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Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety are both mental illnesses that frequently occur together within a person's psyche. However, depression and anxiety are actually very different. They differ in effects on children, effects on adults, types of therapy, and main types.

First of all, depression and anxiety differ in the ways that they affect children. Depression makes children "irritable and angry." Nancy Schimelpfening writes, "You might see changes in behavior, such as increased defiance or a decline in grades at school." If the irritability is long lasting, it may be a sign of depression. Schimelpfening also contends that children with depression may make complaints of stomachaches and headaches.

Anxiety is shown in children through several characteristics. Anxiety is characterized by "persistent, irrational, and overwhelming worry, fear, and anxiety that interfere with daily activities." Anxiety makes children irritable and jittery, keeps them from sleeping, or causes headaches or stomach aches. Anxiety can also cause difficulty concentrating in school. Research suggests that "anxiety disorders tend to run in families" and "if left untreated, children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk to perform poorly in school, miss out on important social experiences, and engage in substance abuse" ("Anxiety Disorders").

Secondly, besides being different in the way they affect children, depression and anxiety differ in the way they affect adults. Depression makes people feel "sad, discouraged, hopeless, irritable, unmotivated" and lacking "interest or pleasure in life." The Anxiety and Depression

Association of America (ADAA) states, “Some people [with depression] may experience physical aches and pains, leading them to believe that these are symptoms of an undiagnosed physical ailment.” Depression can cause thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts. It can also cause inability to sleep; changes in weight; sad moods that won’t go away; guilty, helpless, and/or worthless feelings; and “loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities” (“Anxiety and Depression”).

Anxiety affects adults in several ways. According to the ADAA, “[A]nxiety is a normal emotional reaction to stress . . . [and] helps [people] get out of harm’s way and prepare for important events.” Anxiety in adults can be “persistent, excessive, seemingly uncontrollable, overwhelming, and disabling.” Anxiety often disrupts a person’s daily activities and the ability to complete tasks (“Anxiety and Depression”).

In addition to differing in the way they affect adults, depression and anxiety differ in psychotherapy treatment options. Depression can be treated using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines CBT as a “therapy [that] helps assess and change negative thinking patterns associated with depression [with a goal of recognizing] negative thoughts and [teaching] coping strategies.” Another treatment option is interpersonal therapy (IPT); NAMI defines IPT as a therapy that focuses on “improving problems in personal relationships and other changes in life that may be contributing to depressive disorder. [It teaches] individuals to evaluate their interactions and to improve how they relate to others.” Psychodynamic therapy is also an option in treating depression; NAMI defines psychodynamic therapy as “a therapeutic approach rooted in recognizing and understanding negative patterns of behavior and feelings that are rooted in past experiences and

working to resolve them. [It also involves] looking at a person's unconscious processes" ("Depression").

Anxiety can be treated with varying types of psychotherapy. Anxiety may be treated using exposure therapy; in exposure therapy, "a person is gradually exposed to a feared situation or object, learning to become less sensitive over time." Another treatment option is acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT); ACT uses "strategies of acceptance and mindfulness . . . along with commitment and behavior change." Anxiety can also be treated with dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT); DBT uses "concepts from Eastern meditation and combines acceptance and change." DBT also "involves individual and group therapy to learn mindfulness, as well as skills for interpersonal effectiveness, tolerating distress, and regulating emotions" ("Treating").

Along with having different types of therapy, depression and anxiety are divided into different types. The ADAA states, "Depressive disorders, also known as mood disorders, include three main types: major depression, persistent depressive disorder, and bipolar disorder." A person with major depression may exhibit symptoms that are "disabling and interfere with [a person's] ability to work, study, eat, and sleep." Persistent depressive disorder is "a form of depression that usually continues for at least two years," though it is "less severe than major depression." If a person has "moods that shift from severe highs (mania) or mild highs (hypomania) to severe lows (depression)," that person is exhibiting the symptoms of bipolar disorder ("Anxiety and Depression").

Anxiety can be divided into six types. The ADAA states that the term "anxiety disorders" describes generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), social anxiety disorder, and specific phobias. Generalized anxiety disorder is described as "persistent, excessive, and unrealistic worry about

everyday things.” Obsessive-compulsive disorder is comprised of “unwanted and intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and ritualistic behaviors and routines (compulsions) conducted to ease anxiety.” Panic disorder is spontaneous panic attacks and fear of recurrent attacks.

Posttraumatic stress disorder is an anxiety disorder that is “triggered by an extremely traumatic event in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened or witnessed.” Social anxiety disorder is “an intense fear of being scrutinized and negatively evaluated by others in social or performance situations.” Specific phobias are “seemingly excessive and unreasonable fears in the presence of or in anticipation of a specific object, place, or situation” (“Treating”).

In conclusion, depression and anxiety are very different mental illnesses. Depression and anxiety differ in their psychotherapy treatment options. They differ in their types or divisions. They also are different in the way they affect adults and the way they affect children.

Works Cited

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