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MOOC 2 – UNIT 3

Individual Training in Early Intervention Psychology, as an Emergency Psychologist (EP)

Chapter 1

Kinds of Stress in the Work of the Emergency Psychologist

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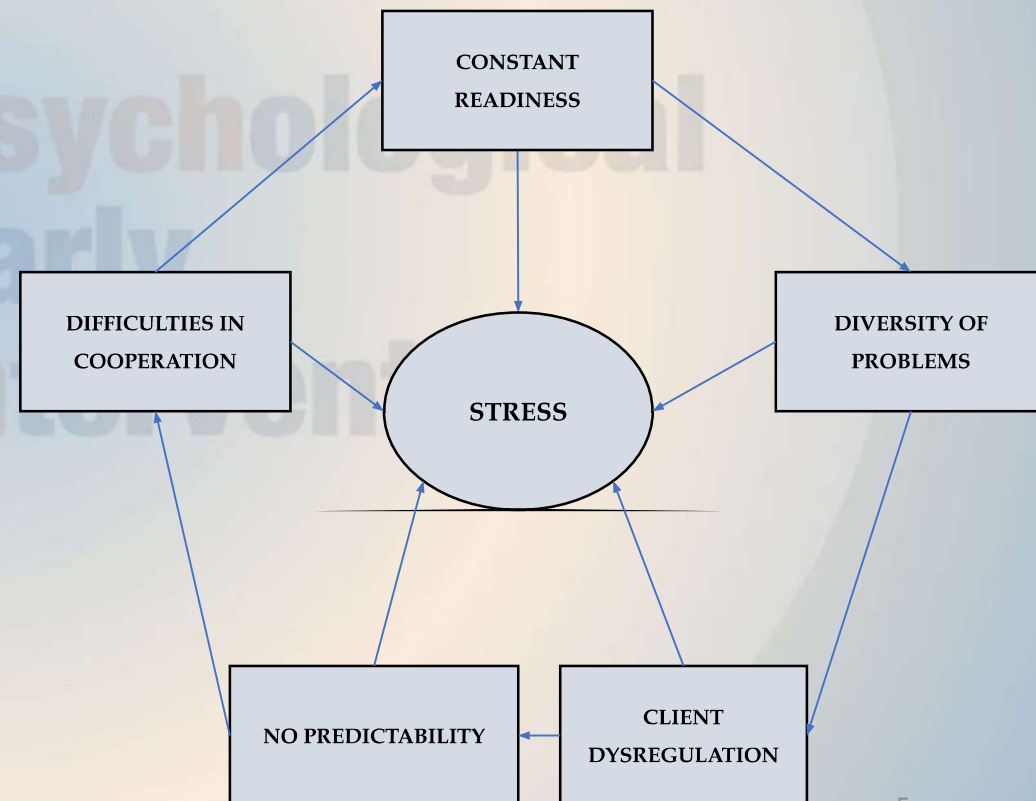
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Chapter 1.

KINDS OF STRESS IN THE WORK OF THE EMERGENCY PSYCHOLOGIST

Introduction to the chapter

- Helping people who experience various traumatic life events is associated with high levels of stress.
- In order to understand the sources of this stress, it is necessary to look at the basic characteristics of an emergency psychologist.





1.1. Stress of Helping People

A. Availability and constant readiness to help

- Traumatic events are often unpredictable, sudden and dynamically developing,
- They extend over time,
- The time of providing aid often plays a decisive role in its effectiveness,
- FULL AVAILABILITY AND CONSTANT READINESS FOR WORK is the basic feature of the EP's work.

B. Large diversity of problems in the work of an Emergency Psychologist

Disasters and natural events.

- Epidemic
- Flood
- Earthquake
- Hurricane
- Drought
- E.t.c..



