**MENTAL HEALTH REVISION TASK**

**QUESTION 1 (15 marks)**

1. Read the information in the **MEDIA ARTICLE about Aaron’s specific phobia of buttons.**

Analyse Aaron’s specific phobia of buttons by identifying the contributing factors. Make direct reference to at least one example of each of the following and explain their contribution to the specific phobia:

• precipitating factor

• perpetuating factor

• protective evidence-based social intervention (3 + 3 + 3 = 9 marks)

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b. Several biological factors have contributed to Aaron’s button phobia.

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(i) Explain why and how GABA dysfunction may be a predisposing risk factor and contribute to a stress response such as that shown by Aaron. (3 marks)

(ii) GABA agonists, benzodiazepines, are biological protective factors that can assist in managing the symptoms of specific phobias. Explain the effect that they have on the nervous system and how they help to reduce anxiety. (3 marks)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTION 2 (15 marks)**

1. Read the information in the **MEDIA ARTICLE about Amy’s specific phobia of heights.**

Several psychological factors have contributed to Amy’s phobia of heights. She says that ‘my heart (would) race. I’d start to shake, and couldn’t stop myself from running away’.

Use the three phase behavioural model of operant conditioning to explain the perpetuating psychological risk that is maintaining Amy’s phobia.Use psychological terminology and refer to Amy in your response. (6 marks)

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b. Several protective psychological factors are used as a form of therapy for phobias.

(i) When Amy sought help she was given various exercises to complete, ‘such as going up a lift every day and getting off one floor higher each week’. What type of therapy is being used? (1 mark)

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(ii) Identify the key elements of a ‘fear hierarchy’ & explain how it would be used to treat Amy’s phobia. (3m)

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(iii) Amy lived with her phobic fear of heights for several years, adopting avoidant behaviours and barely coping with the physiological effects. Eventually, she decided to take steps to seek evidence based interventions to treat her phobia.

The following table sets out the stages in the transtheoretical model of behaviour change.

Refer to the experiences Amy may have had in making her decision to seek treatment and complete the table with typical comments she may have made to reflect her thinking at each stage. (5 marks)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage of change** | Typical comments Amy may have made that reflects her thinking at each stage |
| **Pre-contemplation** |  |
| **Contemplation** |  |
| **Preparation** |  |
| **Action** |  |
| **Maintenance** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **2017 PSYCH UNIT 4** **Area of Study 1 Outcome 2 A**  **SUGGESTED ANSWERS** |

**QUESTION 1 (15 marks) a) Read the information in the MEDIA ARTICLE about Aaron’s specific phobia of buttons. Analyse Aaron’s specific phobia of buttons by identifying the contributing social factors. Make direct reference to at least one example of each of the following and explain their contribution to the specific phobia:**

* **precipitating social factor**
* **perpetuating social factor**
* **protective evidence-based social intervention (3 + 3 + 3 = 9 marks)**

1. identify relevant social factor
2. one example
3. explain their contribution to the specific phobia

**precipitating social factor**

1. specific environmental triggers
2. the stimuli of buttons
3. A precipitating risk factor increases susceptibility to, and contributes to, the occurrence of a specific phobia and are the immediate factors or events that have caused the individual to experience symptoms ‘now’. In this case, the buttons are ‘specific’ objects, that produce or ‘trigger’ an extreme fear response at the time of exposure. p545

**perpetuating social factor**

1. Stigma related to receiving treatment
2. ‘I thought I’d be laughed out of a GP’s office’; ‘is used to people laughing at him’; ‘my friends were joking about my weird little quirk and playing pranks on me’.
3. The nature of specific phobia and its symptoms mean that individuals with a phobia are particularly vulnerable to experiencing stigma, which in turn affects their willingness to tell family and friends, let alone to seek treatment from a professional. Failing to seek treatment only serves to perpetuate the phobia.. p546

**protective evidence-based social intervention**

1. Psychoeducation for families/supporters — challenging unrealistic or anxious thoughts, not encouraging avoidance behaviours
2. ‘I moved back in with my parents’.
3. Psychoeducation may include family members and others outside the immediate family who can provide social support. The format can be provided in an individual or group format and encourages participation and self-management. Psychoeducation is further enhanced if the individual has access to appropriate support from families, friends and others. p557

**b. Several biological factors have contributed to Aaron’s button phobia. (i) Explain why and how GABA dysfunction may be a predisposing risk factor and contribute to a stress response such as that shown by Aaron. (3 marks)**

