

Volcano Pie

Identifying Stress Factors Contributing to Depression

There are many factors that can contribute to depression. These include traumatic life experiences such as child abuse, loss, certain diseases or medicines, substance abuse, hormonal changes, and family history of depression. Often it is a combination of physiological, psychological, behavioral, and environmental factors that contribute to an individual's depression.

One approach to depression management is to target the contributing factors. In another session we discussed the Volcano Stress Model of Depression. That can be done by constructing a Volcano Pie and deciding on strategies that target the slices of the pie. By reducing stress in life, a person is likely to experience less depression. The following are general steps for making a Volcano Pie:

1. Identify factors causing you stress by exploring each of the following domains: environment, physical condition, behavior, and thinking. Example factors are given below.
2. Pick out about 5 of the most significant factors and assign percentages to them so that they add up to 100%
 - a. If you have trouble assigning percentages, imagine each factor individually being eliminated as a problem and ask yourself how much better your life would be.
3. Put them as pieces of a pie.
4. Identify an intervention for each piece, especially the pieces with the highest percentages.
5. Set SMART goals

Environmental Factors

- Financial problems,
- Housing problems,
- Safety
- Legal problems,
- Workplace
 - Unemployment
 - Job dissatisfaction,
 - on-the-job conflict, etc.
- Transitional change: retirement, disability, etc.
- Interpersonal conflict and relationship problems: marriage, children, job, etc.
- Social factors
 - Influence of those in immediate environment
 - Lack of social contact: social isolation,
- Culture
 - Cultural depression?
 - Status
 - Values (“all about me”), greed
- Societal changes,
- Grief/loss

Physical Factors

- Poor sleep,
- Obesity: low self esteem, fatigue, hopelessness
- Genetics/biology
- Medications (interferon, Chantix, Prozac)
- Health:
 - loss of independence,
 - loss of functional capacity,
 - chronic pain,
- Direct and indirect effects of disease
 - Disorders of the thyroid
 - Low Testosterone: sx's are – depression, lowered libido, ED, muscle weakness, loss of body hair. 30% of men dx w/depression have low T (hypogonadism).
 - Heart disease – anoxic encephalopathy, possibly due to lack of blood flow to the brain?
 - Anemia - anoxic encephalopathy, possibly due to diminished total O₂ to the brain?
Females. Hgb, Ferritin, Iron,
 - Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (symptoms provided below)
 - Cancer
 - HIV
 - Neurological disorders

Psychological Factors

- Deficiency in skills to help cope with life's challenges: Life as a 'recurring' condition and mental health defined as the ability to continually adapt to changing life circumstances.
- Lack of life meaning and purpose
- Trauma/abuse history
- Problem Thinking
 - Rumination: out of control thinking. Being victimized by thoughts.
 - Negative imaging
 - We often have problems with ambiguity, negative expectations, & lack of control
 - Content that might contribute to depression:
 - pessimism,
 - hopelessness,
 - self-doubt,
 - Low self-esteem, low self-image
 - Feelings of failure
 - Guilt
 - Skills needed:
 - Methods for gaining self-awareness and personal insight about factors contributing to your depression.
 - Methods for identifying and challenging thoughts and beliefs
 - Problem solving skills: divide and conquer.
 - Ability to concentrate: thought control,
 - Can be used to replace negative rumination with hope and optimism

Behavioral Factors

- Nutrition:
 - Diet
 - Drugs and alcohol
 - Lack of physical activity
- Isolation
- Social skills
- Gambling
- Dishonesty