PATHS TO THE PERSON

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PATHS TO THE PERSON

COMMUNITY ASSIGNMENTS IN ACHIEVING
INDIVIDUAL PREVENTION GOALS

Editors

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To the Holy Father John Paul II
– Servant of the dignity of the human person –
the Founder of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers

Effective Resistance Resources
(IWONA NIEWIADOMSKA)

1. Psychological Stress: a Common Risk Factor
in Behaviour Disorders

A complex system comprising the overall relationship between a specific person and their surrounding environment constitute a psychological situation (Tomaszewski 1984, p. 134). Special attention should be paid to the problems that the person experiences, which can be treated as difficult situations.

A difficult situation is characterized by a discrepancy between an individual's needs or their allocated tasks and the possibilities of meeting those expectations or completing those tasks.

Difficult situations most frequently experienced by human beings include the following (Tomaszewski 1984, pp. 134-135):

– deprivation of vital biological and psychic needs;

– strain caused by having to perform tasks beyond the individual's physical and/or psychic capabilities;

– experiencing painful situations resulting from the person's exposure to physical or psychic suffering (e.g.: insults, humiliation, harm);

– motivational conflicts connected with long-term decision processes involving negative emotions;

– physical security threats (concerning the risk of losing one's life or health) or social security threats (e.g.: a possibility of losing one's social status) – i.e. perception of the stimuli which are not dangerous themselves but which signal the appearance of unpleasant emotional states;

– difficulties resulting from the individual's limited intentional activity caused by the lack of elements necessary to perform that activity or by any obstacles to performing actions directed at achieving the individual's aim (frustration);

– experiencing new situations in which well-tried ways of action fail.

The above-mentioned difficulties are not mutually exclusive. They can arise simultaneously or overlap each other at a certain point of time or throughout a long period of time. For example, a given situation can, at the same time, be painful, dangerous and can bring about a motivational conflict. The frequent result of an individual experiencing difficult situations is psychological stress.

An individual suffers from stress when their psychic tension reaches an appropriate level – the so-called stress threshold.

Crossing one's stress threshold is connected with response syndrome occurring at three levels (Strelau et al, 2004, pp. 49-51):

1. non-specific changes,
2. specific changes,
3. modification of expressive action.

Re 1) **Non-specific changes** begin with an individual's heightened activity and improved fitness, then are followed by emotional tension and functional deterioration, leading to physical exhaustion, disorganized activity and loss of interest in the ultimate outcome of that person's activity.

Re 2) **Specific changes** take place when an individual's behaviour content is adjusted to an appropriate type of difficult situation. One can distinguish between two forms of specific response depending on "the stress threshold":

a) fighting an individual's stress appropriate to the type of destabilizing factor (e.g. removing the source of tension);

b) defence against an individual's stress which starts when fighting this stress has proved ineffective – defensive behaviour can take a real form (e.g. withdrawal from a stressful situation, avoidance of a stressful situation, attacking an obstacle) or a symbolic form (e.g. fantasizing or denial).

Re 3) **Reactions connected with changing an individual's expressive actions** are not meant to achieve any specific outside aims but to signal the state of their emotional tension in case of any difficulties (e.g. expressing their disapproval, verbalizing their unpleasant experiences, fury, panic).

It should be noted that the effects of an individual's stress burden can vary depending on its intensity. As a rule psychic tension does not disrupt their functioning so much as to lead to behaviour disorder. However, after crossing their individual 'stress threshold' strain is so tremendous that it can provoke disadaptation reactions aimed at defending themselves against too high psychic tension (Terelak 2008, pp. 228-229).

A typical example of stress 'strain' can be the feeling of loneliness experienced by social outsiders who withdraw from functioning in different communities in order to integrate with their 'companions in misery'. At the same time they suffer from an overwhelming feeling of inner emptiness caused by deficits in internal standards, impossibility of achieving success, a feeling of helplessness and a very poor sense of security (Rokach 1984-1985, p. 231; Ohme 1993, pp. 293-303).

As a result of establishing 'I'm a loser' standard within their group, the outsider does not notice any contrast between his or her social status and the situation of other people. This leads, on the one hand, to the person's identification with antisocial values and norms of behaviour as well as to their falling under the socialization influence of a deviant community and, on the other, to 'shaking off' their shackles which hinder their free aggression manifestation against their own environment (Ohme 1993, p. 298; Simon et al, 1998, pp. 646-658; Gray-Little, Hafdahl 2000, pp. 26-54).

