

Running Head: HOW STRESS AFFECTS OUR LIVES

How Stress Affects Our Lives

Introductory

We all know what stress feels like. “For teens and adults alike, stress has an impact on healthy behaviors like exercising, sleeping well, and eating healthy foods” (American Psychological Association 2014). It’s caused from work, school, and even families. It seems like more and more events are becoming stressful rather than joyful. A relaxing trip turns into something stressful; fitting many activities into a small amount of time becomes overwhelming. Weddings require so much planning that up until the day of is full of dreadful planning. “Nearly half of teens (42 percent) report they are not doing enough or are not sure if they are doing enough to manage their stress and more than 1 in 10 (13 percent) say they never set aside time to manage stress” (APA, 2014).

Literature Review

Stress is defined as specific events or chronic pressures that place demands on a person or threaten the person’s well-being. Stress is not something to ignore, you need to figure out how to relieve it because it affects everything you do. “Survey findings illustrate that when people are living with high stress, it appears that they are less likely to sleep well, exercise and eat healthy foods. Twenty-seven percent of adults say they eat to manage stress and 34 percent of those who report overeating or eating unhealthy foods because of stress say this behavior is a habit” (APA, 2014). When it comes to exercising Americans aren’t getting out to exercise, which is a big reliever for stress. The American Psychological Association found that “more than one-third of adults (37 percent) and 1 in 5 teens (20 percent) report exercising less than once a week or not at all” (APA, 2014). As for eating people agree that they eat more when they are stressed and that the foods aren’t even healthy foods.

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With life come chronic stressors, which are sources of stress that occur continuously or repeatedly. These repetitive events begin to build up and cause distress and illness. “People who report having a lot of daily hassles also report more psychological and physical symptoms and these effects often have a greater and longer-lasting impact than major life events” (Schacter, D., & Gilbert, D. 2013).

Stress is linked to our immune system and our immune system responds to psychological influences. “Stressors can cause hormones known as glucocorticoids to flood the brain wearing down the immune system and making it less able to fight invaders” (Schacter, D., & Gilbert, D. 2013). “In one study medical student volunteers agreed to receive small wounds on the roof of the mouth. Researchers observed that these wounds healed more slowly during exam periods than during summer vacation” (Schacter, D., & Gilbert, D. 2013).

Stress can also cause problems with our heart and circulatory system. “Chronic stress is a major contributor to coronary heart disease because prolonged stress-activated arousal of the sympathetic nervous system raises blood pressure and gradually damages the blood vessels. Stress affects the cardiovascular system to some degree in everyone but is particularly harmful in people who respond to stressful events with hostility” (Schacter, D., & Gilbert, D. 2013).

Here are many ways to deal with stress to make going about your stressful events easier. Exercise is a big reliever, but too much of it can become distressful or harmful. A popular form of exercise is jogging or running, it is an exercise that is on the cheaper side and doesn't require any special equipment. “Because it is rooted in personality, stress in most cases can be managed by changing personal habits and attitudes that promote its effects. Meditation and exercise help to relieve stress symptoms by giving individuals a feeling of self-control they might otherwise lack.” (Thomas W.V., 1980) Social support is another factor in dealing with stress. Having

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others help and support you through hard time is comforting to have. “Lonely people are more likely than others to be stressed and depressed and they can be more susceptible to illness because of lower than normal levels of immune functioning” (Schacter, D., & Gilbert, D. 2013).

Surprisingly humor helps too! “Humor can reduce sensitivity to pain, distress, and it can reduce the time needed to calm down after a stressful event” (Schacter, D., & Gilbert, D. 2013).

Application

One memory that stands out in my mind was about when I was 8 years old. My 5 siblings and I were playing around in the living room. My mom had finished dinner and was ready for us to sit down. None of us were paying attention to her and were ignoring her request for us to sit at the dinner table to eat. An ear-splitting noise came from the kitchen, my mom was throwing the plates onto the table and the glass was shooting everywhere. In shock we all stopped what we were doing but had no clue how to react to this. The next thing came the tears; she instantly realized her unnecessary behavior and regretted exploding in front of us. She left into her bedroom and came back later to clean up the mess.

We had no clue what happened and I didn't know until later in my teens her situation. My mom and dad got divorced when I was 2 but were going through custody battles for a long time. She had court earlier that morning and was overwhelmed and stressed with the case. My dad was accusing her of sexually abusing her kids when that wasn't even near accurate. The court case was taking a long time to close and she was worried she would lose us. On top of the case were the lawyer fees and financial burdens. It was a costly process to fight for what she loved. After months of going through the case she won and was able to keep us. Once she told me details of what she was going through I was able to understand her more clearly. I realized everything was crashing down on her and that was her reaction to it. She isn't abusive nor crazy, it was just a

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night of chaos for her. I asked my mom the other day what she used to get her self through these crazy times. She loves music so the violin and piano were the ways she coped with the stress.

Conclusion

I would have liked to know more ways to manage stress earlier in my life. I realize I manage stress in the wrong way; I like to sleep and forget about what is going on. I'll come home and take a 3 hour nap to escape from the situations. Now I understand there are healthier ways to manage stress. In the future I know I will need to use this information because I plan to have a family and that sometimes can be stressful. I feel that this topic is so essential to life. Everyone should know how to take care of stress because if you leave it alone it can lead to mental disorders and anxiety. I wish I had known some of these things earlier in my life because I could have done some damage to my health. I'm grateful I had the chance to write this paper because I developed a better understanding with what some of my friends and family members can struggle from due to stress and I can help advise them.

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References

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