dimensions of Cognitive Learning:
  - Cognitive Competence
  - Self Encoding
- Values and Attitudes
- Goals and Plans
- Learning Health Behavior
- Summary

CHAPTER 9: HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES

- The Power of Social Norms
- Conformity
- Obedience to Authority
- Social Roles
- Social Roles Defined
- Social Roles Influence and Health/illness Behavior
- Role Conflict
- Reactions to Illness and the Sick Role Attitudes
- Attitudes of Prejudice and Discrimination
- Social Support
- Summary

CHAPTER 10: THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL GROUPS, ENVIRONMENTAL SURROUNDINGS, AND CULTURE

- Effects of Parenting
- Restrictiveness versus Permissiveness
- Warmth & Acceptance versus Rejection
- Punishment
- Perfectionism & Unrealistic Demands
- Faulty Communication
- Social Class
- Disadvantaged Social Groups
- Work Environment
- Surrounding Environment
- Social Change
- Cultural Influences
- Summary

Section four: Growth and development

CHAPTER 11: GROWTH DEVELOPMENT: INFLUENCING FACTORS AND STAGES

- Factors Influencing Development
- Heredity
- Environment
- The Interaction between Heredity and Environment
- Stages of Development
- The Prenatal
- Infants and Toddlers
- Preschool Child
- Middle Childhood
- Adolescence
- Early Adulthood
- Middle Adulthood
- Late Adulthood
- Summary

Chapter 12

Development of basic human functions

- Physical Development
- Physical Development in Early Childhood
- Body Stature
- Motor development Physical Development in Adolescence and Adulthood
- Adolescence
- The Maturation of Reproductive System
- Other Physical Changes
- Adulthood
- Motor Development & Coordination
- Sexual Maturation
- Cognitive Development
- Cognitive Development in Childhood
- Thinking and Reasoning
- Language Development
- Memory
- Cognitive Development in Adolescence and Adulthood
- Thinking and Reasoning
- Memory and Old Age
- Social Development
- Social Development in Infancy and Childhood
Section six: Dysfunctions of human behavior and their treatments

CHAPTER 15: DYSFUNCTIONS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Three Criteria Signaling Abnormality
Neurotic Disorders
Anxiety Disorders
Generalized Anxiety Disorder,
Panic Disorder
Phobias
Obsessions and Compulsions
Somatoform Disorders:
Somatization Disorder
Conversion Disorder
Hypochondriasis
Somatoform Disorders
Dissociative Disorders:
Amnesia
Multiple Personality
Fugue
Depressive Neurosis:
Dysthymia
Psychotic Disorders
What’s Psychosis?
Major Affective Disorders:
Major Depression
Bipolar Disorders
Schizophrenic Disorders:
Disorganized Type
Catatonic Type
Paranoid Type
Chronic Undifferentiated
Personality Disorders
Anti social Disorder
Developmental Disabilities
Border Mental Retardation
Mild Mental Retardation
Moderate Mental Retardation
Severe Mental Retardation
Profound Mental Retardation
Understanding Abnormality
Summary

CHAPTER 16: PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENTS OF PSYCHIATRIC AND BEHAVIORAL DYSFUNCTIONS

Basic Methods of Psychotherapy
Supportive Psychotherapy
Psychoanalytic
The Humanistic-Existential Therapies
The Client-Centered Therapy
The Gestalt Therapy
Behavior Therapy
Other Forms Of Psychotherapy
Group Therapy
Community Mental Health  
Effective Psychotherapy  
The Therapist:  
Patient Factors  
Process of Therapy  
Summary

CHAPTER 17: BEHAVIOR THERAPIES IN MEDICINE

What’s Behavior Therapy?  
Some Representative Techniques  
Conditioning of Incompatible Responses  
Aversion Therapy  
Flooding (Implosive) Therapy  
Reinforcement Techniques  
Training of Social Skills  
Biofeedback  
Cognitive Techniques  
Behavioral Management of Medical Problems  

Headaches  
Insomnia  
Sexual Dysfunctions  
Cigarettes Smoking  
AIDS Epidemic  
Cancer  
Summary  
References

The Book’s Introduction:

For many practicing physicians and other caregivers, patients’ population is still seen as divided into two separate groups: the true physically ill and those who are ill but show no explanatory organic defect. The first group remains in treatment with the physician and his allies in physical treatment, while the second group is labeled as psychiatrically or psychologically impaired, and is usually passed on for psychological or psychiatric treatment.

One basic position taken by the authors of this book is that both categories, physical medicine and psycho1ogy, overlap. In fact, this overlapping between these two categories is not quite recent, but was viewed as basically important since the ear y recorded h1 story, and, particularly, throughout Greek and Islamic history. For example, since the times of Hippocrates, the psychological factors have been viewed as fundamentally important in medicine. Many earlier Islamic practicing physicians, have maintained such relationship between personal habits and both psychological and physical health. Personal habits such as moderate eating, good sleeping, faith, and peace of mind were all seen by Islamic Scholars and physicians, such as Avicenna and Al-Razi, as conducive to good health and better life. This implies that these two categories of general medicine overlap within the human behavior context. Thus, we will outline, throughout the chapters of this book, the general foundations of human behavior, biological, cognitive, social, and developmental, and to generally emphasize their contributions to all phases of psychological and physical medicine.

We have tried to show, in very general terms, what are the major bases of behavior. The chapters have been organized in four sections, each representing one of these bases.

Section One is about the neurobiological basis of behavior. It presents the student to the role of brain and the biological aspects on behavior including emotion and motivation. We look at the nervous system and at the brain in particular for clues to all the behavior processes with emphasis on health and illness related aspects.

Section Two deals with the cognitive aspects of behavior, and examines the way people learn, remember, think, reason, create, and perceive.

Section Three deals with the social bases of behavior as they range from learning to social influence of one person or a small group, to the role of the social change and cultural influences on individuals. We will emphasize on health related reactions to social factors.

Section Four traces the development of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional maturity from birth to adulthood. Also discussed in this section, the psychiatric and medical problems related to growth including behavioral, emotional, mental, and social disorders.

Section Five considers the role of individual differences and personality in understanding and predicting our unique types of behavior. The two basic areas of intellectual and temperamental differences have been examined in this section along with their behavioral and medical implications.

Section Six examines the nature of psychological and behavioral dysfunctions. It examines the basic concepts in abnormal behavior and the major types of psychological disorders, and developmental disabilities. It also considers the many forms of behavior change and related psychological therapies.

Although we will discuss these areas as if they are separate and discrete, it should be clear that each area overlaps with others. The contribution of each area to all phases of psychological and physical medicine will be emphasized.

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