

Coping styles used by chronic health disorder sufferers



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Analyse and evaluate coping styles used by individuals with a chronic health disorder identified in a case study.

Case study; BBC documentary called ' The Truth about Depression':

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5YubjEqbZ8>)

In this essay the author will examine chronic illness with focus on depression and its symptoms as well as critically evaluate coping skills used by individuals with chronic depression.

According to better health (2015), a chronic illness is a long term illness, which can be stressful and may change the way a person lives or relates to others. For the purpose of this essay the author will investigate chronic depression (or Dysthymia). Despite mental health professionals' massive efforts to educate the public, lack of knowledge and misconceptions around resulting in stigma and discrimination (Web MD, 2015).

NHS (2015), state that the symptoms of chronic depression are sadness or depressed mood and being physically restless or rundown in a way that is noticeable by others. Fatigue or loss of energy and problems with concentration or making decisions, a loss of enjoyment in things that were once pleasurable, either weight gain or weight loss of more than five percent of weight within a month, insomnia or excessive sleep almost every day, feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness or excessive guilt and lastly, the most devastating symptom being the almost daily recurring thoughts of death or suicide.

According to research carried out by Science Direct (2015), there are a range of different ways an individual can cope. These include; sourcing information on the illness, (which can help combat feelings of helplessness or lack of control), emotional support from others, (particularly family and close friends), setting short-term goals which can restore certainty, power and control and lastly, thinking about possible outcomes and discussing them with health professionals. The overall aim of these coping strategies would be to help the sufferer put into context and give some meaning to what is happening to them. However, not all individuals can achieve this and will find different ways of coping.

Whilst coping with depression, individuals need to work on many aspects, contending with sleeping problems, eating, activity, positive and negative emotions, thinking, and relationships. Above all, individuals need to cultivate hope. However, all of these aspects cannot be worked on at the same time. If an individual is severely depressed, their first priority should be their physical health as this can improve their emotional wellbeing by releasing endorphins. These can lift a sufferer's mood and give them a sense of achievement. Sufferers may also benefit from exercising in groups in order to help build new relationships. However, this coping strategy may not be achievable by all individuals as the participation in such physical activity could be unrealistic due to other underlying health conditions (Everyday Health, 2015).

When reality is a nightmare for a sufferer of chronic depression, using sleep as a coping mechanism is simply like clocking out and taking a break from life. However, after sleeping, the reality will continue to make them unhappy.

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To add to this, a lack of sunlight due to excess sleeping will also lower the mood of the sufferer even further, because it causes an imbalance of certain brain chemicals (Thought Catalogue, 2015).

Some other coping skills to practice for sufferers of chronic depression could include; meditation and relaxation techniques. Deep breathing techniques, can activate a relaxation response and help reduce stress. Hobbies are also important in order to set aside time to allow relaxation and escape from the stresses of life, for example, gardening, art therapy, dancing or cooking. One must remember that these techniques may not be suitable for all sufferers because of differing interests, or the severity of the depression as they may feel more apprehensive than others to venture out of their surroundings to attend these groups (NHS, 2015).

Psychologist World (2015), consider the attachment theory to be important when studying coping styles for chronic depression. Attachment is a biological need and is the basis of the power of therapy ranging from individual to group, hospitalization, and support groups. Ultimately, by the individual establishing or rebuilding secure attachments in friendships, family relationships, and intimate relationships they can start to recover.

Stressful life events contribute to the onset of chronic depression. An individual can minimize stress by learning to use coping skills to manage stress. For example, by making sure there is clear communication with doctors, by maintaining emotional balance to cope with negative feelings and maintaining confidence and a positive self-image are essential in the

process of remaining well. However, not all individuals can achieve this and find lowering stress levels harder to achieve than others (Help Guide, 2015).

Finally hope is the foundation of recovery. What gives an individual hope might change from one time to another. Hope is likely to be intermingled with fear and doubt. One might be afraid to hope for fear of being disillusioned; thus hoping takes courage. Perhaps there's no firmer ground for hope than the possibility that some good ultimately might come from the painful experience (Share Care, 2010-2015).

As well as needing to find ways to deal with the stress involved with chronic depression, from this essay the author has found that an individual will also need to understand their condition, know about the treatments and therapy's on offer. Maintain trust and confidence in health professionals, especially when recovery isn't possible. Know how to control their symptoms by using individual coping skills and lastly maintain social relationships and avoid social isolation.

It was also found that obtaining and maintaining good coping skills takes practice. However utilizing these skills becomes easier over time. Most importantly, good coping skills make for good mental health wellness and a way forward from chronic depression.

In this essay the author has examined chronic illness focusing on chronic depression and its symptoms. It has also critically evaluated coping skills used by individuals with chronic depression.

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