Too intensive situational stress can bring experiences that are defined as critical life change events (Sęk 2001, p. 252). This kind of phenomenon is very similar to a situation when someone experiences problematic circumstances. However, the main difference between the two is that (Sęk 2001, p. 253):

Stress experienced in a difficult situation is easier to get over, while a critical life change event requires a change in the functional relationship between an individual and their environment.

Changes in the relationship between an individual and their environment can be constructive or destructive in nature. A constructive change takes place when this type of experience can boost that person's self-development through their discovery of higher values, directing their behaviour at more mature goals and/or initiating pro-social attitudes (Cekiera 1993, pp. 280-281).

It is frequently the case, though, that the circumstances contributing to a critical life change event can lead to negative consequences. The risk of these consequences becomes higher when an individual (Sęk 2001, pp. 253-254):

– suffers a huge physical, psychic and/or social loss,

– suffers the consequences of a critical event in their different life aspects (e.g. loss of their job or experiencing a cataclysm),

– experiences a dramatic escalation of the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness,

– possesses scarce preventive resources.

Attention should also be paid to the phenomenon called chronic stress.

Chronic stress takes place when an individual experiences prolonged emotional tension which is negative in nature.

Different empirical analyses indicate that chronic stress increases to a great extent the risk of various disorders. At the psychic functions level the consequences can take the form of anxiety states, apathy or depression. At the physiological level they can lead to psychosomatic diseases or other health problems, and at the behavioural level they heighten the risk of aggressive and auto-destructive behaviours, including suicide attempts (Strelau et al. 2004, pp. 49-51).

Longitudinal research on the psychological effects of chronic stress has shown that the most frequent reaction to tension, apart from neurosis and psychosomatic diseases, is increased use of psychoactive substances, above all alcohol (Poprawa 1998, p. 62). Among the subjective factors heightening the risk of using chemical substances as a preventive strategy in the case of an individual's exposure to stress are the following (Poprawa 1998, pp. 65-67):

– lack of appropriate cognitive-behavioural skills necessary to deal with difficulties (their scarcity or rigidity), while at the same time the individual is convinced that psychoactive substances are an effective way of solving their problems;

– low sense of self-efficacy in handling difficult circumstances as well as positive expectations as to the effects of using a chemical substance in a given situation – treating it as, above all, a good way of reducing tension and getting away from the current problems;

– lack of motivation to struggle with their life problems – low tolerance of difficulties, accumulation of their failures, a tendency towards giving up on any effort and, instead, searching for 'easy solutions';

– following the recorded patterns of how to use psychoactive substances;

– intensive social training in runaway-addictive behaviours.

It is worth mentioning that if an individual suffering from chronic stress runs away from their stress through intoxication, this creates a paradoxical situation. That means that short-term use of psychoactive substances brings relief but long-term use of them leads to mechanisms of addiction which destroy the proper structure of that person's life aspirations (Niewiadomska 2001, pp. 165-177; Niewiadomska 2002, pp. 219-239).

Prolonged stress can also lead to one's crisis in the sphere of judging people. A personality assessment system should be understood as a set of elements of cognitive structure which constitute a relatively permanent organization of one's convictions on their preferred ways of behaviour or extreme states of existence arranged according to their relative importance.

Due to their subjective assessment system an individual makes choices directed at such goals which, in their subjective opinion, represent a vital value, giving in this way sense to their actions aimed at achieving those goals (Matusewicz 1975 p. 9; Schwarz 1992, pp. 1-66). The symptoms of crisis in the individual's sphere of judging people can take the following forms (Oleś 1988, pp. 5-7):

– difficulties in forming a hierarchy of the values the individual possesses – the person cannot define the principal value in the system of their aspirations; this situation results in the person's lack of axiological orientation or in the conflict between their main values;

– significant redefinition of values – the individual discovers new values and, at the same time, gives up the ones they have acknowledged so far;

– lack of the integration of cognitive, affective and motivational processes constituting their assessment – the individual makes cognitive declarations but, at the same time, has a negative emotional attitude toward them and does not get involved in their realization; disorders of this type are defined as suppression of organismic valuing process;

