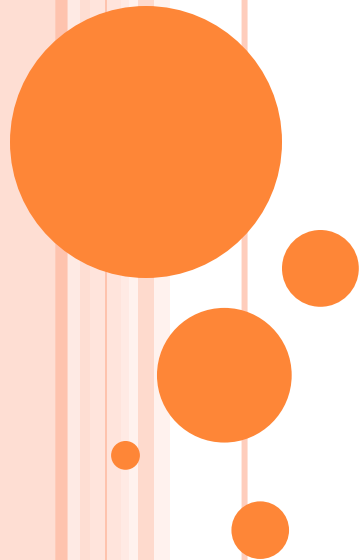




THE HEALTH PSYCHOLOGIST'S ROLE

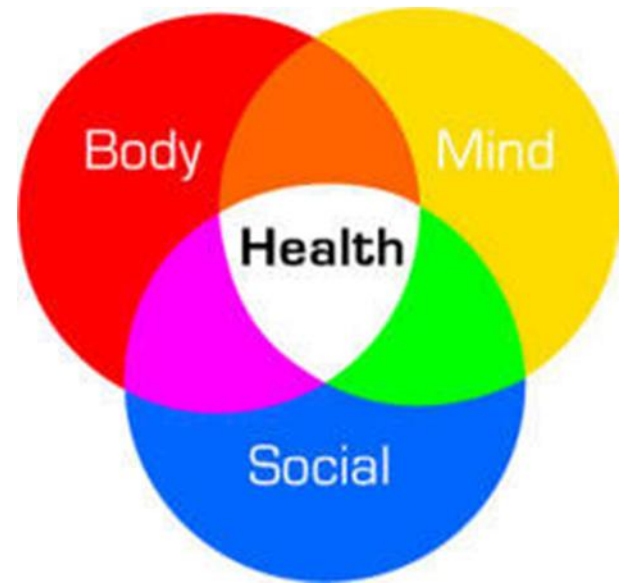
Alexandra Nobel, MA
Fall 2015





WHAT IS HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY?

- *Medical problems occur within a social context and are maintained within systems. Managing symptoms and coping with medical problems are likely influenced by cognitive-behavioral factors.*
- Biopsychosocial Model





A LITTLE ABOUT ME...

- BA in Psychology, Rhodes College, Memphis, TN
- MA in Psych, Connecticut College, New London, CT
- Current PhD student, Clinical Psychology – University of Rhode Island – Kingston, RI
 - *Expected 2019*





WHAT AM I INTERESTED IN?

- Interprofessional health care teams
 - Primary care, patient and family centered care, home based care
- Assessment of decision-making capacity
- Shared decision making
 - Patients, families, medical providers
- Advance care planning and end-of-life decision-making





CLINICAL HEALTH PSYCHOLOGISTS...

- Could work in medical settings, universities, public health initiatives
- In medical settings, typically working on interprofessional health care teams
 - This is my ultimate goal and integrated medical care (ie, medical and mental health care providers working together to assess patients' needs and goals) appears to be gaining momentum! Yay!
- Trained in clinical practice and knowledgeable about relevant medical diagnoses/treatments





SO WHAT DO HEALTH PSYCHOLOGISTS DO?

