

Approaches to treating depression: an analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- Stacey Obispo

NCU

Intervention Program

Depression is an issue that will affect 10 percent of the young adults in the United States (Buss, 2012). Possible solutions towards treating depression can be found through an evolutionary perspective. By looking through the lens of evolutionary psychology one can see how the ancient environments different from the ones we have today have developed and molded the structure and functions of our brains. Treating depression through understanding environmental influences and natural selection in shaping brain formation and behaviors can be an effective way towards incorporating an intervention plan to prevent and counter the effects of depression.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical basis for the depression intervention program is based on an ethological approach. The role of biology in studying human behavior brought on from Darwin's theory of natural selection was enforced through ethology (Buss, 2012) The ethological approach for treating depression is one that should be considered because it does not just treat the symptom (such as sadness) it attempts to treat the root of the problem. Using an ethological approach to depression answers the four whys of behavior. The four "whys" of behavior include: 1) the immediate influences of behavior; 2) the developmental influences of behavior; (life; 3) the function of behavior or the "adaptive purpose" it fulfills, and 4) the evolutionary or phylogenetic origins of behavior (Buss, 2012). The first two "why" questions examine the <https://assignbuster.com/approaches-to-treating-depression-an-analysis/>

causes of behaviors pertain to the processing of internal and external stimuli such as one's anatomy (Geerts & Brune, 2009). The second two "why" questions are referred as the evolutionary causes which address the evolutionary processes that molded the behavior (Geerts & Brune, 2009). These questions are important pertaining to depression because with these answers a deeper understanding involving the biological action of behavior or selective advantages regarding a person's survival and reproductive process can be understood as well as how the origins of the behavior may have come about and evolved.

Evolutionary Psychology

Darwin's theory of natural selection composes of three essential ingredients variation, inheritance, and selection. Organisms vary in different ways such as personality, cell structure, defensive ability and etc. The raw materials provided that are essential for evolution to operate is variation (Buss, 2012). Some variations are inherited passed down from parents to offspring down through the generations(Buss, 2012). As a result, more offspring results due to the aid of heritable variants for the task of survival or reproduction(Buss 2012). Another way variation applies is through phenotypes. Phenotypes are the physical and biochemical characteristics of an organism as determined by the interaction of its genetic make- up and the environment (Brune et al. , 2012). They are important to understanding how behaviors develop due to environmental factors. Phenotypic variation occurs when an intricate interaction of environment and genotype including epigenetic devices are decisively shaped by experiences of the individual lifespan (Brune et al., 2012). Implementation of an intervention program can be made by looking <https://assignbuster.com/approaches-to-treating-depression-an-analysis/>

at how the origins of these traits apply to psychological development of maladaptive traits and the detection and the development and nature of its devices, explain the “ proximate causes”, and evolutionary history and adaptive value (Brune et al, 2012). Treating depression through understanding environmental influences and natural selection in shaping brain formation and behaviors seen through the lens of genetics, environment and psychotherapy is the basis for the intervention program.

Genetics and Environment

Belsky and Pluess (2009) found that in humans parenting and gene environment interactions can affect ones susceptibility to depression. Individuals may be more likely to develop psychiatric conditions like depression because they carry variations of genes that make them vulnerable. What is even more striking in the research of Belsky and Pluess (2009) is the discovery of variations of genes can predispose an individual into developing depression due to unfavorable environmental conditions such as child abuse and these alleles can also protect and allow enhanced coping from experiencing favorable environmental conditions. So the gene can produce two results; predispose one to a psychiatric condition or enhance coping skills. These results show how genes and environment interplay with each other to get either a favorable or unfavorable result. The results advocate how selection favors flexibility which contributes towards individuals being more exposed to environmental possibilities (Brune et al., 2012). This knowledge is valuable for making interventions to depression because the research has suggested that if one is in a favorable environment can foster positive results such as enhanced coping skills (Belsky & Pluess, <https://assignbuster.com/approaches-to-treating-depression-an-analysis/>

2009). Conversely, environmental influences such as poor parenting practices and insecure attachment with parents can predispose one to a psychiatric condition (Belsky & Pluess, 2009). With this found knowledge the depression intervention program can be implemented because the genetic and environmental causes have been identified.

