Emotional And Cognitive Effects Of Stress

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Being an undergraduate portends its own feeling of accomplishment but it comes with its own set of pressure. College presents a very unique experience. I had been looking forward to being an undergraduate since high school but now that I have achieved this I feel so much is demanded of me to a point of being overwhelmed at times. At first I thought being away from my family would be easy for me as it would interpret to more independence. Down a few semesters I now feel snatched from a comfort zone. Life demands more of me now and the pressure for me to maintain steady grades while balancing between a part time job and the back to back class schedule.

I am not the kind of person to shy away from responsibility but despite my best effort to make all this work, from recent melt downs it's clear I am not doing enough. The final exams are finally here and I have to put in extra hours to study. I have not been able to do much this semester when it comes to revision as I find myself most the time drooling over my notes aching with fatigue. The weekends are not any easier for me as I have to make up for lost time with my girlfriend. I am really starting to question my life choices and sometimes thinking hard about my relationship. Things are not as they used to be, and I know we always said we would make things work, but too much is going on right now.

The weather this semester has not been any good either. The mornings are always freezing and getting up early to catch the train to town has been a complete nightmare. I wonder what my little brother and sister are up to without me to look out for them. I am certain everyone back at home thinks I am having the best days of my learning experience- all I know is that I cannot let any one of them down.

Psychological Changes To The Brain

When undergoing a great deal of pressure the brain tries to cope with the alterations that are articulated by the endocrine and the nervous system. These two systems are linked together by the hypothalamus that is situated above the pituitary gland that is responsible for regulation of the endocrine system.

If a person is under duress the hypothalamus automatically releases chemical components into the blood conveyed to the pituitary gland. Pituitary glands respond by releasing ACTH into the blood stream which is then conveyed to the adrenal gland which in turn releases Corticoids. These are very vital in times of stress as it lets you generate body energy from stored fats. The hypothalamus also

activates production of adrenaline from adrenal gland. Presence of adrenaline in the blood stream stimulates psychological adjustments necessary to facilitate rapid response to defend the body from whatever is causing the psychological stress. A lot of hormones are released into circulation in the period of distress causing multiple physiological processes to be sustained. Such put the body on maximum alert.

Emotional And Cognitive Effects

The nervous system responds differently under distress. This is because of the high presence of hormones circulating in the blood stream. These stress neurons in a way alter the effectiveness of the brain functions as they limit the activity of neurons in the brain. This affects the hippocampus which articulates long term memory. Another part of the brain that is affected is the frontal lobe that focuses the brain faculties enabling you to pay attention as well as sorting out which information is relevant and which should be overlooked. With all these functions disoriented the individual in question cannot be able to maintain calm, focus their thoughts and emotions as well as making plausible choices (Lupien et al., 2009).

Consistent behavior and social appeal that you are normally accustomed to is hard to maintain as now you are more irritable to situations, emotionally imbalanced and socially withdrawn. Trivial things the one off during this period and moods fluctuate leaving one distasteful to be around. This projection towards other people is majorly caused by mixed emotions. The concentration of hormones in the bloodstream causes this uneven precedence of emotions. If the progress of depression is not checked by this stage the common outcome is that the person in question becomes alienated socially. This is undesirable as recovering from chronic depression gets harder as time goes.

Effects Of Stress On Different People

The way the body articulates response towards stress is different between the two genders. Numerous scientific studies have been made to prove this practically. When a given number of male and females are subjected to similar stressful factors the amount of adrenaline in the bloodstreams of the males it is double that of the female. This means that psychologically the women are likely to be less affected by almost all kinds of stress factors when compared to the male this can be attributed to many factors but the constitution of hormones greatly varies between the two genders. Men are also predisposed to be more aggressive by nature as it is in their role to be the protector.