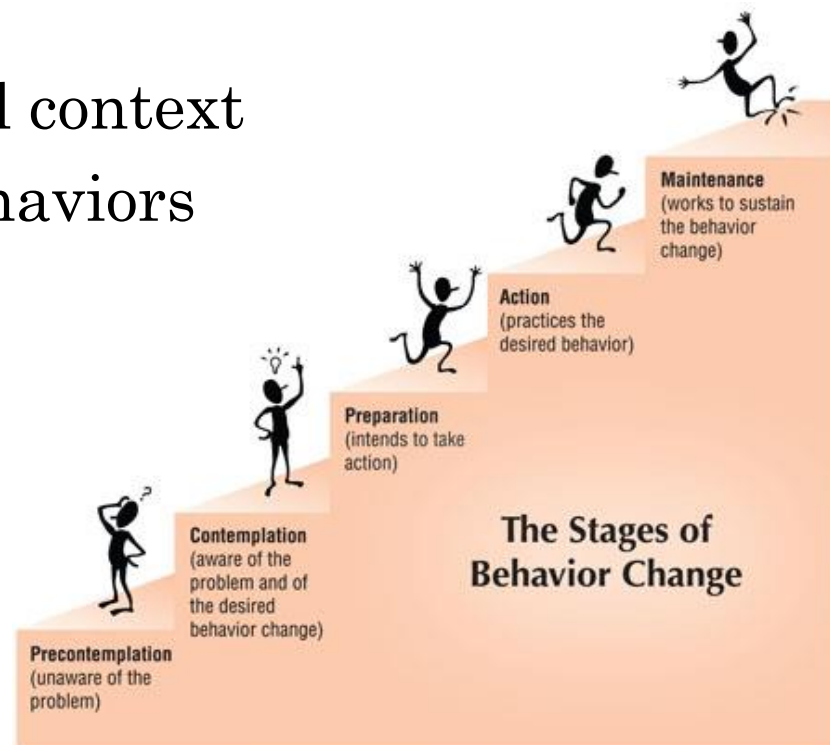
- Research
- Clinical Practice
- Advocacy
- Educate
- Clinical Training/
Supervision



WHAT ELSE?



- Health behavior change
- Management of chronic illness
- Connections between bio-med issues and psychosocial issues
 - development & social context
 - thoughts/feelings/behaviors
 - existential issues





EXAMPLES FROM MY COLLEAGUES:

- Diabetes management group at the VA
- Cancer caregivers support group at South County Hospital
- Research study using motivational interviewing to increase knowledge/motivation to engage in living donor kidney transplant
- Smoking cessation research/intervention with high school students in RI
- Behavioral Health, Visiting Nurses Services –anxiety and depression in homebound patients (eg, broken hip, blood pressure checks, chronic pain)



DETAILED PERSONAL EXAMPLE

- Homebound patient recovering from flu and pneumonia referred with severe anxiety/depression sx
- Hospitalized 1mo ago
- Arthritis, diabetes, hypertension, suffered stroke 20+ years ago
- One close daughter, estranged from sons
- Stressful apt building; limited social connection
- No transportation – limited mobility
- Numerous losses within the last 3 years (husband, friend, 2 sisters)
- Existential anxiety – sickness and death





THE LOOK I GIVE

**WHEN I'M COMPLETELY
OVERWHELMED**





WHAT MIGHT A HEALTH PSYCHOLOGIST DO?

- Integrated medical team communication
 - PT (mobility and social interaction)
 - CNS (medication management)
 - MD (prescriptions, hospital stay)
 - RN case manager (how long do we have to work together?)
- Psychological interventions
 - Identifying negative thought patterns and how they relate to emotions and behaviors
 - Discussing how social withdrawal maintains negative thoughts (“I’m alone.”) and feelings (sad, angry)





PATIENT OUTCOMES

- Talked to providers and adjusted her psychotropic medications to hopefully increase motivation, increase energy, and improve sleep
- Motivated patient to acknowledge how interacting socially might help her sadness and disconnectedness
 - Enhance personal responsibility and feelings of control
- Validated emotions and provided safe space to talk about fears





DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY (DMC)

- Another example of what health psychologists do in medical settings
- Consultation-Liaison
 - “Psych consult”
 - Is the patient of sound mind to make a specific decision
 - To have a surgery
 - To make end-of-life care plans

