CHAPTER 1
ADJUSTING TO MODERN LIFE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe four examples of the paradox of progress.
2. Explain what is meant by the paradox of progress and how theorists have explained it.
3. Provide some examples of people’s search for direction.
4. Describe three problems that are common in popular self-help books.
5. Summarize advice about what to look for in quality self-help books.
6. Summarize the philosophy underlying this textbook.
7. Describe the two key facets of psychology.
8. Explain the concept of adjustment.
9. Explain the nature of empiricism.
10. Explain two advantages of the scientific approach to understanding behavior.
11. Describe the experimental method, distinguishing between independent and dependent variables, and between experimental and control groups.
12. Distinguish between positive and negative correlation, and explain what the size of a correlation coefficient means.
13. Describe three correlational research methods.
14. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of experimental versus correlational research.
15. Discuss the prevalence of reported happiness in modern society.
16. List the various factors that are surprisingly unrelated to happiness.
17. Explain how health, social activity, religion, and culture are related to happiness.
18. Explain how love, work, and personality are related to happiness.
19. Summarize the conclusions drawn about the determinants of happiness.
20. List three steps for developing sound study habits.
21. Describe the SQ3R method and what makes it effective.
22. Summarize advice on how to get more out of lectures.
23. Summarize how memory is influenced by practice, interference, and organization.
24. Describe several verbal and visual mnemonic devices.

Psychology- The scientific study of the behavior and the physiological and mental processes that underlie that behavior

Applied Psychology- The profession that applies the accumulated knowledge from the field of psychology to practical problems

Adjustment- The psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of every day life
CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. The paradox of progress

A. Examples of paradox
   1. Time: Time-savings from technology versus not enough time
   2. Economics: Abundance versus dissatisfaction
   3. Choices: Appeal versus regret
   4. Technology: Progress versus devastation

B. Explanation of paradox
   1. Technological advances have not led to perceptible improvement in collective health and happiness
   2. Some critics suggest that quality of our lives and sense of personal fulfillment have declined

C. Causes of paradox
   1. Fromm: changes in value systems
   2. Toffler: alienation due to rapid cultural change
   3. Kasser: excessive materialism

II. The search for direction

A. Manifestations of search for direction
   1. Self-realization programs (e.g., Scientology)
   2. Cults (e.g., Heaven’s Gate)
   3. Popularity of “Dr. Laura” radio show

B. Self-help books
   1. The value of self-help books
      a. Some excellent books offer authentic insights and sound advice
      b. But many books offer little real value to the reader
   2. Main shortcomings of self-help books
      a. Dominated by "psychobabble"
      b. Advice provided is generally not based on solid, scientific research
      c. Usually don't provide explicit directions about how to change behavior
   3. What to look for in self-help books
      a. Clarity in communication
      b. Don't promise too much in the way of immediate change
      c. Mention the research basis for their program
      d. Provide explicit directions about how to change behavior
      e. Tend to focus on a particular topic

C. The approach of this textbook
   1. Based on premise that accurate knowledge about psychological principles can be of value in everyday life
   2. Attempts to foster a critical attitude about psychological issues and to enhance critical thinking skills
   3. This text should open doors
   4. Assumes that the key to effective adjustment is to take charge of your own life
III. The psychology of adjustment

A. **Definition of psychology:** the science that studies behavior and the physiological and mental processes that underlie it, and the profession that applies the accumulated knowledge of this science to practical problems
   1. **Behavior:** any overt (observable) response or activity by an organism
   2. **Clinical psychology:** the branch of psychology concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of psychological problems and disorders

B. **Definition of adjustment:** the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life

IV. The scientific approach to behavior

A. The commitment of empiricism
   1. **Definition of Empiricism:** the premise that knowledge should be acquired through observation
   2. Investigations in scientific psychology are formal, systematic, and objective