There is evidence that some people experience the anxiety associated with phobias because the neurotransmission of GABA (Gamma-amino butyric acid) becomes dysfunctional. GABA dysfunction can results in low levels of GABA in the brain. ( 1mark)

And, without the inhibitory effect of GABA (counterbalancing the excitatory activity of glutamate), it cannot act like a calming agent or ‘brake’ to the excitatory neurotransmitters that lead to anxiety,(1 mark)

Aaron may have GABA dysfunction and this low level of GABA makes him more vulnerable to anxiety in the presence of the environmental trigger of a button. p537

**(ii) GABA agonists, benzodiazepines, are biological protective factors that can assist in managing the symptoms of specific phobias. Explain the effect that they have on the nervous system and how they help to reduce anxiety. (3 marks)**

Benzodiazepines are a group of drugs (‘agents’) that work on the central nervous system, acting selectively on GABA receptors in the brain to increase GABA’s inhibitory effects and make post-synaptic neurons resistant to excitation. (1 mark)  
  
When a benzodiazepine attaches to a GABA receptor, it changes the shape of the receptor to make it more receptive to the activity of GABA and consequently more resistant to excitation. (1 mark)

Reducing the excitability of neurons reduces the communication between neurons and, therefore, has a calming effect on many of the functions of the brain. Generally, they relieve symptoms of anxiety by reducing physiological arousal and promoting relaxation, thereby reducing anxiety. (1 mark) p548

**QUESTION 2 (15 marks) a. Read the information in the MEDIA ARTICLE about Amy’s specific phobia of heights. Several psychological factors have contributed to Amy’s phobia of heights. She says that ‘my heart (would) race. I’d start to shake, and couldn’t stop myself from running away’. Use the three phase behavioural model of operant conditioning to explain the perpetuating psychological risk that is maintaining Amy’s phobia. Use psychological terminology and refer to Amy in your response. (6 marks)**

Students were asked to apply the three-phase model of operant conditioning to explain the perpetuating psychological risk that is maintaining Amy’s phobia.

Marks were awarded for:

* correct identification of the **antecedent** as the environmental trigger of heights
* correct identification of the **behaviour** as avoiding heights ‘running away’
* correct identification of the **consequence** as Amy feeling better, after running away, as negative reinforcement for the avoidance behaviour.

3 marks for identifying the three phases - antecedent/behaviour/consequence

3 marks for identifying each of the factors - heights/avoidance/feeling better

**b. Several protective psychological factors are used as a form of therapy for phobias.**

**(i) When Amy sought help she was given various exercises to complete, ‘such as going up a lift every day and getting off one floor higher each week’. What type of therapy is being used? (1 mark)** systematic desensitisation

**(ii) Identify the key elements of a ‘fear hierarchy’ and explain how it would be used to treat Amy’s phobia. (3 marks)**

**Any one of the following elements:**

* Working with the therapist, the individual identifies different phobic stimuli and constructs a ‘stepladder’ of anxiety-producing objects and/or situations
* A list of feared objects or situations, ranked from least to most anxiety-producing.
* should consist of 10 to 15 specific situations
* ranked (‘ordered’), often on a 100-point scale.
* Each situation should be quite detailed, including relevant variables such as time of day, duration of exposure and presence of other people.

**Explanation of use in treatment**

* systematic, graduated pairing of items in the hierarchy with relaxation by working upwards through items in the hierarchy, one ‘step’ at a time.
* (can be achieved either *in vivo* (in real life) or using *visual imagery* (‘imagination’) and using virtual reality technology during which the individual is exposed to computer-generated scenarios involving the phobic stimulus.)

**(iii) Amy lived with her phobic fear of heights for several years, adopting avoidant behaviours and barely coping with the physiological effects. Eventually, she decided to take steps to seek evidence based interventions to treat her phobia.**

**The following table sets out the stages in the transtheoretical model of behaviour change.**

**Refer to the experiences Amy may have had in making her decision to seek treatment and complete the table with typical comments she may have made to reflect her thinking at each stage. (5 marks)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage of change** | Typical comments Amy may have made that reflects her thinking at each stage |
| **Pre-contemplation** | ‘I have no intention to treat my phobia.’ |
| **Contemplation** | ‘I may start to think about getting some help to deal with my phobia. |
| **Preparation** | ‘I will see a therapist within the next month.’ |
| **Action** | ‘I have started treating my phobia of heights.’ |
| **Maintenance** | ‘I will continue to not have a fear of heights.’ |