Man-made disasters and events

- Traffic accidents
- Environmental contamination
- Terrorist activities
- Violence and neglect (towards children, the elderly, the vulnerable, the excluded, towards social minorities)



1.1. Stress of Helping People

C. Contact with people with high emotional behaviour and different ways of reacting

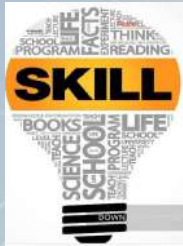
- People who have faced trauma are often agitated, despairing and suffering,
- They have trouble controlling their behaviour, and can sometimes act impulsively and aggressively,
- This is a factor that is strongly burdening the emergency psychologist, the more so as they may not have information about the context of the victim's situation.

D. The conditions in which the emergency psychologist will operate and make decisions

- Due to the unpredictable state and situation of the client, it is sometimes very difficult to make decisions.
- The time pressure and the responsibility of the emergency psychologist for the actions taken increase with the degree of threat to the client.

E. Necessity of cooperation with different organizations and people

- Crisis situations require the cooperation of various services and institutions dealing with first aid.
- Sometimes it is not easy to integrate all these activities, which brings additional stress for the emergency psychologist.



1.1. Stress of Helping People

1. Identifying the sources of stress in terms of all factors that can cause stress. An attempt to organize knowledge and relate it to yourself.
2. Assessment of the level of stress in individual factors, i.e. which of the listed stressors works the most.
3. Strategies for coping with stress - what EP can do to reduce the intensity of experienced stress .

Identifying the sources of stress. The main cause of stress is that the requirements that a person faces are at the limit of their capabilities, or even impossible to meet.

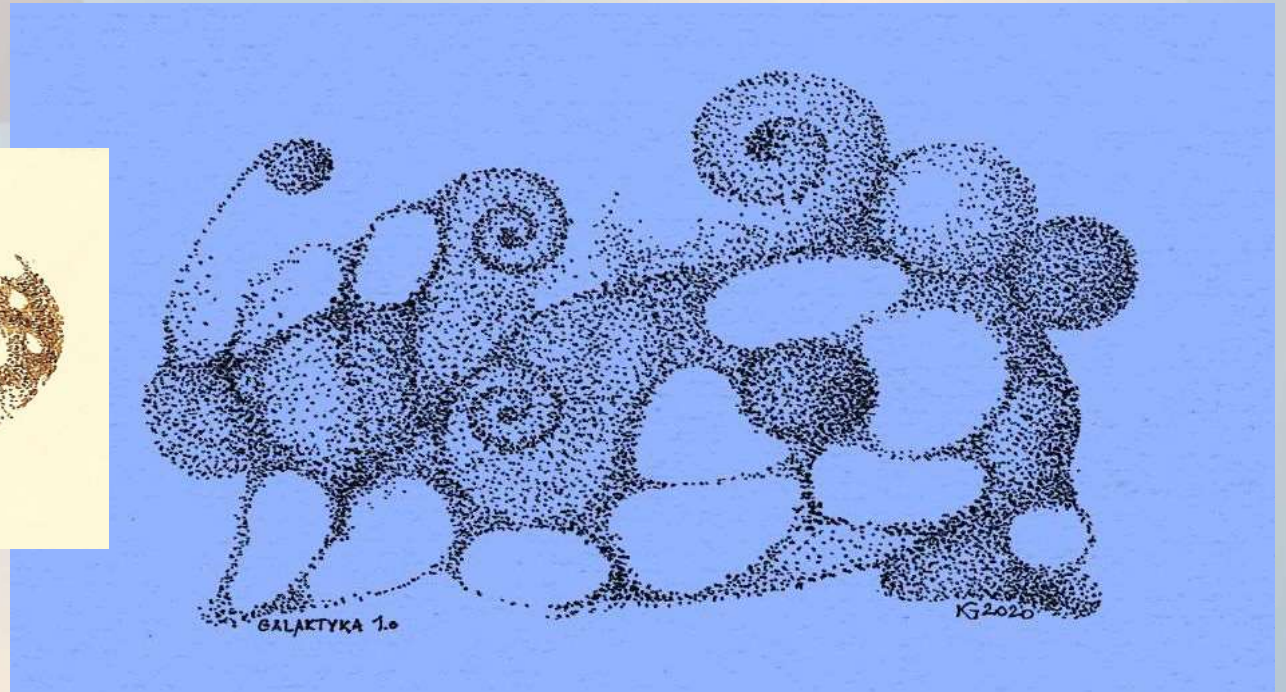
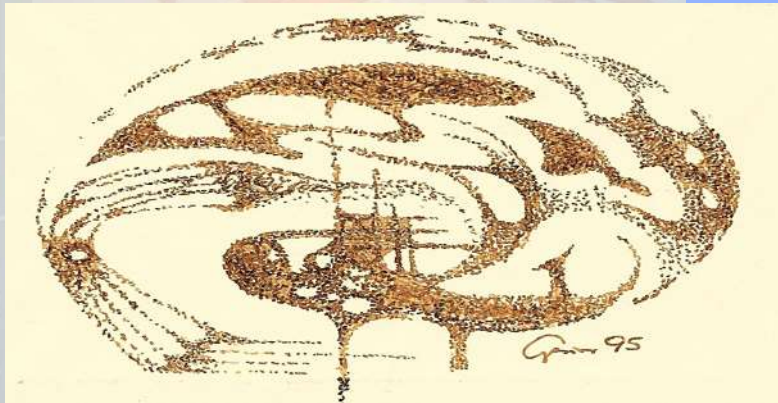
The sources of stress can be divided into:

