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How Stress Contributes to the Effects of Depression

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How Stress Contributes to the Effects of Depression

Current Research

According to Palmer & Cooper (2007), stress is an experience of negative emotions that arise from an anticipated biochemical, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral changes that target to change the stressors or make changes to its effects. It is a process that strains the body systems to handle the environmental demands that bring the biological and psychological changes accounting for an illness. Furthermore, Pretty (2004) argues that the environmental aspect highlights circumstances that are in objective relation to the body's demands for adaptation to stressful situations. On the other hand, the biological aspect is the different body systems that are triggered and controlled both physically and psychologically in response to stress. This paper aims to discuss how stress contributes to depression.

Khanacademymedicine (2014) posits that prolonged stress can cause adverse effects on the human body. It affects the immune system, neuroendocrine, nervous, and cardiovascular systems. When stress is allowed to progress without getting treated, it can lead to serious illnesses like depression, insomnia, muscle pain, high blood pressure among others. Furthermore, it is the leading cause of disorders like obesity, heart disease, and depression. Nonetheless, stress and resultant depression are understandable by looking at its physiology first.

Also, Stephens & Wand (2012) claims that two interlinked systems namely ¹the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) axis together with the sympathetic adreno-medullary (SAM) system are involved when a person experiences stressful situations. In the SAM system stress is activated when an individual faces a stimulus that disrupts homeostasis and is identified as a stressor by the cerebral cortex. Besides, this information is then transmitted to the hypothalamus that starts the flight or fight reaction. The adrenal medulla is stimulated by

response secreting the catecholamine (epinephrine and norepinephrine). Besides, the two combine to produce an aroused effect like high blood pressure, blood vessel constriction, palpitation, and sweating.

During HPA activation, the hypothalamus secretes corticotrophin-releasing hormone (CRH) (Stephens & Wand, 2012). It arouses the pituitary gland making it release adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). In turn, the adrenal cortex ends up releasing a combination of steroids, among them cortisol that is the most important at this point. It decreases inflammation and store carbohydrates, hence helping the body to return to its original state before the stressful event happened.

Effects to Short- And Long-Term Health

As suggested earlier, depression is caused by a stressful situation. It occurs when there is a chemical imbalance in the brain and the body tries to respond to bring back the body to its original state (Palmer & Cooper, 2007). Furthermore, depression interferes with a person's daily life making it difficult to live normally. If left untreated, depression can develop into a long-term issue that affects both physical and mental health. The early signs of depression that are preventable include an individual feeling sad, helpless, worthless, anxious, or hopeless. These individuals will stop caring about things that used to make them relax like hobbies. Moreover, they feel they have lost energy and are incapable of paying attention to anything and experience body aches that do not go away easily. They also experience irregular sleep patterns and will complain of a loss of appetite.

The short-term effects of depression include a lack of interest in life. Enthusiasm and motivation that was once present will vanish and depressed individuals suffer from loneliness. Furthermore, their energy levels drop due to the psychological depression, which they may see as

incurable. Their energy levels also drop because they are incapable of taking care of themselves; they do not eat or drink but remain in bed or indoors secluded from others. On the other hand, the long-term effects involve irregular sleep patterns combined with a weak immune system.

The elderly may find it difficult to identify cognitive changes because they are confused as signs of old age. According to the American Psychological Association, depressed individuals may find it difficult to memorize things and their reaction is always slow (American Psychological Association, 2012). Furthermore, others may find solace in alcohol not knowing they are depressed. This may increase instances of abusive and reckless behavior since these individuals find it hard to fulfill their social obligations (Stephens & Wand, 2012). Research has also established that depression may lead to neurological illnesses like epilepsy and Multiple Sclerosis (Khan & Khan, 2017).

Prevention

According to research, there is no one proven method of treating depression. However, early interventions can help people avoid or treat illness. As discussed earlier, stress is a leading cause of depression. However, one way of limiting stress is to create strong social relationships and a strong support network research indicates that having adequate social support can help protect people from depression (Palmer & Cooper, 2007). It is important to connect with friends and family, even when busy. Again, attending social gatherings and meeting new people is a way of building new relationships.

Consequently, people are encouraged to learn how to cope with stress. They must avoid overcommitting themselves and they should let go of things that are beyond their control. Sometimes there are environmental factors that can lead to stress, factors that are beyond the control of humans and they should not stress individuals as it may lead to depression (Palmer &

Cooper, 2007). Furthermore, once a person has been diagnosed with depression, it is important to maintain a healthy treatment plan. Prescription medication must be taken as directed by a physician, and those seeing a therapist should ensure that they attend all the sessions.

In conclusion, having discussed how stress contributes to depression, it is arguable that stress is usually neglected at the same time its role in causing depression is beyond imagination. Stressful situations should be dealt with once the early signs are detected to prevent the serious consequences that come with it and depression. More important is the need for a strong social support system and adherence to the treatment for those suffering from depression.

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