– difficulties in passing judgments and in making choices on the basis of their internal standards – the axiological system does not perform a regulatory function; the causes of this type of disorder can be twofold. They can come as a consequence of the lack of the individual's clear hierarchy of values. They can also be caused by decisions which do not result from any internal standards but from some other premises (e.g. situational ones);

– the feeling of the individual's non-fulfilment of values – problems of this type arise when the individual realizes the discrepancy between their internal standards and their own behaviour; the lack of the regulatory function of the valuing orientation is most frequently caused by strong internal pressures (e.g. frustrated needs) or external pressures (e.g. social pressure).

The symptoms of an individual's crisis in their personality valuing sphere are frequently reflected in that person's problems with their moral behaviour and/or in problems with their social functioning.

The heightened risk of destructive behaviour displayed by an individual experiencing valuing crisis is caused by the fact that their actions are strongly influenced by their internal standards (values and behavioural norms).

Following one's internal standards brings satisfaction and enhances the person's self-esteem, while violating them brings about remorse and lower self-esteem. In this way those standards hold control over the individual's behaviour (Oleś 2005, pp. 218-223). In the case of a valuing crisis their internal standards are weakened, which, on the one hand, results in the

reduction of the individual's control over their own behaviour and, on the other, in the increase in their susceptibility to the influence of their environment.

The interpersonal problems of the people experiencing disorders within the axiological sphere can be manifested in their distrustful, unfriendly and too critical an attitude toward others, in their poor ability to establish close emotional relationships, in their tendency towards rivalry and, simultaneously, in their feeling the need to be accepted by others (Oleś 1989, p. 169). Those people's problems with their interpersonal relationships can be manifested through their various internal experiences, like:

– the feeling of having no intimacy, which reflects those people's deficit in close relationship with another person. This kind of state can be best illustrated through the following statements: *"There is not a single person to whom I could reach out my hand and touch. I have nobody to talk to, I have nobody to cuddle. There is nobody I could exchange my thoughts with. I was crying out for help but there was no one out there. There is not a single person who could understand my feelings"* (Rokach 1988, p. 536);

– the feeling of being separated from other people and social groups. The people experiencing such separation could express their feelings in the following way: *"I feel desperately lonely. I feel I'm an outsider. I can't feel that I'm part of my group"* (Rokach 1988, p. 537);

– the feeling of being passively rejected. This kind of conviction reflects a situation in which those people feel ignored by others. States of this type can be expressed through the following sentence: *"When I'm doing fine I can't get the feeling that anybody is helping me or is giving me any encouragement; nobody cares about me"* (Rokach 1988, p. 537);

– the feeling of being actively rejected, which implies that the people have been ostracized by others. The following statement can reflect the feeling of this kind: *"My boss is saying something to me and I feel as if he was saying: 'You don't exist. You're nonexistent'"* (Rokach 1988, p. 537).

The above-mentioned arguments – the consequences of one's situational and chronic stress as well as their experience of a critical life change event among others – support the idea that the person should seek effective subjective resources thanks to which they become more resilient in problematic situations.

2. Resources: Factors Forming one's Subjective Resilience to Stress

The problem of the ways in which an individual can form their subjective resilience to difficult situations will be discussed below on the basis of Steven Hobfoll's conservation of resources theory. The main assumption underlying this theory is the following (Hobfoll 2006, pp. 70-71):

People strive to obtain, retain, protect and promote their personal resources, i.e. what they regard as precious to them.

Various objects and states of reality that are precious to an individual can structurally be divided into four groups (Hobfoll 2006, pp. 74-75):

material resources – physical objects whose value can be directly (e.g. a house, means of communication, fetishes) or indirectly (e.g. diamonds, usually associated with one's high social status or their positive self-assessment) connected with the individual's survival;

– personal resources – their features of personality (e.g. leadership skill, optimism, hope, a feeling of being efficient), competences (e.g. in one's professional career) and skills (e.g. at the social level) contributing to their positive adaptation;

– resources of state – e.g. their health, marriage, permanent employment, working experience. This type of capital is desirable and highly-valued because it influences the individual's access to other categories of means of adaptation;

– energy resources – e.g. their knowledge, money, credit rating. What makes these resources valuable is that they can be exchanged for elements belonging to the other categories of highly-valued goods.

