Mental Health Impacts of Chronic Pain

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Chronic Pain and Mental Health

More than 1.5 billion people worldwide suffer from chronic pain every day, according to the American Academy of Pain Medicine. Although pain does not put one's life at risk, it does put one's quality of life in jeopardy. People might suggest a variety of methods to overcome the physical aspects chronic pain, like taking medication, exercising, or ignoring it; however, the mental part of chronic pain is the most painful to bear.

Everyone deals with uncomfortable feelings differently, including pain. A person might become angry and frustrated, withdraw into himself, or develop depression.

It has been clinically proven that chronic pain sufferers are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, or both, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America says. When a person knows pain will be coming their way at some point during the day, it is understandable how having the motivation to get out of bed is challenging. Because of chronic pain, feelings of helplessness, loss of control, and interference with normal daily activities can trigger mental health disorders.

Researchers have found that anxiety disorders and chronic pain often occur together. The stress associated with living with chronic pain may exacerbate conditions such as anxiety disorders and depression. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, people with severe depression feel pain more intensely. Many studies are finding that inflammation may be a link between depression and illnesses occurring because of depression. The link between inflammation and depression may due to higher than normal levels of inflammatory proteins called cytokines that people with depression have in their body; thus, chronic pain and depression can join together in a perpetual and endless cycle.

Understandably chronic pain can lead to negative feelings, emotions, and mental health disorders but there are solutions that can help: support, a positive mindset, and keeping yourself busy.

Support

We all need support at some point in our lives; however, those with chronic pain need to rely on support more often than the average person. Chronic pain sufferers deal with negative thoughts throughout the day with constant reminders of what they are incapable of doing, but support can help them get through the constant obstacles. Support can come in a variety of forms; it could be someone who helps with tasks you are physically unable to do, someone you talk to about your struggles, or someone who is going through the same ordeal.

Make sure to identify who your support is when it comes to dealing with chronic pain so you know who to turn to when you're having a rough time. Potential support could be a trained therapist, a family member, significant other, or close friend. Even if you can't identify a person, joining a support group or online forum for chronic pain can also be just as effective. Talking amongst others about your struggle with chronic pain will allow you to better cope with the condition and might make managing the pain a little easier.

Chronic pain is tough to deal with, especially if you are alone; one of the worst feelings a chronic pain sufferer can feel is that they are alone in the struggle. As stated earlier, more than 1.5 billion people in the world suffer from chronic pain. That means more than 1.5 billion people are going through a similar struggle to one you may be going through. It is comforting to know that you are not the only one going through the endeavor.

As a group, we are all trying to overcome chronic pain or we are all learning to cope with the condition. Just remember: there are numerous celebrities, public individuals, and international figures who are doing tremendously positive things with their lives even though they live with chronic pain. George Clooney, Montel Williams, Jillian Michaels, and Bono are just a few celebrities who have managed to continue their careers despite dealing with chronic pain.

Try to Keep a Positive Mindset

Keeping a positive mindset can have a drastic impact on the quality of your daily life. In order to overcome the negative thoughts that come with chronic pain, we have to embrace the philosophy of looking at the glass as half full. Focus more on the activities that you can still do rather than the activities you are not able to do because of your condition. Part of this strategy involves avoiding negative influences that remind you of the pain and how it has limited your life.

You can't always control your physical condition but you can have control over your mindset. It is also important to surround yourself with positive people, who can reinforce the idea of thinking positively. They will also be able to help bring you up emotionally when you're having trouble being positive on a particular day. This goes back to the idea of support; when you are with someone who is supportive, they understand your struggle and will participate in activities you can also participate in despite having chronic pain.

Keep Yourself Occupied

Many chronic pain sufferers have the instinct to seclude themselves. However, one of the worst things a person with chronic pain can do is sit in a room alone, feel sorry for themselves, and focus solely on their pain. Secluding oneself from social interaction or societal inclusion can feed into the cycle of depression and more pain. You must understand your physical limitations, but if you're going to be in pain why not try to divert your attention by doing something you enjoy? Chronic pain sufferers can still participate in gentle exercise, therapeutic writing, and many other enjoyable activities. There are times when it is acceptable to seclude yourself when you aren't feeling well but to do so on a regular basis is hampering you from living your life to the fullest and potentially from inspiring others.

Conclusion

Chronic pain is a lifelong battle for a lot of people that involves fighting both their bodies and minds. Although it is easier said than done, having support, having a positive mindset, and keeping yourself busy can make that battle a little easier as life progresses. Pain is a very complex sensation that can be difficult to control, but controlling your emotions will help in dealing with the pain. Part of managing the pain involves wrapping your head around it and finding enough support to get you through the tough times.

Keeping a positive mindset may be the hardest to acquire, but in trying to do so will open your mind to universal opportunities to make your life that much more enjoyable despite having a debilitating condition. Rather than letting chronic pain suck you into a hole of darkness, take advantage of those opportunities that will keep you busy and focused on the good that life does have to offer. We may not ever be able to overcome chronic pain, but we can learn to control how much of our lives it can affect.