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Module Overview



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Stress, Resilience, and Prevention

Running three miles for charity is good stress; running for one's life much less so! Exercising on a schedule builds physical capacity; being a couch potato does not. Having a town welfare office with emergency funds and resources reduces stress and is an example of resilience. Understanding stress, whether it is personal or situational, leads one to be prepared to whatever extent can be agreed upon. Being aware of stress and resilience together leads to effective policy and intervention strategies (prevention). If it were only that easy. It is not readily agreed upon what constitutes individual and community responsibility. The role of the community psychologist is as much mediator as educator and counselor in arriving at consensus on how to manage a community's strengths and weaknesses.

Coping with Stress, Building Resilience, and Prevention Strategies

Poverty is a stress, racism is a stress, poorly funded schools are a stress. Are these viewed as calamities or opportunities? How does one cope with stressors in such a way to build resilience? Food banks and rent control may build resilience for poverty; interracial dialogues, events, and activities can build resilience in the face of racism; and do-it-yourself strategies with volunteers in schools can help offset poor funding, building resilience.

It is necessary to note that policy and intervention strategies are prevention, and these build resilience in response to stress. The concepts of stress, resilience, and prevention are not separate. They are part of life as one answers the human question "How ought one live?" The goal is not to end stress forever (which is impossible), but to be prepared for it with policies and interventions that produce resilience. Resilience is the ability to manage stress, whether it is usual (such as rush-hour traffic), acute (such as a flood that wipes out several homes), or chronic (such as a family member with special needs).

The above ideas illustrate that stress, resilience, and prevention are related to individuals and the community at the same time. This is a difficult insight to explain, especially in a culture of such high

individualism. This is where a professional template is important. As a community psychologist, what is your answer to this? How do you understand and explain the individual and community as necessarily interdependent? Think of individualism and community as appearing along a continuum. An issue is sometimes more of one than the other; the support system as infrastructure can sometimes be private and at other times must be public. The tragedy of the commons is a frequently cited example of individualistic pursuit at the expense of the community. It raises the question “How does one balance individual and community so both flourish?”

Conclusion

Stress, resilience, and prevention are common to all. The awareness of each concept as it applies to daily life enables communities to better respond. The idea for communities to foster is that all, individually and collectively, are answering the question “How ought one live?” The community psychologist (teacher, minister, social worker, and politician) is to help keep the idea of community alive.



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