The above-mentioned types of resource decide upon the way and quality of an individual's adaptation to their surroundings. At this point it is worth paying special attention to the following:

1. psychosocial adaptation capital stemming from the interaction between resources of state and personal resources;

2. personal resources connected with intentional motivation.

Re 1) Psychosocial adaptation capital. The need to function within a group and to possess skills necessary in interpersonal relationships constitute the essence of man's life (Millon et al 2005, pp. 56-58). An individual's social interactions – reactive, provocative and proactive in character – play a special role in the formation of the dynamic dimensions of their personality (Radocholiński 1998, p. 39).

The characteristic feature of reactive contacts is that an individual reacts to the oncoming stimuli in their own specific way. Each person extracts a subjective context from the objectively ensuing circumstances.

This subjective – 'psychological' environment is formed by, above all, cognitive schemata. In their formation the essential role plays social perception which is made up of two types of information (Lewicka 1985, pp. 20-21):

– descriptive (connected with physical characteristics of objects, events and phenomena),

– affective (concerning emotional sensations experienced while in direct contact with an object as well as object assessment made according to its importance for the subject or its usefulness in achieving their goal).

Cognitive orientation allows an individual to plan their future activity and to predict its consequences, while affective information is used to form an 'emotionally symmetric' representation of the world under cognitive schemata. The existence of both of these types of information in the individual's personality structure makes it easier for them to undertake activity toward various objects (Lewicka 1985, pp. 25-31).

The significance of descriptive-affective information in human psyche is proved by the fact that individuals displaying antisocial behaviour possess specific cognitive stereotypes concerning acts of aggressive behaviour, e.g. they treat them as an effective way of achieving their aims. They are also more prone to resort to acts of violence in various circumstances, accepting them as a permissible means of solving problems (Radochoński 1998, p. 40).

The essence of provocative interactions lies in the fact that, through their behaviour, individuals trigger specific-to-themselves reactions in other people.

In the course of provocative contacts a peculiar positive feedback loop is formed: **the reaction of the subject – the reaction of the environment – the reaction of the subject.** Regular repetition of this positive feedback loop in the analyzed type of reactions results in the stabilization of an individual's behaviour. Additionally, generalization mechanism leads to the transfer of the patterns of social behaviour from the individual's own environment to other types of situation and interpersonal relationship.

Proactive interactions are characterized by the fact that an individual selectively chooses or forms their social environment in accordance with their requirements.

People often seek the company of other people similar to them in terms of their predispositions and abilities. Certain individual features also determine their choice of specific situations aimed at satisfying their spe-

cific needs and /or boosting their primal talents. For example, when an individual feels the need for thrilling experiences they choose the situations which involve taking physical or social risk. Proactive interaction is a process where an individual becomes the 'active agent' of their own personality development. People's self-regulatory characteristics in terms of their personality dynamics increase with time. This manifests itself in their making appropriate choices concerning their field of study, professional activity, their development of interest and different forms of spending their free time (Radochoński 1998, pp. 41-42).

Overcoming one's difficulties is frequently connected with the possibilities of using their aid interpersonal resources. Therefore (Koole et al, 2001, pp. 289-301):

Social support is treated as a preventive strategy, resource or mediator in an individual's dynamics of coping with their stress.

The more well-aimed and expected the help and the more an individual can perceive the relationship between a positive change in their situation and positive reinforcement from others, the bigger the positive role of other people in that individual's surmounting their difficulties (Sęk 2004, pp. 98-99).

Supporting an individual socially in their functioning can be generally immunizing or buffer in character (Cieślak, Eliasz 2004, p. 78). Social support plays an immunizing role when an individual can perceive and evaluate the informative, emotional, instrumental or material help they receive in the categories that enable them to overcome their difficulties, which alleviates the individual's stress and increases their preventive resources. This regularity can be confirmed by the results of empirical analyses which state that perceived social support correlates positively with the individual's preference for the task-oriented preventive style, and negatively with their emotional strategies (Cieślak, Eliasz 2004, p. 83). Another important issue is that an individual who receives help from other people feels more secure and more deeply rooted in their community, which, in the long-run, makes them more resilient to stress. It is necessary to emphasize the consequences of poor interpersonal support that the individual receives in difficult situations. On the one hand, it increases the activity of the stressor and, on the other, limits the individual's abilities to deal with the stress agent (Sęk 2004, pp. 64-66).

