

Handbook of Salutogenesis by Mittelmark et al.

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Salutogenesis concerns the origins of health and assets that promote health and resilience, as opposed to the medical model that sees health in terms of the absence of sickness and looks at the risk factors for sickness. This model of health advancement was originally designed in America by Aaron Antonovsky in 1979, and later developed and added to by Antonovsky and researchers and writers from many different disciplines from all over the world, including Europe, South Africa and Asia (Mittelmark et al., 2017).

Comprising forty-nine chapters, the book starts with an overview of salutogenesis, before going into new developments (parts one and two) and explaining a core construct of salutogenesis, called 'sense of coherence'. Parts four and five describe applications of salutogenesis in everyday settings such as schools, neighbourhoods and work environments, followed by applications in health care environments such as mental health, hospitals, rehabilitation and aged care. Because of the many different applications, the reader is able to read across disciplines to find applications relevant to their own setting and adapt the model for their own use.

Discussing the core values of salutogenesis, Vinje et al. (as cited in Mittelmark et al., 2017), explain that in salutogenesis individuals see health as a continuum that can be influenced, rejecting the healthy-versus-sick dichotomy. It is essential to see stress as a normal and necessary part of coping in this model. Langeland et al. (as cited in Mittelmark et al., 2017) add that "the aim is to develop a salutogenic coping style through concentrating on meaning and thus promote identity" (p. 303). The individual is seen as capable of active adaptation and able to access the resources needed in their context to counter stress.

The core concept 'sense of coherence' encompasses:

- **Comprehensibility:** Understanding of what is going on for the individual.
- **Manageability:** The belief of the person that he or she has the skills and resources available to cope with challenges and manage day-to-day realities.
- **Meaningfulness:** The understanding the person has of what motivates them and gives them purpose in life.

One message that stood out for me in this book is that all three aspects are needed simultaneously to achieve a sense of coherence, which is important for teachers, who in responding to challenges in children's behaviour, often focus solely on manageability. Focusing on sense of coherence and salutogenesis in the wider sense, including locus of control, resilience, connectedness, gratitude, belonging and wellbeing, gives the teacher access to a wider range of resources and strategies that look at the child and their family holistically in a credit-based way.

Further development of the application of salutogenesis and sense of coherence is needed, and a realisation that instead of trying to measure sense of coherence (which leads to focusing overly on risk factors), more credit-based applications are needed.

This book has open access and is available to everyone interested who would like to start exploring salutogenesis!

References

Mittelmark, B., Sagy, S., Eriksson, M., Bauer, G. F., Pelikan, J. M., Lindstrom, B., & Epnes, G. A. (2017). *Handbook of Salutogenesis*. Springer Open. Doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-04600-6