- External - a general assessment of the size and type of the emergency. You could say that the greater the tragedy, the greater the severity of the stress.
- Internal - requirements towards oneself in terms of the effectiveness of the help provided, coping with a given situation, with the suffering of another person, the ability to distance oneself from experiences and experiences of others, etc. ...



1.1. Stress of Helping People

- A. Strengthening motivation and improving the ability to cope with various types of stress.
- B. Searching for sources of support.
- C. Strategies for coping with various stresses.



Tip 1.1. Drill: Strengthening the motivation to deal with stress.



1.2. Emergency Psychologist Pitfalls and Dilemmas

Crisis intervention is entangled:

- on the one hand in traditional problems of clinical psychology - traps,
- and on the other hand in strongly marked social problems - dilemmas.



PITFALLS:

- Counter-transference,
- Over-identification,
- Premature evaluation,
- Closures,
- Errors related to inappropriate attitudes of the EP

DILEMMAS:

- Individual – Community,
- Unwanted help,
- Strengthening helplessness,
- Intervention limits,
- The role of the intervener,
- Illusion - Hope



1.2.1 Emergency Psychologist Pitfalls

A. The counter-transference pitfall

- Countertransference relates to the attribution to the client of the characteristics and behaviours of persons significant to the EP now and in the past. This entails an unrealistic perception of the client and the intervention situation,
- Unresolved counter-transference problems can hinder or even prevent effective intervention.
- The interveners may become trapped by their own negative thoughts and feelings, while absorbed in their own experience, they may completely ignore the impact of the trauma on the victim.

Countertransference

Activating your own
behaviours, feelings
and thoughts related to
previous experiences

A crisis situation of a
person requiring help



1.2.1 Emergency Psychologist Pitfalls

B. The pitfall of over-identification

- It can trigger the pursuit of accelerating the resolution of the crisis, despite the lack of readiness on the part of the client,
- Failings in the intervention process and resistance in a crisis to change for the better may discourage the intervener,
- Client behaviour and emotions may evoke difficult feelings and attitudes of the interveners over time. This may disturb the adequate perception of the client as a victim of the crisis,
- The intervener's unconscious problems triggered by a crisis situation may entail an overprotective attitude towards the client, over-identification, destructive counseling, anger, magical actions