Perceiving and receiving social support in a situation of considerable stress protects an individual against any pathology in their physiological, psychic and/or social functioning. The buffer activity of their aid relationships can exist in different forms depending on which element of their stress dynamics it is aimed at. For example, it can be used to reduce the

individual's psychic tension or to weaken the negative consequences of stress (Sęk 2004, pp. 101-102).

An individual's feeling of support depends to a great extent on how much trust they have for certain interpersonal relationships. Their lack of trust usually stems from their general belief that investing one's personal resources in a given relationship can be risked by unfavorable consequences for the investor. The individual's motivation to initiate relationships based on trust becomes particularly low in the cases when they have found out through their own experiences that the investment of their own resources turned out too big because of their partner's low credibility (Gautschi 2000, pp. 132-133).

A low level of an individual's interpersonal trust makes the individual withdraw from their interpersonal contacts and refuse to make use of social support resources, especially because they are afraid of experiencing another failure.

An individual's feeling of being rejected by their environment through stigmatization can also have negative consequences. An important consequence of such social stigma are negative emotions (rage and anger in particular) which the individual is filled with. At first, those negative emotions determine the individual's reaction to other people's behaviour but in the long run they become an independent motivation factor which shapes the relationships between the stigmatized individual and their environment (Wiener et al 1988, pp. 746-747). This assumption can be proved by crime forecast analyses which imply that an antisocial attitude of the culprit is a strong risk factor for recidivism which is stronger than their criminal career, social achievements, intelligence, psychoactive substances use, encountered problems and social-economic status (Gendreau et al, 1996, pp. 401-433). It is worth emphasizing the fact that the interpersonal relationships between serial criminals and conventional peer groups already in their adolescence have a high intensity of aversive elements and that the reaction of the environment to those who have served a prison sentence additionally increase social distance toward people with a criminal record (Rachoński 2000, p. 201).

The influence of an individual's environment on their personal resources is particularly visible in the formation of their self-image and self-assessment.

The above-mentioned mechanism can be explained through the principle of complementarity which states that an individual's actions are directed in such a way as to encourage or force others to behave in a certain way. The indirect aim of each interpersonal contact is, on the one hand, to heighten the reactions sustaining the individual's self-image and, on

the other, to eliminate attitudes at variance with how the person would like to be perceived by others. If each side of an interaction process effectively controls the range of the reactions shown by the opposite party, both parties mutually satisfy each other's needs concerning their self-image. However, any forms of behaviour that are unfavorable for the presentation of the individual's self evoke negative feelings like the feeling of threat or psychic tension, which results in their elimination of the burdensome relationship (Millon et al 2005, pp. 56-59).

An individual's selection of interpersonal contacts is caused by the fact that the reactions of the individual's environment constitute the main source of their self-image and self-assessment formation. Their self-image is, above all, the reflection of the way in which they are perceived by their environment and, to a lesser extent, the result of their individual introspection. Treating a person like a criminal leads to the situation when they begin to believe that they actually are the type of person that the people around them have pronounced them to be, i.e. a deviant, somebody different and worse. The rejected person's self-image is connected with a rapid decrease in their self-esteem and a heightened fear of behaving in accordance with the label that has been attached to them. It can work the opposite way – the individual starts to satisfy those social expectations and to behave in accordance with the label attached to them (Crocker et al, 1998, pp. 504-553).

If an individual feels different from their interpersonal environment, they begin to seek an environment where they can feel accepted. Therefore, they become engaged in activity of deviant groups where the individual (Mills et al, 2004, pp. 717-733):
– frequently displays destructive behaviour,
– forms and retains their deviant identity,
– makes excuses for their behaviour,
– experiences reasonableness of socially unaccepted activities.

Re 2) Personal resources connected with intentional motivation. Human behaviour is neither an automatic outcome of internal impulses nor a passive reflection of the influence of the environment (Oleś 2005, p. 175).

A characteristic feature of human behaviour is its intentionality toward the outside world, free choice in undertaking activities, directing activities towards particular aims and being aware of the sense of the undertaken activities on account of their causes and results.

