TDC Part - I General Psychology. 1

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Pain

Be thankful for occasional pain. Pain is our body's way of telling us that something has gone wrong. It draws our attention to a burn, a break or a rupture and tells us to change our behaviour immediately. ~~Pain makes~~ Ability to feel pain saves us ~~from~~ from severe injury. Without pain, the effects of unchecked infections and injuries accumulate (Neese 1991). More numerous are those who endure chronic pain. The suffering of people with persistent or recurring backaches, arthritis, headache, and cancer related pain prompts us to try to understand pain. Pain is the property not only of the senses of the region where we feel it but of the brain as well.

Unlike vision, the pain system is not located in a simple neural cord running from a sensing device to a definable area in the brain. There are no one type of stimulus that triggers pain, (as light triggers vision) and there are no special receptors for pain. At low intensities, the

stimuli that produce pain cause other sensations including warmth or coolness, smoothness or roughness.

Although no theory of pain explains all the available findings, Psychologists Ronald Melzack and biologist Patrick Wall's (1965 - 1983) "gate control theory" provides a useful model. Melzack and Wall believes that the spinal cord contains a sort of neurological "gate" that either blocks pain or signals or allows them to pass on to the brain. The Spinal cord contains small nerves fibers that conduct most pain signals and larger fibers that conduct most other sensory signals. When tissue is injured, the small fibers activate and open the neural gate, and we feel pain. Large fiber activity closes the pain gate, turning pain off.

Thus one way to treat ~~pain~~ chronic pain is to stimulate gate-closing" (electrically, by massage, or even by acupuncture) activity in large neural fibers,

rubbing the area of pain, creates competing stimulation that will block some of the pain messages. Placing ice on a bruise serve not only to control swelling but also to trigger cold messages that close the gate on the pain signals.

Melzack and Wall believe the pain gate can also be closed by information from the brain. This brain to spinal cord messages help explain some striking Psychological influence on pain. When we are distracted from pain signals and soothed by the release of endorphins, our experience of pain may be greatly diminished. Sports injury may go unnoticed until the after game ~~shower~~ overs.

There is also more to our memories of pain than the pain we experience. In experiments, and after medical procedures, people overlook a pain's duration. There memory snapshots instead record its peak moment and how much pain they felt at the end.

Pain control

If pain is where body meets mind. If it is indeed a physical and a psychological phenomenon - then it should be treatable both physically and psychologically.

The widely practiced Lamaze technique is useful in pain control. Among them are ① relaxation through deep breathing and muscle relaxation, ② Counter conditioning through gentle massage and ③ Distraction through focusing attention on any pleasant photographs. Distracting people with pleasant images as thinking of a warm comfortable environment. It is an especially effective way to increase pain tolerance. (Fernandez & Turk 1989; McCaul & Malott 1984)