For the older people their physiological functions do not respond as promptly as for the younger generation. Stressful conditions have greater effect to this age group and making recovery from such ordeals is much strained. Organs can only function at optimal for a given time period before they start to degenerate in function. The endocrine and nervous system is not as sensitive and life at this level offers major stress triggering factors. When exposed to different stress factors the responses will

definitely be very different for older and younger people. The young people's instincts would resolve to defense mechanisms more readily while for the elderly the implications would create health complications that would leave them exposed to diseases and physical harm. The two also have very different orientations thus their perception and handling of stress would vary greatly (McEwen, 2008).

Effect On Physical Health

Stress puts the physical aspects of the body under great deal of pressure. Fatigue accumulates overtime making the body less resistant to different attacks. Most people with advanced level of depression often complain of pain in joints and bones. The feeling of extreme exhaustion does not subside even after rest or any refreshment. Overtime the victim loses luster for physical activity all together and appeal for intimacy. With one at this state sleep may also be elusive putting one in a state of insomnia all induced by the aggravation of stress levels in the body.

At this point one is greatly advised to seek professional help as the body is at risk of opportunistic diseases. These are the kind that takes advantage of the body immune system depleting. Chronic depression may also lead to cardiac issues that often lead to fatality. Other behavioral implications may lead one to develop habitual dependency on hard drugs. This is done with an aim of finding an escape to their predicament which is momentarily derived from effects of hard drugs. The problem of stress that is not managed overtime leads one into a slippery decline where life threatening situations occur in cycles around the given person.

Behavioural Strategies

When taking measures to fight depression and stress, how you plan out your day determines whether you will successfully avoid slipping into stress patterns. Committing to behaviour strategies is a tasking endeavour that will demand the utmost effort and discipline from the victim. With enough motivation, however, this is a very doable process.

Developing a social support group would be a good way to keep oneself in check. This is mostly accruing the necessary tools to enable me to open up and share my stressors as opposed to battling them alone. People who mind your personal well-being would be most appropriate for this. Exposing yourself to people working through similar conditions may provide one with all the tools they need to battle their stress hence improving their health (Uchino et al., 1996).

Keeping a personal stress journal. This is largely to track and record my everyday progress. This would be handy in keeping one realistic to their goals as well as focused from distractions that would lead to physiological disorientation. The journal may also be a vent for all the repressed feelings one would want to express. Such a release would be a step towards finding ways to manage causative agents of stress factors.

Relaxation and implementation of biofeedback. The best case outcome for a stressed person is to be able to relax their faculties so as to recollect their functionality. Relaxing is, however, a process that can be induced manually, so applying principles from biofeedback would help trigger relaxation. Such involves focusing on key muscles that become tense under duress, coordinated breathing as well as regulating brain activity by moderating brain activity.

Ethical Considerations

Privacy is very important in resolving personal issues that arise from different immediate factors that induce depression in an individual. When encouraging an adult person to adopt certain behavioural changes, one has to be very careful not to violate the dignity of the other. The current state of the client needs to be kept private and detached from third parties as much as possible. The client needs to be reassured of such before they agree to participate in their recovery program. The client would also prefer a recovery path that is not as exposed so as to work on themselves. Such a person's self-esteem and willpower are fragile, and as such, they should be extended some certain level of discretion during the healing transition and after.

Professional relationship boundaries. When addressing adults, the dignity of the clients, as well as the professionals, should be regulated by necessity. The stress factors for adults are more intense than those of any other age group. One should be more lenient and practical when asking adults for behavioural modifications. The clients should never get the implication they are being patronized or incessantly nagged to participate where they are unwilling. Practices that we should recommend to adult clients should be age-appropriate so as not to create awkwardness. Let them choose what they feel would work best for them.

I would implement the application of these behavioural changes by giving the clients a sense of understanding and not attaching any kind of stigma to them whatsoever. Establishing a comfort zone for everyone to be willing to participate as well as express themselves. The adults need to feel a certain sense of control so as to participate in these programs freely.

The pressure on any given student in tertiary institutions is greatly underrated by society. The personalities attached to the typical student of debauchery and recreational drug abuse are a clear indication of the methods employed to cope with different stresses.

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