

# Holistic approach to supporting health psychology essay



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Emma and Kyle live in a home specialising in providing 24hr care for young pregnant women and their babies. Emma was looked after from being 4 yrs old when she was removed from her parents' care. She was fostered for 10yrs by a caring couple until illness forced them to return her to social care services. Several placements broke down as Emma was unable to adjust to a new family and she was finally placed in a young people's home run by social care services when she became pregnant at 15yrs old. She attended school until the birth of Kyle who was born 4 weeks premature. She moved into the mother and baby hostel when she was 6 months pregnant following referral by her social care worker. She has a good relationship with Kyle, although staff say they would be concerned if she were to leave the hostel and live independently. Kyle has recently started full time nursery which gives Emma the opportunity to attend college where she studies catering.

Defining health can be a difficult task. The most famous definition is that of the World Health Organisation (WHO) which hasn't been amended since 1948. ' Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO 1948). There are many models of health that have been developed over the years, one being the biomedical model which focuses on physical symptoms such as pain. This concept scientifically measures a person's health to decide whether illness is present or not. Biomedical scientists claim that the body is a machine and can be fixed when a malfunction occurs. An improved model would be the Biopsychosocial theory which concentrates on whole life issues including emotional and spiritual aspects as well as social and family support. The holistic model improved further to include not only physical,

psychological and social factors but also determinants such as nutrition, alcohol, nicotine, sleep, exercise and community life. The focus of this report is to examine and understand the physical, social and psychological influences upon health by using the case study and consider how things can be improved by using the holistic approach in contrast to the Biomedical and Biopsychosocial.

The first thing that will be considered in this report is emotional issues during infancy. Individuals who suffer from broken or emotional relationships during infancy often develop into adults who experience problems understanding their own emotions and this may limit their ability to maintain a successful relationship in later life. In the case study of Emma, she was cared for by her parents till the age of 4 years then removed and placed into a caring foster family. It is possible that the biological family suffered from dysfunctional tendencies which could mean child neglect or even child abuse within the home. An infant raised within this environment would imagine it to be normal behaviour therefore being placed in what society sees as a normal functioning family, would be difficult to adjust to. Several studies suggest that up to 80% of children in foster care have significant mental health issues due to the trauma of separation from the biological family in addition to experiences of dysfunctional families (Smariga 2007).

When a child is separated from their primary caregiver who is usually the mother, separation anxiety can occur. Infants younger than 4 years are particularly vulnerable and will experience high levels of emotional disturbances. Separation anxiety in infants can be treated with play therapy if recognised early enough. This type of therapy is a form of counselling  
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which helps young children use alternative coping strategies to work through any existing problems and is probably the more favoured model theorised by biopsychosocial therapists. However, biomedical experts believe that an imbalance in neurotransmitters is the cause of anxiety and other psychiatric disorders such as depression and will recommend the child take a mild sedative to help reduce the trauma (Ponton 2006). The holistic model would argue that certain determinants play an important role in detecting and treating anxiety. Nutrition is vital as food influences the balance of chemicals produced and released in the brain therefore, without sufficient protein, the brain can become deficient in certain chemicals, resulting in anxiety and depression. Exercise is also very important as again this releases chemicals such as endorphins and serotonin which give a feel good effect (livestrong 2012)

Depression is a very common disorder and females are twice as likely to suffer at some point in their lives as males. This is mainly due to changes in hormones in adolescence. Biomedical experts believe that these changes are obvious during puberty and pregnancy as well as after giving birth.

According to the National Institute of Health, factors that increase the risk of depression in women include reproductive, genetic, or other biological factors. In addition, women who juggle work with raising a family and single parents suffer more stress that may trigger symptoms of depression (NIMH). A biomedical view would be to diagnose and treat depression by prescribing antidepressants. These types of medications increase the levels of serotonin within the body which go on to increase happiness. Recent studies suggest that side effects brought on by long term use of antidepressants can include

digestive problems, sexual difficulties and even strokes and premature deaths in older people. Drugs that interfere with serotonin may cause developmental problems in infants, development in adults, digestive problems, diarrhoea, and indigestion and may also raise the risk of dementia (Naish 2012). There are a number of holistic methods which can help keep depression under control such as avoiding caffeine, nutrition and exercise. Caffeine reduces serotonin levels so reducing the drug will naturally increase happiness. Essential fats cannot be naturally produced in the human body therefore it is important that they are included in the diet. The richest source of omega 3 is found in oily fish and nuts. Many of the population are on low income or benefits and maybe see themselves to not be in a position financially to eat fresh food. Eating junk food will increase the levels of sugar found in the blood which will give symptoms of fatigue, irritability, dizziness, insomnia, depression and digestive problems. Since the brain depends on an even supply of glucose it is of no surprise to find that the above symptoms can appear. The best way to keep your blood sugar level even is to eat whole foods, fruits, vegetables, and regular meals (Food for the brain 2012)