Intervention Program

The depression intervention model will be administered with participants who volunteer for the program. Eligible participants will include individuals who have been identified by California Department of Social Services who are currently encountering a depressive episode or who are living in unfavorable conditions which might provoke the occurrence of depression. Families that have been identified at being high risk for child abuse and neglect will also be invited to partake in the intervention program. Individuals who take part of the intervention will receive help through a clinical psychologist administering Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) which is drawn from Bowlby's attachment theory. The length of treatment will be 1hour sessions given once weekly over the course of six months.

Relating to Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary concepts are important in understanding mental health issues such as depression. An example of how gene and environment interaction interplay with each other is seen in Bowlby's attachment theory.

Psychological and psychiatric clinical practices have drawn upon Bowlby's attachment model which state that early social interaction between mother and newborn plays an important role in the social development in life and

<https://assignbuster.com/approaches-to-treating-depression-an-analysis/>

that abnormal early attachment can predispose the child to psychopathology later in life (Geerts & Brune, 2009).

Following on the evolutionary concept of Bowlby is CFT. CFT is a form of therapy that teaches patients the importance of phenotypic variation and evolutionary concepts. Gilbert (2009) points out that CFT focuses on distinguishing at least three types of emotion regulation systems: threat and protection systems; drive, resource-seeking and excitement systems; and contentment, soothing and safeness systems.

The threat and protection system is the source of most psychopathologies and all living things have a threat detection and protection system (Gilbert, 2009). However environmental factors like early life events (unattached mother) may stimulate an individual's threat protection system which in turn lead to the development of safety strategies which can operate automatically as a conditioned or conflicting response (Gilbert, 2009). Safety strategies according to Gilbert (2009) can include avoiding interpersonal conflict, seeing one's self as inferior, and being quick to socially anxious and uncertain. Strategies such as these can increase one's vulnerability to depression and low self-esteem and depression (Gilbert, 2009).

According to Gilbert (2009) the drive system relates to the threat protection system by trying to avoid negativity through thoughts such as "shoulds", "oughts" and "musts". Material possessions, and achievement are pursued in order to feel safe and deter the feeling of inferiority and rejection (Gilbert, 2009). However in depression there is decreased activity in this system.

The contentment system is related with being happy and not having the need to seek for things(Gilbert, 2009). Contentment is the absence of activity in the threat protection system. The contentment system is linked to opiates which regulates happy feelings(Gilbert, 2009).

Bowlby's attachment theory is related to contentment systems because a parent touching and soothing a baby has an effect on a baby's physiology (Gilbert, 2009) According to Gilbert (2009) caring behavior is important because it activates the soothing in the threat and protection system and causes it to not be overstimulated. CFT uses attachment theory to help individuals understand the ecological bases ingrained and communicated through their symptoms and offers reasons for giving up unprofitable behavioral strategies or defenses.

Conclusion

Treating depression through an ethological approach treats the root of the problem not just the symptom. CFT approaches depression by considering phenotypic variations and informing patients of how these variations are a part of an evolutionary process. A depression intervention program like the one modeled which places emphasis on understanding the roles of genes, environment, and psychotherapy can be an effective tool in combating depression.

References

Belsky, J., & Pluess, M. (2009). *Beyond diathesis stress: Differential susceptibility to environmental influences* . doi: DOI: 10. 1037/a0017376

<https://assignbuster.com/approaches-to-treating-depression-an-analysis/>

Brune, M., Belsky, J., Fabrega, H., Feierman, H., Glibert, H., Glantz, K., & Polimeni, J. (2012). *The crisis of psychiatry- insights and prospectus from evolutionary theory* . Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3266750/?tool=pubmed#B16>

Buss, D. (2012) *Evolutionary psychology: The new science of the mind* 4th ed. Prentice Hall

Geerts, E., & Brune, M. (2009). *Ethological approaches to psychiatric disorders: Focus on Depression and schizophrenia* . Retrieved from <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=47987b06-5ed7-45ae-86f1-d3d5aea1ceb8@sessionmgr115&hid=104>

Gilbert, P. (2009). *Introducing compassion -focused therapy* . Retrieved from apt.rcpsych.org/content/15/3/199.full