

Mindful Eating

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Figure

Abstract

As of 2019, an increasing number of hospital admissions in the UK have been attributed to obesity, whilst 26% of the population is officially classified as being obese [1]. Obesity however now has a close contender: stress, which also emerges as a contributing factor to ill health and poor diets, prompting us to explore the link between stress and eating behaviours, and how combatting anxiety may automatically lead to improved nutritional intake.

Keywords: Stress; Intuitive Eating; Mindfulness; Obesity

Contributing factors to poor health

Despite there being a huge industry of weight management aids and programmes, the statistics around obesity have remained consistently high in the UK for the last 8 years [1]. The damage caused by stress on the other hand, is less obvious. In a Study involving 4619 people carried out by the Mental Health Foundation in 2018, a massive 74% of the population was reported to be 'too overwhelmed or unable to cope' [2]. This study also claimed that the stress was linked to heart disease, immune disease and digestive problems. The NHS in the UK has consistently published the clear and concise eat well guidelines, to ensure support is affordable and accessible, yet the crisis persists.

The physical malfunctions to the body caused by poor diets will inevitably cause stress.

Stress in itself can lead to unhealthy eating habits. American Psychological Association Survey in 2012, concluded that stress makes people seek out comfort food, and also releases the hormone, cortisol which further increases appetite [3], usually for unhealthy food choices, and which only provide temporary feel-

ings of satiety. This triggers an increasingly addictive and emotionally exhausting cycle that is difficult to break. Thus, resulting in a slower and less obvious path to deterioration. The British Heart Foundation explicitly confirms that stress increases overeating, and the risk of cardiovascular diseases [4]. A further study referenced in the scientific journal Lancet, claimed one in five people across the world dies of causes linked to a poor diet, blaming the problem on overconsumption of meat, salt and sugar. The analysis also proved a low global consumption of whole grains, fruit, nuts, seeds and vegetables, and indicated that food aversions like these were responsible for causing 1 in 7 deaths in Britain [5]. Instead of producing complex nutritional information, repeatedly ignored by a large proportion of the public, more efficient processes should be made available for them to cultivate their own self control and form better relationships with food long term.

Binge Eating Disorder is yet another health related problem that appears to be increasing, proven to be caused by: greater disturbances in eating attitudes and behaviour, a poorer and physical and mental health status, and impaired hunger/satiety control [6].

How intuitive eating works

Clinical Hypnotherapy Weight Management Programmes are used to communicate with the subconscious part of the mind, removing all conditioned beliefs and resetting the brain with its natural ability to recognise bodily needs and nutritional requirements. This process has been widely successful all over the world, in giving clients the control and competence to make appropriate food choices [7]. Meditation and Mindfulness are renowned for providing a great sense of awareness, discipline and deep relaxation. By teaching the public to develop a deliberate and conscious ingestive practice, there is a chance that emotionally driven food addictions, could be eliminated completely.

Conclusions

Emotional wellbeing can help reduce obesity. Meditation, mindfulness and clinical hypnotherapy have all been proven to have positive influences on eating habits, nutritional choices and self-discipline [8]. They promote calm temperaments which naturally make people more observant and intuitive, and should strongly be considered as an effective strategy to combat the current obesity crisis. These modalities also help reduce any stress that trigger the poor eating habits in the first place [9].

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