Some children will suffer with conduct disorders such as aggression, theft, deceitfulness or violation of rules. This can cause problems in school and in the family home which can lead to police involvement. Causes can develop from temperament, genetics (common in children of adults who had conduct problems), environmental (family problems and social pressures) or physical (problems in processing information). Anger affects your physical health and can cause hypertension, chronic lower back pain, stomach problems and heart disease. The biomedical view would be to treat each symptom

individually with medication where as a more holistic method would be to practice relaxation techniques, engaging in physical exercise or by doing something that engages the mind such as drawing or painting. Another way to manage this would be counselling. Group therapy is a really good option for adolescents to learn from one another and social interaction is a vital part of the developmental process.

Adolescent years can be very challenging for parents or professionals. Identities are forming, social lives are expanding and new behaviours are experimented with. This can involve alcohol, tobacco, drugs and unsafe sexual activity. A person who is intoxicated is more likely to engage in unprotected sex with a variety of sexual partners. The continued use of any substance can lead to substance abuse and addiction. Emma fell pregnant at 15yrs which could possibly be a result of excessive alcohol or drugs. A developing baby is exposed to anything that is put into the system so no safe amount of alcohol, tobacco or drugs exists during pregnancy. Nicotine is a vasoconstrictor which causes the blood vessels to narrow limiting the flow of blood to the baby. Also carbon monoxide will limit the levels of oxygen available to the foetus which can result in still birth, low birth weight or sudden infant death syndrome (livestrong 2012). The National Institute of Health advises pregnant women not to drink during the first 3 months in particular as this may induce miscarriage (NHS 2012)

Another form of depression is postnatal depression (PND) which is common in both men and women. PND is different to depression and the onset usually occurs after the birth of a baby but can also appear during pregnancy.

Women can become more tearful and moodier than usual in this time. Some <https://assignbuster.com/holistic-approach-to-supporting-health-psychology-essay/>

women experience thoughts of harming their baby which is quite common affecting almost half of women with the condition (Roberts 2012). PND can be undetected and left untreated which may lead to aggression and possible harm to the baby. Teenage mothers suffer from poorer mental health in the three years after their birth compared with other mothers therefore Emma needs as much support as she can possibly get during the early years of being a mother. She has no family around to support and help her. The feeling of isolation is the most stressful aspect of being a mother. Holistic therapies can be helpful to combat the stress of being not only a new mother but a teenage and single mother. Massage, reflexology and herbal remedies may be useful to aid in relaxation. Talking therapies are also very popular and can help with identifying underlying issues that may be occurring. Any medication that may be prescribed should be taken with caution as it could interfere with breastfeeding.

Teenage parents often drop out of education because of the pressures they experience, including stigmatization associated with pregnancy, isolation from peers, and lack of needed support from family, friends, schools, social service agencies, and other organizations (SEDL 2012). In 2001 the government set up a programme called Sure Start which was intended to provide holistic support to teenage mothers and fathers. The program has been very successful in providing support during emotional times, educational needs and family support to young parents. Sure Start was developed to reduce the risk of social exclusion associated with teenage pregnancy by providing support for parents and their child to help them with housing, health care, parenting skills, education and child care (Sure Start

2012) Emma has managed to obtain a place in nursery for her son while she continues to participate in education. This alone will create a more stable lifestyle for them both while building a future.

The focus of this report is to discuss the different approaches to health and to reinforce that a holistic approach to illness is by far the most improved and widely used method. A more natural approach can help, prevent or improve many health issues before they occur. Many medications can help cure illness and in some cases this is the only way to treat a disease such as cancer however, a large proportion of health problems can be linked to generated issues such as asthma, and stress.

Tobacco, alcohol, drugs, poverty, employment, income, education, social, environment, lifestyle choices are all determinants and wider determinants in what define the concepts of health. The body is an impressive machine and treated holistically there are no reasons why many issues should be part of life. Throughout our lifetime, stressful situations and emotional traumas are constantly presented. As we grow, our interactions with other people generate stress such as gaining approval, pressure at school, or work, forming relationships, relationship breakdowns or bereavement. It can have many detrimental effects on our health physically and emotionally.