Complementary Techniques for Coping with Pain

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Talk Outline
- Approaches to Pain Management
  - Physical Activity
  - Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy
  - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
  - Resources

Physical Activity
- Yoga
- Tai Chi

Yoga
- Involves breath control and body postures
- Improves tension headache pain and duration compared to "usual treatment" (Anheyer et al., 2019)
- Some evidence that it results in small to moderate improvements in back pain and function (Wieland et al., 2017)

Tai Chi
- A series of gentle exercises and stretches in flowing motion
  - "meditation in motion"
- Effective for arthritis & chronic back pain (Kong et al., 2016)
- More research needed

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Goal is to examine and change maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors
- Includes a wide variety of techniques
  - relaxation, biofeedback
  - problem-solving
  - identifying and changing irrational thoughts
  - goal-setting
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Biofeedback – the process of gaining greater awareness of physiological functions by using electronic instruments

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

- Effective with various types of chronic pain – osteoarthritis, neuropathic pain, lower back pain, fibromyalgia, sickle cell anemia, etc.
- Goal of ACT is not to eliminate a person’s pain... but to optimize their quality of life while living with the pain
- Key concepts/techniques include:
  - Mindfulness
  - Values

Mindfulness

Non-judgmental moment-to-moment awareness...
How do I do it?
- Mindful breathing
- Body scan
- Daily activities

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) significantly improves pain and quality of life in individuals with chronic headache (Bakhshani et al, 2015) and chronic low back pain (Banth & Ardebil, 2015)

MBSR reduces depression, anxiety, and pain in people with nerve pain (Zhu et al., 2019)

Values

- Who and what things/activities are most important to you?
- How do you want to show up in life?

Pain

Go to bed

Skip dinner
Resources

- Find a CBT therapist: abctcentral.org
- Find a biofeedback practitioner: aapb.org
- Find an ACT therapist: contextualscience.org

Websites
- www.thehappinesstrap.com
- www.mindfulness.com
- www.actonpurpose.com.au

Books
- Full Catastrophe Living – Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD
- Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life – Steve Hayes, PhD
- The Happiness Trap – Russ Harris, MD

Thank you!

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