



The Champion

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Anxiety & Depression Linked to Physical Symptoms In Teens

Paula Whitaker, Counseling Director, M.Ed., MA, PC, LPC

Teenagers who miss a lot of school because of dizziness, stomach problems, or other symptoms may have underlying anxiety or depression, reports a study in the May issue of the *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

Depression is a complex disorder that can affect many aspects of a person's well being. Because it is the most common psychiatric disorder and can present in a variety of ways, it is often under diagnosed and under treated. Recognizing and treating the physical effects as well as the emotional components of depression are crucial to a complete recovery of depression.

Some symptoms were related to specific forms of anxiety. For example, teens with anxiety about separation were highly likely to have gastrointestinal symptoms, but unlikely to have cardiovascular symptoms.

Parents, school administrators, and primary care physicians should recognize that adolescents who have many symptoms and are missing a lot of school may need to be evaluated for possible anxiety or depression, the researchers emphasize. Recognizing this link permits proper treatment, prevents unnecessary and drawn-out diagnostic tests, and avoids the problem of chronic absence from school.

If you or a teenager you know are suffering from the symptoms below, they may be suffering from depression and anxiety.

- Persistent sad or "empty" mood almost every day for most of the day
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Feeling "slowed down" almost every day
- Fatigue, almost every day
- Insomnia, early waking, oversleeping, or other sleep disturbances
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Irritability
- Excessive crying
- Chronic aches and pains for no apparent reason
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts

If 5 or more symptoms last for 2 weeks or longer or are severe enough to interfere with normal functioning, encourage the person you are caring for to get an evaluation for clinical depression by a qualified health or mental health professional at Champions Christian Counseling Center

FREE

Depression, Anxiety and Your Body Workshop
April 20, 2004 – 6:00 p.m.

The Mind-Body Connection

Esther Bird, MA, LPC, LMFT, LCDC

Stress appears to undermine physical health in two ways: directly and indirectly.

When symptoms of stress such as headaches, nausea, panic attacks and forgetfulness, are present, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, cigarette smoking and destructive drinking or drug-taking can indirectly jeopardize physical well-being. High levels of stress can interfere with thinking. When attention and concentration is decreased, then accidents and injuries can increase.

After getting symptoms checked out with a medical doctor, it may help to talk with someone about the issues that are the source of stress. Often alternatives can be explored and constructive coping skills can be used instead of the destructive behaviors that may have been increasing.

Stress can directly affect health by altering the normal ways the body functions. My mother used to say, "I can feel my blood pressuring rising," when one or all of her four kids were acting out. Environmental stress at work or home can lead to tightening neck and shoulder muscles resulting in stress-induced tension headaches. A lowered immune system from chronic stress can result in increased colds and infections.

Being aware of the connection between what is on your mind and physical symptoms can be the first step to changing what needs to be changed. If our minds are powerful enough to affect health adversely, then the mind can also have positive effects. There are many ways to learn to use the mind for increasing well-being, for controlling what can be controlled and for problem-solving.

People vary in the way they respond to stress, whether acute or chronic. Much of the difference is due to how they think about the stress they are feeling. Several factors are involved that seem to affect how you respond to stress.

Are you optimistic or pessimistic? Do you have a sense of control in your life or do you feel out of control? Are you a controlling person or an easy-going person? Are you Type A or Type B? Are you grouchy or happy? It is important to keep in mind that personality factors can lead to the development of stress-related conditions.

Here at Champions Christian Counseling Center we can help you answer questions about stress and discover what to do to change from stressed to unstressed.

Verse of the Month:

“...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Self-Image and You

Sally Etheredge, MEd, LPC

Have you ever noticed that when you are feeling good about yourself, other people become very nice? Isn't it funny how they change!

The world is a reflection of ourselves. When we hate ourselves, we hate everybody else. When we love being who we are, the rest of the world is wonderful.

Our self-image is the blueprint which determines exactly how we will behave, who we will mix with, what we will try and what we will avoid; our every thought and every action stem from the way we see ourselves.

The picture we have of ourselves is colored by our experiences, our successes and failures, the thoughts we have had about ourselves and others people's reactions to us. Believing this image to be fact, we proceed to live absolutely within the bounds of this picture.

Therefore, our self-image determines –

- How much we like the world and how much we like living in it
- Exactly how much we will accomplish in life

(Excerpted from "Being Happy!" by Andrew Matthews)

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FREE Christian Co-Dependency Support Group
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What Is Stress

By Dave Whittaker, LPC, LMFT

We have needs which arise inside of us and demands which come from outside through jobs, people, and the world around us. Our brain processes that information and compares it to memories stored in our brain; we then make conscious and unconscious decisions about how to react to this. At the same time our thoughts are processing a part of our brain, the hypothalamus controls various glands in our body that release chemicals. Thoughts and feelings go through the hypothalamus causing it to release chemicals which control glands in our body which release body chemicals which can cause the symptoms list below to occur when we are in a stressful situation.

Signs of Stress in the Body:

- Nervous, anxious, depressed, sad, irritable, moody, easily frustrated, forgetful,
- Foggy thinking, hard to make decisions, hard to learn, insomnia, negative thoughts,
- Fidgety, accident prone.
- Physical symptoms: back, muscle pain, headaches, short of breath, feel faint, dizzy,
- Finger nail bitter, teeth grinder, pains in stomach, diarrhea or constipation.

What to do:

- First stop doing multiple activities, sort and take one activity at a time finish it and then move onto the next. Learn how to say no and put limits your time.
- Most people have a biorhythm meaning, they are stronger and weaker at managing stress at certain times of the day or week. Pay attention to your body and schedule slow and fast demand times to match your body's ups and downs.
- Make down time and take it. Take short little breaks often, especially try to do something emotionally satisfying or meaningful for yourself, even if its only for 5 minutes several times a day.
- Plan regular exercise into your life. It doesn't have to be hours in the gym. Sometimes just going up and down the stairs fast or slow can be a big help.
- Stop, and empty your mind by concentrating on taking 5 slow deep breaths. Repeating a short prayer often breaks the emotional reaction chain. "God grant me peace in my heart and mind."
- Physically move away from the people or the task, interaction area. Sometimes just getting away for a few minutes or a short time from the stress area gives your body time to recover and your mind time to heal.
- If you're in the middle of a fight or argument you can always schedule a come back time till each party has time to cool down or take a needed break.
- Give it to God. By letting go of having to control everything, saying I trust God will help me through this, give Him the burden, freeing you the energy to work on your concern.