

## Chapter 1. The Concept of Stress Adaptation

### Multiple Choice

1. A client has experienced the death of a close family member and at the same time becomes unemployed. This situation has resulted in a 6-month score of 110 on the Recent Life Changes Questionnaire. How should the nurse evaluate this client data?
- A. The client is experiencing severe distress and is at risk for physical and psychological illness.
  - B. A score of 110 on the Miller and Rahe Recent Life Changes Questionnaire indicates no significant threat of stress-related illness.
  - C. Susceptibility to stress-related physical or psychological illness cannot be estimated without knowledge of coping resources and available supports.
  - D. The client may view these losses as challenges and perceive them as opportunities.

**ANS: C**

The Recent Life Changes Questionnaire is an expanded version of the Schedule of Recent Experiences and the Rahe-Holmes Social Readjustment Rating Scale. A 6-month score of 300 or more, or a year-score total of 500 or more, indicates high stress in a client's life. However, positive coping mechanisms and strong social support can limit susceptibility to stress-related illnesses.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

2. A physically and emotionally healthy client has just been fired. During a routine office visit he states to a nurse: "Perhaps this was the best thing to happen. Maybe I'll look into pursuing an art degree." How should the nurse characterize the client's appraisal of the job loss stressor?
- A. Irrelevant
  - B. Harm/loss
  - C. Threatening
  - D. Challenging

**ANS: D**

The client perceives the situation of job loss as a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Assessment | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

3. Which client statement should alert a nurse that a client may be responding maladaptively to stress?

- A. "I've found that avoiding contact with others helps me cope."
- B. "I really enjoy journaling; it's my private time."
- C. "I signed up for a yoga class this week."
- D. "I made an appointment to meet with a therapist."

**ANS: A**

Reliance on social isolation as a coping mechanism is a maladaptive method to relieve stress. It can prevent learning appropriate coping skills and can prevent access to needed support systems.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

4. A nursing student finds that she comes down with a sinus infection toward the end of every semester. When this occurs, which stage of stress is the student most likely experiencing?

- A. Alarm reaction stage
- B. Stage of resistance
- C. Stage of exhaustion
- D. Fight-or-flight stage

**ANS: C**

At the stage of exhaustion, the student's exposure to stress has been prolonged and adaptive energy has been depleted. Diseases of adaptation occur more frequently in this stage.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Assessment | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

5. A school nurse is assessing a female high school student who is overly concerned about her appearance. The client's mother states, "That's not something to be stressed about!" Which is the most appropriate nursing response?

- A. "Teenagers! They don't know a thing about *real* stress."
- B. "Stress occurs only when there is a loss."
- C. "When you are in poor physical condition, you can't experience psychological well-being."
- D. "Stress can be psychological. A threat to self-esteem may result in high stress levels."

**ANS: D**

Stress can be physical or psychological in nature. A perceived threat to self-esteem can be as stressful as a physiological change.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Implementation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

6. A bright student confides in the school nurse about conflicts related to attending college or working to add needed financial support to the family. Which coping strategy is most appropriate for the nurse to recommend to the student at this time?

- A. Meditation
- B. Problem-solving training
- C. Relaxation
- D. Journaling

**ANS: B**

The student must assess his or her situation and determine the best course of action. Problem-solving training, by providing structure and objectivity, can assist in decision making.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Implementation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

7. An unemployed college graduate is experiencing severe anxiety over not finding a teaching position and has difficulty with independent problem-solving. During a routine physical examination, the graduate confides in the clinic nurse. Which is the most appropriate nursing intervention?

- A. Encourage the student to use the alternative coping mechanism of relaxation exercises.
- B. Complete the problem-solving process for the client.
- C. Work through the problem-solving process with the client.
- D. Encourage the client to keep a journal.

**ANS: C**

During times of high anxiety and stress, clients will need more assistance in problem-solving and decision making.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Implementation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

8. A school nurse is assessing a distraught female high school student who is overly concerned because her parents can't afford horseback riding lessons. How should the nurse interpret the student's reaction to her perceived problem?

- A. The problem is endangering her well-being.
- B. The problem is personally relevant to her.

- C. The problem is based on immaturity.
- D. The problem is exceeding her capacity to cope.

**ANS: B**

Psychological stressors to self-esteem and self-image are related to how the individual perceives the situation or event. Self-image is of particular importance to adolescents, who feel entitled to have all the advantages that other adolescents experience.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

9. Meditation has been shown to be an effective stress management technique. When meditation is effective, what should a nurse expect to assess?
- A. An achieved state of relaxation
  - B. An achieved insight into one's feelings
  - C. A demonstration of appropriate role behaviors
  - D. An enhanced ability to problem-solve

**ANS: A**

Meditation produces relaxation by creating a special state of consciousness through focused concentration.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

10. A distraught, single, first-time mother cries and asks a nurse, "How can I go to work if I can't afford childcare?" What is the nurse's initial action in assisting the client with the problem-solving process?
- A. Determine the risks and benefits for each alternative.
  - B. Formulate goals for resolution of the problem.
  - C. Evaluate the outcome of the implemented alternative.
  - D. Assess the facts of the situation.

**ANS: D**

Before any other steps can be taken, accurate information about the situation must be gathered and assessed.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Implementation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

11. A nursing instructor is asking students about diseases of adaptation and when they are likely to occur. Which student response indicates that learning has occurred?