An individual's aims which are the anticipated states of affairs are the carriers of potential values and meanings. They can be treated as a vision of the future which the individual, through their actions, changes into a

real world. Thanks to them the individual 'is never in full' but is constantly 'becoming' (Popielski 1993, p. 67; Franken 2005, p. 24). Therefore, it can be stated that human behaviour is characterized by four attributes (Oleś 2005, pp. 226-227):

– intentionality,
– far-sightedness of prediction,
– self-regulation,
– autoreflection.

The first of the above-mentioned features concerns an individual's ability to undertake activities springing from their internal passion for knowledge. A person's intention is a representation of the future means of their self-realization through their proactive engagement in putting their behaviour into action. Intention can be treated as behavioural disposition which is highly likely to happen. Far-sighted prediction involves the evaluation of immediate and far-reaching consequences of the undertaken activity. Self-regulation is an individual's ability to control their own activities through observation and the correction of their behaviour by making references to the personal standards which they possess. Autoreflection is the signal of an individual's metacognitive activity – the individual is aware not only of what they are supposed to do but also of a variety of elements which accompany their undertaking activities (e.g. they can be aware of the effort they have made, being at the same time convinced of the level of a necessary engagement in achieving their aim).

The intentionality of human behaviour is reflected in different spheres of people's activity – it can also be visible in deviant behaviour. The humanistic approach of criminology bases its analyses on the vision of the man who chooses (*homo eligens*). Crime, like any other man's causative acts, is the outcome of an individual's autonomy (Tyszkiewicz 1997, p. 24). Their decision to abandon a forbidden act is connected with the psychic processes which start the moment the individual realizes that they cannot do something. There is a clash between the arguments in favor of the planned choice and the arguments against – above all, the individual's evaluation of the goal value, their determination of the predicted results (positive and negative) as well as their awareness of the incurred costs (Blatier 2000, p. 97).

Treating forbidden acts in categories of one's rational choice leads to the rejection of a psychopathological model in their motivation of crime. It is the planned goals and results that are responsible for the individual's seeking an opportunity for a given type of behaviour, making use of their abilities and forming their moral attitude (Clarke, Cornish 1985, p. 167).

The above conclusions can be confirmed by an empirical analysis of the decisions made by perpetrators of crimes against property who have been divided into three categories – beginner thieves, professional thieves and those who steal out of desperation. In all of these groups the persons' antisocial behaviour was the consequence of their rational decisions resulting from their own experiences and their analyses of in the ensuing situation. The crimes committed by the beginner and professional thieves were well-prepared and were aimed at acquiring consumer values while the desperate stole in order to alleviate their personal difficulties (Kroses 1994, pp. 1-7).

The rationality of an offender's behaviour can be justified by the fact that they frequently seek an excuse for their actions in order to diminish their feeling of responsibility for the results of those actions. Excusing their actions by using different neutralization techniques can be treated, on the one hand, in terms of their use of self-justification and, on the other, of their reduction of negative psychic states like a feeling of guilt, shame, fear or remorse (Haan, Vos 2003, pp. 43-44).

The conclusion that antisocial behaviour is a personal choice of the causative subject can also be confirmed by the results of the study which states that a criminal lifestyle coexists with four personality variables (Walters 2005, pp. 5-24):
  – irresponsibility,
  – self-indulgence,
  – social rule-breaking,
  – interpersonal intrusiveness.

The preferred types of behaviour, life choices and the character of the existence of serial offenders depend to a great extent on the measures above the personality dimensions.

An individual's intentional motivation is made up of a variety of cognitive processes connected with their predicting the development of a situation, organising their activities within a period of time and planning the effects of those activities. The cognitive character of the processes responsible for intentional behaviours is expressed by means of conditional sentences such as 'if..., then', due to which the individual weighs up the availability of their aims, the possibilities of their achievement and the different results of their undertaken activity (Oleś 2005, pp. 216-217). The fact that a given aim is attractive or aversive does not automatically make the individual act. Only when they become confident that there is a possibility of their achieving a positive effect or avoiding a negative one do they begin to display their aspirations (motivational tendency) to initiate actions aimed at its achievement (Hacker 1993, pp. 157-169).