C. The pitfall of prematurely assessing the nature and occurrence of the crisis

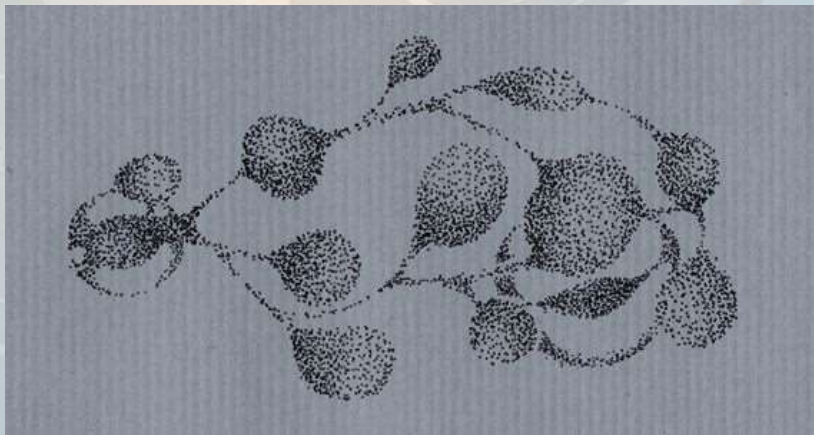
- Falling into this pitfall may result in "closing the intervention stance", that is, the intervener's side narrows the optics of the whole situation. EP can stick to and watch over their own hypotheses about the client. He ceases to be interested in learning about his perspective,
- This may lead to the loss of the client's chance to resolve the crisis on their own as the intervener takes the initiative.



1.2.1 Emergency Psychologist Pitfalls

D. The pitfall of closing in on the client

- It leads to the disappearance of "curiosity" with the person against whom the intervention is conducted
- EP ceases to look for resources, ways of dealing with the client so far in similar crisis situations
- **Caring** - we start helping with interest and concern for the client,
- **Knowledge** - we gain knowledge about the client to help them better, we also have professional and expert knowledge,
- **Power** - the more knowledge we have and the client's treatment of us as an authority makes us more suggestive for the client, it can lead to pride,
- **Pride** - we think we know better what is needed for the client, we start to decide for them. We close ourselves to the client.



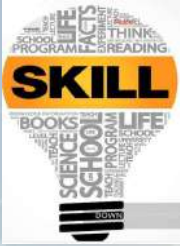


1.2.1 Emergency Psychologist Pitfalls

E. Errors due to inappropriate attitudes of the EP

- An attitude of overconfidence that the problem has been correctly identified
- The overactivity of the intervener
- Taking too much responsibility by the intervener
- Giving advice on how the client behaves
- Making or suggesting a decision to the client
- Difficulty listening to the client actively





1.2.1. Emergency Psychologist Pitfalls – How to Avoid Them?

Avoiding pitfalls is an important skill for an interventional psychologist.

Avoiding and dealing with pitfalls consists of:

- Pitfall recognition skills - what is the pitfall?
- Determining the sources of the pitfall - where does it come from?
- Choosing the right ways to eliminate the pitfall - how to deal with it?

The order in which the pitfalls appear in the subsequent phases of the intervention is important.

(2) TiP 1.2.1. Drill: Distinguishing between pitfalls





1.2.2. Emergency Psychologist Dilemmas

The EP's dilemmas are related primarily to the social context, The emergency psychologist functions in a specific social system, hence face numerous dilemmas regarding the role of the intervener, the limits of intervention, human freedom, responsibility to others, or the problem of an individual - community (institution)

A. The individual-community dilemma

- EP is focused not only on helping or solving personal problems or difficulties of a person affected by the crisis, but also concerns the community in which the client lives and functions.
- EP may face the dilemma of how much to support the client and think only about them, and how much to take into account the community in which the client functions.