- A. "When an individual has limited experience dealing with stress"
- B. "When an individual inherits maladaptive genes"
- C. "When an individual experiences existing conditions that exacerbate stress"
- D. "When an individual's physiological and psychological resources have become depleted"

**ANS: D**

During the stage of exhaustion of the general adaptation syndrome, the individual loses the capacity to adapt effectively because physiological and psychological resources have become depleted. This is the time when diseases of adaptation may occur.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Health Promotion and Maintenance

12. When an individual's stress response is sustained over a long period of time, which physiological effect of the endocrine system should a nurse anticipate?

- A. Decreased resistance to disease
- B. Increased libido
- C. Decreased blood pressure
- D. Increased inflammatory response

**ANS: A**

In a general adaptation syndrome, prolonged exposure to stress leads to the stage of exhaustion at which time the body's compensatory mechanisms no longer function effectively and diseases of adaptation occur. A decreased immune response is seen at this stage.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Assessment | **Client Need:** Physiological Integrity

13. Which symptom should a nurse identify as typical of the "fight-or-flight" response?

- A. Pupil constriction
- B. Increased heart rate
- C. Increased salivation
- D. Increased peristalsis

**ANS: B**

During the "fight-or-flight" response, the heart rate increases in response to the release of epinephrine. Pupils dilate to enhance vision. Salivation and peristalsis decrease as the body slows unessential functions. OK

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Comprehension | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Assessment | **Client Need:** Physiological Integrity

14. A nurse is evaluating a client's response to stress. What would indicate to the nurse that the client is experiencing a secondary appraisal of the stressful event?
- A. When the individual judges the event to be benign
  - B. When the individual judges the event to be irrelevant
  - C. When the individual judges the resources and skills needed to deal with the event
  - D. When the individual judges the event to be pleasurable

**ANS: C**

When the individual judges the resources and skills needed to deal with the event, the individual is conducting a secondary appraisal. There are three types of primary appraisals: irrelevant, benign-positive, and stressful.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

15. Research undertaken by Miller and Rahe in 1997 demonstrated a correlation between the effects of life change and illness. This research led to the development of the Recent Life Changes Questionnaire (RLCQ). Which principle most limits the effectiveness of this tool?
- A. Specific illnesses are not identified.
  - B. The numerical values associated with specific life events are randomly assigned
  - C. Stress is viewed as only a physiological response.
  - D. Personal perception of the event is excluded.

**ANS: D**

Individuals differ in response to life events. The RLCQ uses a scale that does not take these differences into consideration.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Evaluation | **Client Need:** Health Promotion and Maintenance

16. A client who experiences stress on a regular basis asks a nurse what causes these feelings. Which is the most appropriate nursing response?
- A. "Genetics have nothing to do with your temperament."
  - B. "How you reacted to past experiences influences how you feel now."
  - C. "If you're in good physical health, your stress level will be low."

D. "Stress can always be avoided if appropriate coping mechanisms are employed."

**ANS: B**

Past experiences are occurrences that result in learned patterns that can influence an individual's current adaptation response. They include previous exposure to the stressor or other stressors in general, learned coping responses, and degree of adaptation to previous stressors.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Implementation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

### Multiple Response

17. A nurse is interviewing a distressed client, who relates being fired after 15 years of loyal employment. Which of the following questions would best assist the nurse to determine the client's appraisal of the situation? **Select all that apply.**

- A. "What resources have you used previously in stressful situations?"
- B. "Have you ever experienced a similar stressful situation?"
- C. "Who do you think is to blame for this situation?"
- D. "Why do you think you were fired from your job?"
- E. "What skills do you possess that might lead to gainful employment?"

**ANS: A, B, E**

These questions specifically address the client's coping resources and encourage the client to apply learning from past experiences. These questions also encourage the client to consider alternative methods for dealing with stress. Asking who is to blame does not assess coping abilities but, rather, encourages maladaptive behavior. Requesting an explanation is a nontherapeutic block to communication.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Assessment | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

18. A nurse is working with a client who has recently been under a great deal of stress. Which nursing recommendations would be most helpful when assisting the client in coping with stress? **Select all that apply.**

- A. "Enjoy a pet."
- B. "Spend time with a loved one."
- C. "Listen to music."
- D. "Focus on the stressors."
- E. "Journal your feelings."

**ANS: A, B, C, E**

Focusing on the stressors is more likely to increase stress in the client's life. However, pets, music, journaling feelings, and healthy relationships have all been shown to decrease amounts of stress.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Application | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Implementation | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

19. A nurse is conducting education on anxiety and stress management. Which of the following should be identified as the most important initial step in learning how to manage anxiety?

- A. Diagnostic blood tests
- B. Awareness of factors creating stress
- C. Relaxation exercises
- D. Identifying support systems

**ANS: B**

Although all of the above answers may be useful in the comprehensive management of stress, the initial step is awareness that stress is being experienced and awareness of factors that create stress.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Analysis | **Integrated Processes:** Teaching/Learning | **Client Need:** Psychosocial Integrity

20. A patient presents in the Emergency Department immediately following a shooting incident in a school where she has been teaching. There is no evidence of physical injury, but she appears very hyperactive and talkative. Which of these symptoms manifested by the patient are common initial biological responses to stress? **Select all that apply.**

- A. Constricted pupils
- B. Watery eyes
- C. Unusual food cravings
- D. Increased heart rate
- E. Increased respirations

**ANS: B, D, E**

Increased lacrimal secretions, increased heart rate, and increased respirations are identified as initial biological responses to stress. Since dilated pupils rather than constricted pupils are related



to “Fight or Flight” syndrome, this symptom should be assessed for other potential causes. Unusual food cravings have not been identified as a typical biological response to stress.

**KEY: Cognitive Level:** Analysis | **Integrated Processes:** Nursing Process: Assessment | **Client Need:** Physiological Integrity