3. Subjective Principles of Using One's Resources

According to the conception of retaining one's resources an individual experiences stress in the circumstances connected with a threat of losing or an actual loss of the goods indispensable in their survival in a given social environment. The occurrence of stress can be predicted in situations when the invested resources do not bring the person any satisfying profit, which is tantamount to sustaining loss because they make high-risk investments in order to generate further profits (Hobfoll 2006, pp. 71-72). The above-mentioned regularities result from the fact that people's efforts are not directed at, above all, winning prizes but at retaining their adaptive capital. The dynamics of an individual retaining their highly-valued goods follow two basic principles.

Principle I

An individual's loss of their resources has far greater significance than making a profit (Hobfoll 2006, p. 78).

The result of principle I is that an individual's motivation to protect themselves against losses is much greater than their motivation to make profits. Therefore, the person adopts different types of strategy to protect themselves against the loss of their adaptive capital. The generated profits play two sorts of function – primary and secondary. The former lies in the fact that after sustaining loss the individual initiates a profit cycle in order to balance that loss. The latter derives from the fact that the individual pays special attention to their generated profits in situations when they realize their incurred loss, which helps the individual to reduce their psychic tension and to alleviate their reactions to the stress they feel.

Principle II

An individual invests their resources in order to:
– prevent their loss,
– compensate for the incurred loss,
– and/or obtain new resources (Hobfoll 2006, p. 90).

On the basis of this principle it can be stated that an individual is able to invest disproportionately much to compensate for a possible loss of their highly-valued goods. This mechanism constitutes the individual's motivation to build up capital reserves. Some important implications arise from the regularities presented above.

Implication I

Individuals who possess more resources are at a lower risk of losing them and they have more opportunities to increase their profits (Hobfoll 2006, p. 97).

People who have an enormous adaptive capability can use various strategies to protect themselves against loss. The ways in which an individual can protect themselves against adaptive deficits are, above all, the following (Hobfoll 2006, p. 192):

– investing highly-valued goods,

– controlling the incurred loss,

– retaining the reserves,

– making use of the external capital sources in order to supplement or to substitute their resources,

– restoring the lost capability through the initiation of a cycle of profits.

Implication II

The incipient loss suffered by the individuals with a poor adaptive capability contribute to a series of losses, while the incipient profit generated by the individuals with a large adaptive capital brings even more profits (Hobfoll 2006, p. 98).

These tendencies lead to the conclusion that an individual's possessing greater capital reserves decides upon (Hobfoll 2006, pp. 98-99):

– minor depletion in the individual's adaptive capability in situations where they experience failures,

– less painful consequences of the incurred losses,

– investing the individual's surpluses through initiating behaviours aimed at increasing their capital,

– taking a risk of suffering possible losses in situations when the individual invests their resources.

Implication III

Individuals who are lacking in adaptive resources are prone to adopt a defensive attitude (Hobfoll 2006, p. 100).

Defensive behaviour results from an individual's necessity to retain their minimal reserves in order to make use of their resources to survive in future difficult situations, as well as from their enormous sense of loss. It has to be emphasized that a person possessing an extremely small adaptive capital experiences stress and negative emotional reactions very intensively when they suffer an incipient loss. Additionally, the mechanism of a violent spiral of further deficits heightens the already existing psychic tension and intensifies the negative emotions. As a result, the individual's necessity to fight off those unpleasant psychic states leads to the depletion of their adaptive reserves. It also has to be noted that a particularly high level of stress is induced in the circumstances in which, on the one hand, there takes place high resource expenditure and, on the other, there exists

a faint possibility of making a profit. Experiencing these types of situation leads to the cases in which the individual (Hobfoll 2006, p. 193):
– becomes aware of finding themselves in an unfavorable situation,
– begins to experience disorders in different spheres of their functioning,
– loses their sense of control over their own life.

4. The Aim of Pro-Health Activities: Increasing One's Resistance Resources

The above-presented mechanisms can be used in undertaking preventive activities. The application of this strategy is possible by matching an individual's adaptive resources to their environment's requirements. The matching model assumes that the individual (Hobfoll 2006, pp. 237-240):

1. possesses an unlimited number of reserves,

2. can fulfil the requirements imposed by their environment by using their specific resources,

3. can prevent stress or constructively reduce their psychic tension thanks to the required capital reserves that they possess,

4. can adapt to the requirements imposed by their environment through intentional and reactive actions.

