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English 111 – 97

Ms. Lashell

Cause and Effect Essay

 Being in college could possibly be the most stressful time for a student. You have an extensive amount of assignments to complete, you have to deal with strict professors and you have to learn how to transition from adolescence into adulthood. Learning to be independent is hard, especially if you are new at it. All of the new responsibilities and decisions become overwhelming and you feel as though your whole life is falling apart. It becomes even more stressful when you don’t know how to deal with all the stress. Stress is a common response to life; however, unresolved chronic stress can result in a plethora of health problems including psychological problems, physical disturbances, and cardiovascular disease.

“Stress refers to situations that trigger emotional and physical reactions and the reactions themselves” (Insel) Stress can be triggered by many events or circumstances such as a first date or a final exam. Its effects can be either positive or negative, however most of the time they are negative. “Each individual’s experience of stress depends on many factors, including the nature of the stressor and how it is perceived.” (Insel)

As a result from stress, a person’s psychological health can be negatively affected. “Stress has been found to contribute to psychological problems such as depression, panic attacks, anxiety, eating disorders and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).”(Farrehi) About 11 percent of American adults suffer from serious psychological distress (Insel). Many people experiencing stress may feel overwhelmed, lonely, lost and helpless which can cause them to be unhappy or dissatisfied with either themselves or their life. Sometimes it can even lead to a person to consider suicide.

Many hormones and chemicals are released during stress which result in emotional reactions such as anger, random crying, or nervousness. These hormones and chemicals could negatively impair the mental state of an individual (Insel). An example would be the enzyme PKC, which influences the brain’s prefrontal cortex and is released when an individual is under stress. An excess amount of this enzyme affects an individual’s focus, judgment and ability to think clearly (Insel). This could be dangerous when doing everyday tasks such as driving and walking up and down the stairs. In addition, people experiencing chronic stress often forget things and are constantly worried. Others have felt that they no longer can be creative nor have a sense of humor. As a result, work and normal duties could be affected.

In addition to psychological problems, an individual could also experience physical symptoms due to stress such as headaches, sleep disturbances and digestive problems. “Stress can have a major impact on the physical functioning of the human body.” (Jeshmaridian) Although they may not be serious conditions at first, they can become critical disorders if a person is not able to find ways to cope with his or her stress.

Many people suffer from severe and long term headaches because of stress. More than 45 million Americans suffer from extreme headaches, which can be categorized into three types, tension headaches, migraine headaches, and cluster headaches (Insel). These headaches are all a result of stress and can be both painful and disturbing. Tension headaches cause dull, steady pain on both sides of the head. Migraines cause a throbbing pain that start in one place and spread throughout your head. Migraines also can cause fatigue, nausea, and dizziness. Lastly, cluster headaches cause intense pain around one eye and can occur about two to three times a day (Insel).

In addition, lack of sleep can be a result of stress and could weaken your ability to normally function throughout the day. If you do not get sufficient sleep it could affect your mental and physical state. Many individuals feel extremely tired, weak and exhaustion because of stress. Plus, symptoms of stress like nervousness and constant worrying leads to interruptions in sleep patterns (Collins). An example would be a person suffering from insomnia, which occurs when a person is having trouble falling or staying asleep (Collins). “About seventy five percent of people who suffer from chronic insomnia report some stressful life event at the onset of their sleeping problems.”(Collins) In addition, not getting enough sleep time may cause an increase in the level of stress hormones throughout a person’s day and cause physical and mental exhaustion.

Digestive problems such as stomachaches, diarrhea, and constipation can also be a result from stress. Stress can increase colonic contractions or can lead to spasms in the colon. Increased muscle tension in the abdominal area as well as throughout the body can occur from stress, along with increased pain sensitivity (Collins). In addition, “people who experience chronic stress may be seen for disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome, Chron’s disease and general gastric discomfort.”(Collins) All these physical symptoms are a direct result from chronic stress.

Long term stress could also potentially increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Stress causes your heart rate to increase and blood vessels to constrict, causing blood pressure to elevate. In addition, stress can increase a person’s serum cholesterol level and reduce the body’s sensitivity to insulin, which also causes blood pressure to increase (Collins).

Stress can also worsen an individual’s health who already suffers from a cardiovascular disease. An example would be Atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is a disease caused by high pressure and causes blood vessels to become damaged and surrounded with fatty deposits. As a result, these deposits block the arteries and could cause heart attacks or strokes. Stress increases the individual’s blood pressure therefore trigging a heart attack or stroke due to his or her current disease (Insel). Plus, how an individual reacts to stress could determine the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. A person who responds with anger and aggression is more likely to develop cardiovascular disease rather than a person with less-hostile responses (Insel).

Many effects of stress can be extremely harmful and are moderately and slowly affecting one’s health. Although there are positive effects of stress, there are also many that negatively affect a person’s health such as physical problems, psychological disorders and cardiovascular disease. It is important to know how to deal with stress. Doing so would prevent any future risk of illness. Staying healthy and stress free is the key to a long and happy life.

Works Cited

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