

How We Learn To Love An Unhealthy Lifestyle

Our society provides incentives for us to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle. Even our health care systems support it. Find the home site of author Bill Allin at [http: billallin.com](http://billallin.com)

As I write this I am experiencing a high level of anxiety brought about by stress from many different sources over a period of several weeks, my present purpose being to convey not my feelings but the effects that stress over a long period of time has on my thinking and decision making. The effects of stress on one person can affect another person similarly, if not identically, thus my experience can be a learning situation for you.

I have experienced depression and its effects in the past, though that was cleared entirely by my taking vitamin D supplements to compensate for the lack of sufficient direct sunlight on my skin to allow my body to create vitamin D on its own. The effects of depression bear striking similarities to the effects of stress/anxiety over a long period of time.

With depression I found that triggers would set off a bout of anger for a period of several minutes (up to an hour), then the emotional energy would dissipate and turn into what most of us would call depression. With stress, the anger comes to stay, varying in degree enough that it could often be called intolerance of the behaviour of others, inability to understand the life situations of others (lack of empathy) or a strong desire to get away from the company of specific people, rather than it being labelled easily as anxiety.

My present anxiety caused by long term stress has not resulted in any thoughts of suicide, which depression has done in the past. While I seek relief from the effects of my anxiety, I do not want to resort to easy solutions such as medication, addictive behaviour or the ultimate easy way out, suicide.

Why should you care? One or more people you know (perhaps many) may exhibit the some similar behaviours as I do right now, for the same causes. You may know nothing about the causes of the people you know or my own because we don't talk about them. We only talk about the effects, the bad behaviour, sometimes our own but usually of others who we think act weird or permanently irritable.

Stress has caused me to lose sleep--a considerable amount over a period of weeks--and this could easily compromise my immune system as well as causing me to exhibit symptoms of sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation alone could cause irritability, inability to get along with others and a short fuse on the temper. Coupled with long term anxiety it could result in amplified instances of anger, intolerance, not paying attention to the needs of loved ones, not taking proper care of loved ones due to an egocentric attitude, even a desire to generate conditions which could destroy a close relationship just to have something "happen" to give a person the feeling that he or she is in control of something.

Stress can cause loss of sleep, but the sleep loss effects add to the effects of long term anxiety, rather than simply overlapping them. One doubles up with the other, so to speak.

Now we have causes which could result in such well known behaviours as road rage, office rage, marital arguments, marital incompatibility (real or imagined), disconnects in relationships with a person's own children, lack of interest in sex (at least of the softer, gentler, more loving kind), erectile dysfunction, inability to cope with other personal problems, even turning to addictive behaviours or substances for some form of relief.

Enter drugs, prescribed and otherwise. Prozac is the most prescribed drug in North America. Legal and illegal sales of Viagra and Cialis flourish. As many as 25 percent of people in many communities may have used marijuana or one of its derivatives

in the past year. The rates of divorce in most countries of the West hover around or above 50 percent. Examples of physical and emotional abuse surface frequently. Police must deal with family problems on about one-quarter of their calls in many communities. I don't have statistics to show what effect marital problems could have on other socially unacceptable behaviours, such as fights in bars or even theft from employers.

Where do people who suffer from these problems turn to find socially acceptable help to solve their problems? A

family doctor will likely prescribe drugs, which solve nothing, merely cover up symptoms. Some--the lucky ones--get referred to counsellors who specialize in helping people who suffer from anxiety symptoms caused by high stress. Unfortunately, that part of the health care community is so fixed on a steady source of income that treatment may not be the best because it's in the financial best interests of the practitioner to have the professional help last as long as possible.

The whole ethic of teaching children about what they must do to "succeed" in the working world prepares them to face and accept stress and long term anxiety, though not how to cope with them.

We teach kids to not just enter the rat race, but to believe that this is the way life is and should be, and that they should learn to "enjoy it" by making as much money as possible and finding as many "interesting" ways of spending it as they can.

This article cannot present instant cures for complex problems. It can only point to the way that those with a concern for solving those problems should turn.

Treat broken adults one by one and we continue with our present kinds of problems. Teach children how to cope with the lives they will live in the future, as adults, and we change the path of the future for our descendants.

Change is possible if we know what we want to achieve and where to begin that change process.

Teach the children.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a guidebook for parents and teachers who want to grow children who can cope with their lives as adults better than today's adults can.

Learn more at <http://billallin.com>

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