B. The dilemma of offering help

- Preventive actions also include looking for clients who have problems, difficulties, but for various reasons do not ask for help (e.g., war veterans who may have PTSD),
- Clients who do not want help, do not accept it, show resistance to intervention,
- Then there is a dilemma about supporting the client despite the lack of acceptance on their part, or leaving them to themselves,
- Offering unwanted help despite the most sincere intentions violates the client's intimacy and privacy, strengthens the feeling of helplessness, and undermines faith in the ability to deal with a crisis on one's own. It evokes emotions such as shame, humiliation and guilt in the client.



1.2.2. Emergency Psychologist Dilemmas

C. The dilemma of strengthening the helplessness

- Each intervention (also effective and successful) can strengthen the client's beliefs about their own:
 - Passivity
 - Helplessness
 - Powerlessness
 - The hopelessness of the situation
- Learned helplessness syndrome can start during interventions
- The dilemma faced by the intervener is the need to decide what actions to take and how they are implemented will allow to avert the crisis without further strengthening the helplessness.
- It is important that the interviewer sees and strengthens the client's strengths and resources and shows them how they have dealt with a difficult situation so far.
- A good balance is extremely important so as not to increase the feeling of helplessness and not to diminish the sense of control and power abused by the crisis.



1.2.2. Emergency Psychologist Dilemmas

D. The dilemma of the limits of intervention - involvement of the intervener

- Attention should be paid to mechanisms that may influence the involvement in the relationship with the client. They may (consciously or not) manipulate or apparently show their own helplessness in order to draw the intervener into decision making, over-support, over-care
- A well-structured contract may help in resolving this dilemma, which defines the limits of the aid, the method of its provision and duration.
- It is also important to be cautious when organizing specific activities or suggesting them so as not to influence, even indirectly, the decisions of the assisted person.

E. The dilemma of the role of the intervener

- It concerns the nature of the relationship between the intervener and the assisted person.
- The client's expectations towards contact with the helper are of great importance. It may prejudice the effectiveness of the intervener's actions
- More formal relationships can help with lifestyle change issues (divorce, job change, counseling, difficult information sharing)

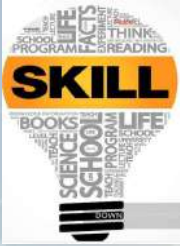


1.2.2. Emergency Psychologist Dilemmas

F. The dilemma of illusions and hope

- EP faces the dilemma of building hope or confronting the client too quickly and sharply with the difficulties related to the crisis situation.
- This is especially true of traumatic events such as pandemic, catastrophe, terminal illness, etc.
- The solution to the described dilemma should take into account, among others: individual style of coping with stress, resistance to stress, personality traits, emotional balance, the presence of support in the family/ relatives. All these variables should be considered by the intervener before deciding on openly disillusioned confrontation or excessive hope.



