The Link Between Depression and ADHD

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When ADHD and Depression Co-Exist

It isn't unheard of for depression and ADHD to co-exist. It's actually estimated that depression is over two times more likely to occur in those with ADHD. Those suffering from both can often be misdiagnosed, potentially causing further issues down the road because they share similar symptoms.

Types of Depression

There are two types of depression that can affect those with ADHD – situational depression and clinical depression. Symptoms of situational depression commonly arise after a trauma or significant lifestyle change, such as the death of a loved one, a divorce, or job loss.

In the case of those with ADHD it can often occur as a result of the frustration of dealing with untreated symptoms of the ADHD. The symptoms of situational depression are the same as clinical depression but they typically occur without a trauma or an inciting incident.

What Are the Symptoms?

To further add to the frustration of untreated ADHD, depression and ADHD have similar symptoms, which can sometimes lead to a misdiagnosis. There are some slight differences that can help identify one over the other:

1. **Trouble Focusing:** Those with ADHD often had difficulty focusing on tasks and daily life because they're easily distracted and try to focus on too many things at once while those with depression have trouble focusing due to a lack of motivation and energy.
2. **Sleep Patterns:** People who suffer from ADHD often have trouble falling asleep because their mind won't "shut down," so they can find themselves over thinking. Typically the opposite happens with those with depression, while they can also encounter episodes of insomnia, more often they sleep too much because of a severe lack of energy or motivation to get out of bed.
3. **Mood Swings:** Mood swings are common in those with ADHD; dark moods typically derive from setbacks and frustration while mood swings that affect those with depression are chronic and last much longer.

What to Treat First

You should always work with your doctor to narrow down whether the depression or the ADHD needs to be addressed first; typically the one that carries the most symptoms should get primary focus. If the distracting symptoms of ADHD are overwhelming the depression then that should be dealt with first.

If this is the case then a few lifestyle changes could help to relieve the symptoms of depression. If, however, you believe that the symptoms of depression are overshadowing the effects of ADHD there are quite a few treatment options available.

Next page: medication, therapy, diet and meditation.

Medication

There is a wide range of medications available to help treat the effects of depression.

Therapy & Counseling

Speaking to a therapist or joining a support group can help to build a supportive network.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Similar to the above-mentioned therapy and counseling, a therapist may be able to help you with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). This involves changing perspective and negative thought patterns to improve internal thoughts and self-treatment.

This could ensure a healthy change in lifestyle and thus improve symptoms of both the ADHD and depression.

Diet and Exercise

Improving small lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise can make a large improvement in overall health and outlook. Healthier food and regular meals will increase energy and help improve function.

Regular exercise can help to establish routine and release endorphins to naturally stabilize mood.

Meditation

There are many different forms of meditation, finding the one that is best suited for you is a great way to bring a sense of calm and focus into your life. Even if it's only for a few minutes, with practice it could help to stabilize mood, increase energy, and improve thought patterns.

Conclusion

While ADHD and depression share similar symptoms, it's important to recognize the differences in order to move forward with treatment.