B. Advantages of the scientific approach
   1. Clarity and precision
   2. Relative intolerance of error

C. Experimental research
   1. **Experiment:** a research method in which an investigator manipulates one (independent) variable under carefully controlled conditions and observes whether any changes occur in a second (dependent) variable as a result
   2. Independent and dependent variables
      a. **Independent variable:** a condition or event that an experimenter varies in order to see its impact on another variable
      b. **Dependent variable:** the variable that is thought to be affected by the manipulations of the independent variable
   3. Experimental and control groups
      a. **Experimental group:** consists of the subjects who receive some special treatment in regard to the independent variable
      b. **Control group:** consists of similar subjects who do not receive the special treatment given to the experimental group
      c. Logic of the experimental method rests on the assumption that the experimental and control groups are alike, except for their different treatment in regard to the independent variable
   4. Advantages and disadvantages
      a. Main advantage is that it allows scientists to draw conclusions about cause-and-effect relationships between variables
      b. One disadvantage is that some variables cannot be manipulated because of ethical concerns or practical realities

D. Correlational research
   1. **Correlation:** a correlation exists when two variables are related to each other
   2. Measuring correlation
      a. **Correlation coefficient:** a numerical index of the degree of relationship that exists between two variables
b. Kinds of relationships
   1) Positive relationship
   2) Negative relationship
c. Strength of the relationship
   1) The absolute value of the correlation coefficient indicates the strength of the relationship
   2) Thus, the closer the correlation coefficient is to either -1.00 or +1.00, the stronger the relationship is
   3) Correlation coefficients near zero indicate little or no relationship between the variables
3. Naturalistic observation
   a. In naturalistic observation, a researcher engages in careful observation of behavior without intervening directly with the subjects
   b. Method is naturalistic because behavior is allowed to occur naturally
4. Case studies
   a. A case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual subject
   b. Generally used in clinical settings to diagnose and treat a psychological problem
5. Surveys
   a. Surveys: structured questionnaires designed to solicit information about specific aspects of participants’ behavior
   b. Frequently used to study attitudes and other aspects of behavior that are difficult to observe directly
6. Advantages and disadvantages of correlational research methods
   a. Main advantage is that they can be used to explore questions that cannot be examined with experimental procedures
   b. Main disadvantage is that correlational research cannot be used to demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships between variables

V. The roots of happiness: an empirical analysis

A. What isn't very important?
   1. Money
      a. Correlation between income and subjective feeling of happiness is positive, but surprisingly weak
      b. On average, wealthy people are only marginally happier than middle classes
   2. Age
   3. Gender
   4. Parenthood
   5. Intelligence
   6. Physical attractiveness

B. What is somewhat important?
   1. Health
   2. Social activity
   3. Religion

C. What is very important?
   1. Love and marriage
   2. Work
   3. Personality
a. Best predictor of future happiness is past happiness
b. Personality correlates of happiness include self-esteem, extraversion, optimism,

D. Conclusions
1. Because most of the data are correlational, we must be cautious in drawing inferences about the causes of happiness
2. Evidence indicates that many popular beliefs about the sources of happiness are unfounded
3. But some general conclusions can be drawn
   a. Determinants of well-being are subjective and relative
   b. Research suggests that people tend to adapt to their circumstances. **Hedonic adaptation occurs when the mental scale that people use to judge the pleasantness-unpleasantness of their experience shifts so that their neutral point, or baseline for comparison, is changed.**
   c. It is possible to find happiness in spite of seemingly insurmountable problems. The quest for happiness is never hopeless

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Evaluate the degree to which technology has improved the quality of our lives by doing a “cost-benefit analysis” (weigh what society has gained against what you believe it has lost).

2. Why are self-help books so popular? List any self-help books that you have read. How helpful did you find these books to be? Did they have (or lack) any of the qualities listed in the chapter under what to look for in self-help books?

3. Has anyone you know been enthusiastic about a self-improvement program that you felt was worthless? Do you think this person might have experienced a placebo effect?

4. This chapter defines psychology. How does the chapter’s description of psychology vary from your initial impression of what psychology is, or what psychologists do?

5. If you were a psychological researcher, what types of research methods would you prefer to use, such as experimental research, correlational, naturalistic observation, case studies, or surveys? How might it depend on the research topic?

6. Can you recall any correlations reported recently in the news? (Hint: a common example are correlates with various aspects of health). Was the correlation positive or negative? What are the various possible causal relationships related to this correlation?

7. What variables do you think have been influential in determining your happiness? Is your answer to this question consistent with the empirical findings discussed in the textbook?