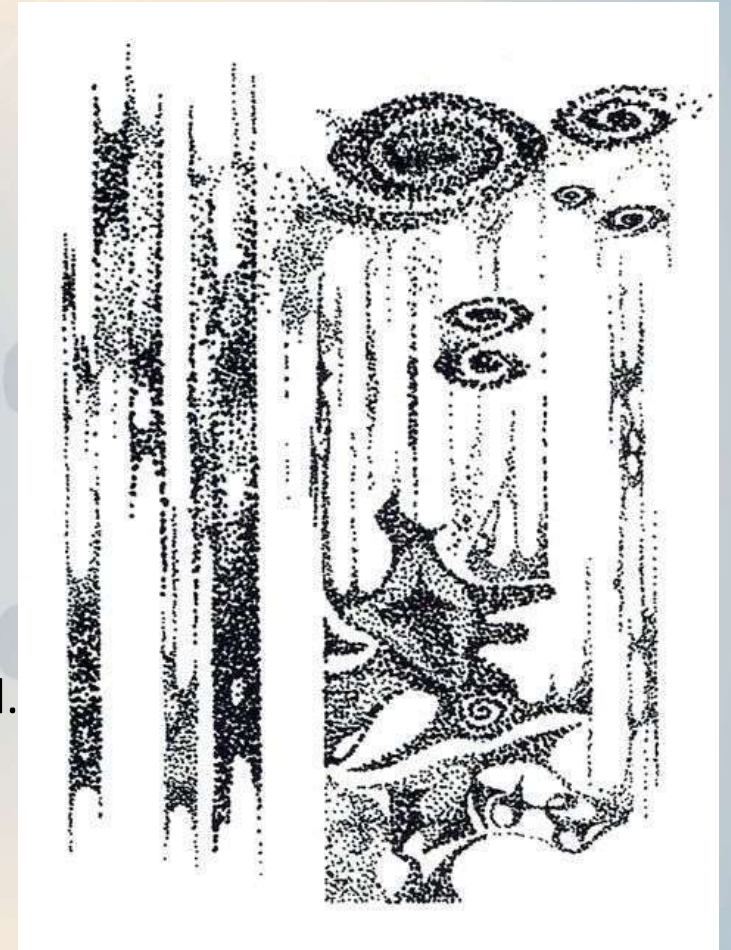


1.2.2. Solving Dilemmas

Solving dilemmas involves the following skills:

- Properly assessing the nature of the dilemma,
- Determining the method of solving the dilemma,
- Checking the effects of the applied solution

Unfortunately, not all dilemmas can be unequivocally resolved. In such a case, it is important to be able to endure frustration and reconcile opposing arguments.

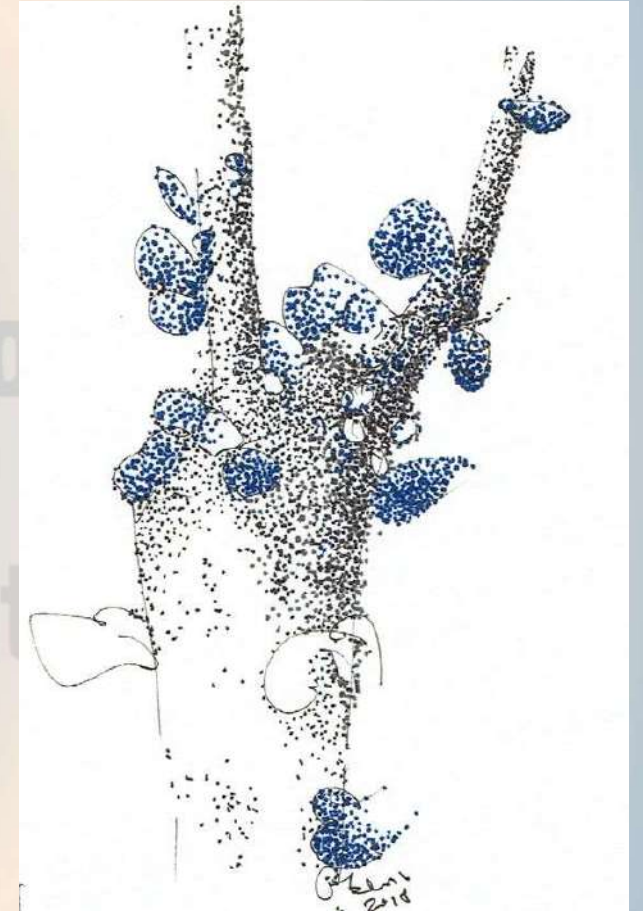




1.2.2. Solving Dilemmas

Solving dilemmas and avoiding pitfalls is related to competences, which include:

1. The ability to distance oneself from oneself and the surrounding reality,
2. Ability to assess the nature and sources of traps and dilemmas based on reliable knowledge,
3. Creative search for a solution to a problem,
4. Reliable checking of the effects of the applied solution,
5. The ability to tolerate and reconcile opposing arguments.



(3) TiP 1.2.2. Drill: Dilemmas - vignette about a real case (Paul)