

A psychological aspect of susan smith: dependent personality essay



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Cluster C personality disorder in the DSM-IV.

Cluster C personality disorder is described as anxious or fearful. Females are more likely than males to have a Cluster C personality disorder (Joseph Rey, 1996). Childhood illness or separation anxiety disorder of childhood may be a premorbid condition to DPD. Some experts believe that events occurring in early childhood exert a powerful influence upon behavior later in life.

Others indicate that people are genetically predisposed to personality disorders. In some cases, however, environmental factors may cause a person who is already genetically vulnerable to develop a personality disorder (National Mental Health Association). What is the link between parental over protectiveness and authoritarianism and the development of dependent personality traits in children? Parental over protectiveness and authoritarianism serve simultaneously to 1) reinforce dependent behaviors in children of both sexes and 2) prevent the child from developing independent, autonomous behaviors (since the parents do not permit the child to engage in the kinds of trial-and-error learning that are involved in developing a sense of independence and mastery during childhood). Thus, when parental over protectiveness or parental authoritarianism is characteristic of the family unit, this will tend to produce high levels of dependency in children, since both parental controls foster and encourage dependent behavior. When both parental over protectiveness and authoritarianism are present within the family unit, dependency in children is particularly likely to result (Robert Bornstein, pg. 41).

Rey (1996) suggests that because personality is shaped by experiences during childhood and adolescence, it is likely that mental disorders occurring during these years may have an influence on personality development. He found that the quality of the family environment before the age of 12 years was the “ most robust development predictor of personality disorder in young adults”. There is no specific treatment for this disorder, although psychotherapy may be useful in gradually helping people make choices that affect their own life. This is the treatment of choice for dependent personality disorder. Psychotherapy for patients with this disorder focuses on helping them see the unconscious conflicts that are contributing to or causing their symptoms. It also helps people become more flexible and is aimed at reducing the behavior patterns that interfere with everyday living (NMHA).

Long term therapy is not recommended because it can reinforce a dependent relationship upon the therapist. An important component of therapy is examining the client’s faulty cognitions and related emotions such as lack of self-confidence. Assertiveness training and other behavioral approaches have proven to be most effective in treatment (Gillihan). In conclusion, The National Mental Health Association suggests that: There are many types of help available for different personality disorders.

Treatment may include individual, group, or family psychotherapy. Medications prescribed by the patient’s physician may also be helpful in relieving some of the symptoms of personality disorders including problems with anxiety and depression. References American Psychiatric Association

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