8. Although there is only a weak correlation between income and feelings of happiness, many people believe that having more money will make them happy. Why do you think this is?
HELPFUL WEBSITES

http://mentalhelp.net/psyhelp/ This site has information about self-help programs, including the basic steps involved in the self-help process.

http://www.psychwww.com/mtsite/page3.html This “information skills” page from Mind Tools describes a number of strategies that can be used to improve learning.

http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html This site, located at Virginia Tech, has information about study skills.

http://www.quackwatch.com A enormously helpful website, updated frequently, with the latest information on helpful, harmful, and useless therapies and treatments.

http://methods.fullerton.edu/noframesindex.html For your ambitious and curious students, this eBook has a great deal of detailed and current information on research designs, their strengths, and their weaknesses.

http://www.skepdic.com/ “A Collection of Strange Beliefs, Amusing Deceptions, and Dangerous Delusions (and how to think critically about them)”. Includes reference to empirical investigation of areas of self-help, parapsychology and pseudopsychology.

http://www.psychology.org/ The Encyclopedia of Psychology is a wonderful resource for introducing students to all aspects of the science. It provides an easy way to search for specific topics related to the current body of psychological knowledge.

http://shpm.com/ The Self-Help magazine website, online since 1994, has a wealth of topics and information related to many issues.

http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/ The Research Methods Knowledge Base – this site has far more information that you might need, but various pages within the site can be recommended to students for further information on research in the social and behavioral sciences, and it’s a wonderful resource to recommend to students who develop a serious interest in the social and behavioral sciences.

http://www.psychologicalscience.org/ This is the homepage for the American Psychological Society. It includes links to various areas related to psychology in general and empirical research. For instance, the “Media Center” is frequently updated with news of recent research findings in psychology.

http://www.apa.org/ This is the homepage for the American Psychological Association. It includes links to various areas related to psychology and psychological research. Its coverage of various psychological topics can be a useful reference in introducing psychology as a broad and diverse field.

http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/ The Self-Help magazine website, online since 1994, has a wealth of topics and information related to many issues.
UNDERSTANDING EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

Instructions: For the following experiments, identify the components listed below each.

1. A health psychologist wants to test the hypothesis that yellow hospital rooms will shorten the recovery time for surgical patients when compared to recovery times of patients in standard white hospital rooms. Half of the patients are randomly assigned to yellow rooms, the other half to white rooms. The number of days until recovery is noted for each patient.

   1a) Independent variable ____________________________

   1b) Dependent variable _____________________________

   1c) Control group__________________________________

   1d) Experimental group _____________________________

2. An educational psychologist wants to explore whether a new math program, which involves textbooks with special colored pictures, will help high school students in learning geometry. Half of the students are randomly assigned to traditional textbooks, while the other half are assigned to the special textbooks. Scores on a standardized geometry test are measured at the end of the semester.

   2a) Independent variable ____________________________

   2b) Dependent variable _____________________________

   2c) Control group__________________________________

   2d) Experimental group _____________________________

3. A counseling psychologist wants to know whether the methods in a new self-help book are effective. The book promotes a special set of “Refunctional” writing exercises for individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The psychologist has some clients complete these “Refunctional” writing exercises, while another group of clients are asked to write ordinary journal entries. The level of PTSD symptoms are measured and compared between the two groups of clients.

   3a) Independent variable ____________________________

   3b) Dependent variable _____________________________

   3c) Control group__________________________________

   3d) Experimental group _____________________________
4. A psychologist studying memory wants to test the hypothesis that a herbal supplement aids memory. The research involves having eighty individuals complete a memory test. Half of these individuals first consumed the herbal supplement; the other half consumed a placebo pill.

4a) Independent variable ____________________________
4b) Dependent variable _____________________________
4c) Control group__________________________________
4d) Experimental group _____________________________

5. A workplace psychologist believes that giving workers frequent but small rewards will improve worker morale and productivity more than the standard reward program (infrequent large rewards to only the best employees). In order to test this hypothesis, some managers are instructed in giving their employees frequent small rewards, while others are left to continue with the standard reward program.

5a) Independent variable ____________________________
5b) Dependent variable _____________________________
5c) Control group__________________________________
5d) Experimental group _____________________________