By looking at the above-presented regularities it is possible to draw applicable conclusions which can significantly contribute to the increase of the effectiveness of pro-health activities.

Conclusion I

In undertaking pro-health activities the significance of an individual's adaptive capital has to be taken into account.

Preventive strategies should be directed in a proper way so that their application contributes to building up an individual's resistance to stress – mainly through their acquiring the ability to properly evaluate the actual and/or possible losses. The above conclusion is confirmed by the results of some empirical analyses which indicate that there is a relationship between an individual's low resistance to stress and their intensified violent behaviours, between a small number of their social commitments and their intense engagement in the activities of deviant groups (Paternoster, Mazerolle 1994, pp. 235-263).

Individuals who frequently display destructive behaviours are characterized by low resistance to their experiencing problems. For instance,

penitentiary recidivists who have repeatedly served prison sentences frequently perceive their different life circumstances as difficult situations. This interpretation of the ensuing events increases the risk of deviant behaviours which are their reactions to the psychic tension they experience (Gordon 2005, pp. 108-109). Criminogenic behaviour is most often the result of three types of difficulty (Mazerolle et al, 2000, p. 90):

1. obstacles in achieving important aims (frustration),
2. deprivations springing from an individual's lack of highly-priced values,
3. noticing harmful (aversive) and/or new stimuli.

Pro-health activities should therefore counteract the situations where an individual possesses extremely few resources because this makes the individual adopt a defensive attitude toward a possibility of changing anything in their life. It also leads to their suffering from chronic stress (which causes disorders at somatic, psychic and/or social levels) as well as to their use of destructive preventive strategies (e.g. by using chemical substances).

Conclusion II

Preventive strategies should involve teaching an individual competences necessary to make use of their resources in order to restore the incurred losses and/or increase their resources.

The above-presented conclusion is also reflected in the results of the research conducted within a group of convicted offenders. The results of the study showed that the motivation for pro-social behaviours of former prisoners increases when their life situation improves after they leave their prison (Bałandynowicz 1996, p. 147).

The assumption that it is possible for an individual to restore their incurred losses and/or increase their resources can also be confirmed by the results of some empirical analyses which showed that criminal offenders' participation in addiction therapies encourages them to use a greater number of constructive preventive strategies in various life situations (Hepburn 2005, pp. 237-259). The analyses of preventive styles used by alcoholics undergoing treatment imply that the process of their recovering is accompanied by the change of the ways in which they overcome their problems, i.e.: (Makowska 1998, p. 108):

– focusing more on solving a given problem – e.g. planning the ways to overcome difficulties and positive revaluing the situation,

– less frequent use of confrontational strategies, i.e. violent expression of one's negative emotions (e.g. anger or irritation).

Conclusion III

Pro-health activities should be directed in such a way as to enable an individual to acquire an ability to make good judgments and to choose the resources which will help them to use preventive strategies appropriate to the requirements of their environment.

The choice of proper resources is connected with the following question: Are internal resources adequate to constructively solve certain problems or is it justifiable to use the external capital? The conception of retaining one's resources implies that an interpersonal context has considerable importance in overcoming one's difficulties. This results from the phenomenon of the intersection of stress where resources flow and exchange each other in the preventive process. An example of the intersection of stress is the dynamics of support which are, on the one hand, connected with causing stress and, on the other, with the need for specific forms of help. The fact is that in providing help the individuals who possess more resources support the weaker ones. It is necessary to present here the results of the empirical analyses which stated that one of the most effective way of solving an individual's problems in situations of considerable stress is to competently provide them with social support (Sęk 2001, pp. 252-253). Two factors are of vital importance in the help offered to an individual (Bałandynowicz 1996, p. 148):

– properly raising the individual's hopes that they will overcome their difficulties;

– taking positive advantage of the individual's impatience caused by the lack of visible progress in overcoming their difficulties.

The above-mentioned factors are called stimulators which induce individuals to display behaviours directed at changing their personal life situation. The lowering of this type of motivation takes place in situations of predicting possible losses, i.e. when an individual has a faint hope to solve their problem with a positive result, experiencing at the same time a high level of impatience due to the lack of any actual changes.

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