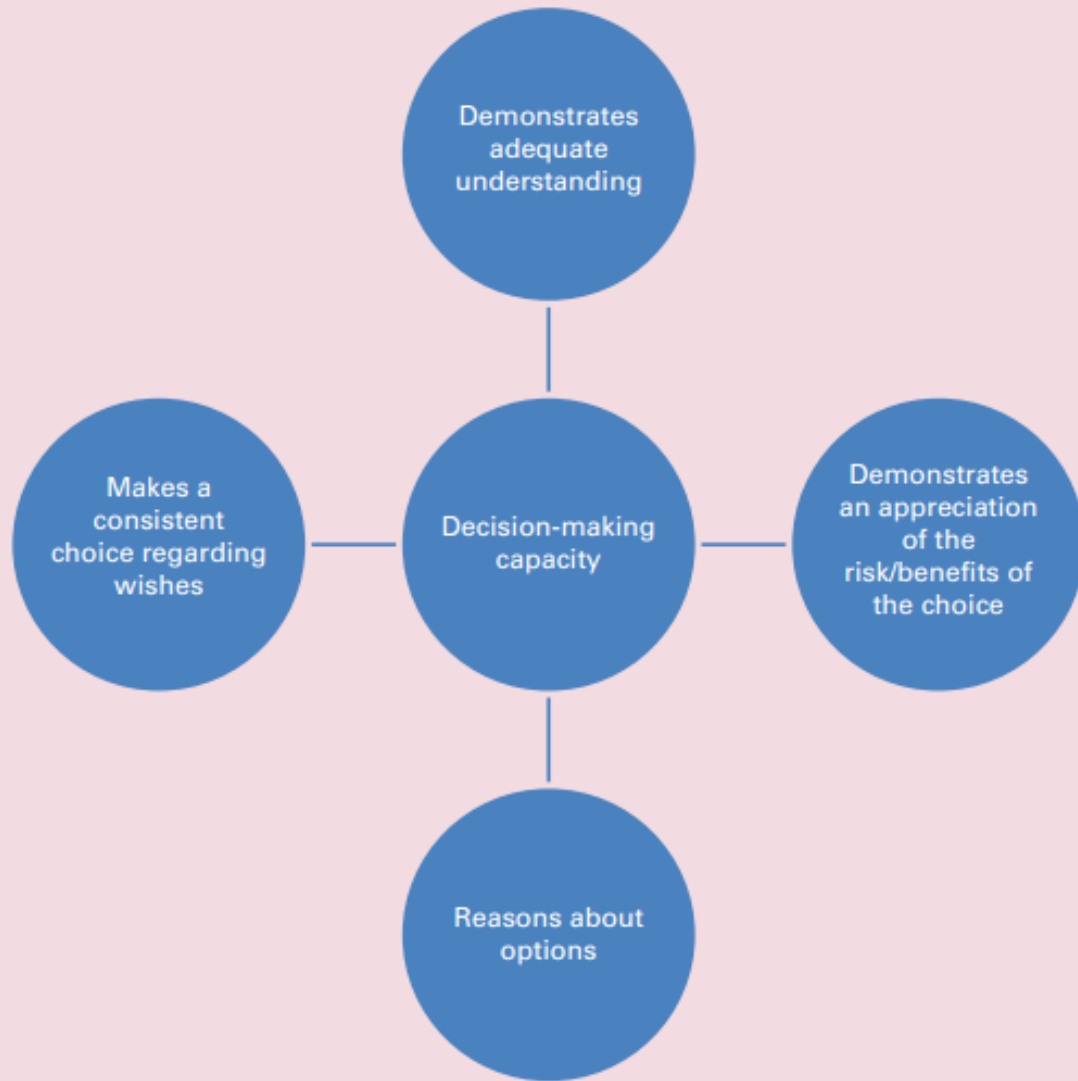


DMC ASSESSMENT CRITERIA



1. Able to clearly communicate a choice.
2. Exhibit understanding of the relevant information
 1. Own words, risks/benefits
3. Appreciation of the situation and its consequences
 1. Insight, ownership of situation
4. Able to incorporate and manipulate relevant information and reason through options
 1. Process by which they decide to accept/reject option.

Criteria for DMC



Adapted from Appelbaum PS. Clinical practice. Assessment of patients' competence to consent to treatment. *N Engl J Med.* 2007;357(18):1834-1840.





WHO HAS DIMINISHED CAPACITY?

- Adolescents?
- Elderly?
- Dementia?

- We have no clue.





HOW CAN A HEALTH PSYCHOLOGIST HELP?

- Be present when the doctor is discussing options
- Assess patients' insight and ability to communicate wishes
- Advocate for the patient's wishes with medical providers
 - *Is the patient making a sound decision that is just not what the doctor recommends??*



IN SUM



Health psychologists work with individuals, families, groups, communities, medical providers, universities, and health care systems to assess/intervene on behavioral, mental, and physical aspects of health.



THANK YOU!!

- QUESTIONS?
 - anobel@my.uri.edu

