At the end of my rope: Understanding depression and burnout

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On the agenda

• What is depression?
• What is burnout
• What is stress?
• When does it cause burnout and depression?
• How do we deal with it?
What affects your mood?

• You’re having a bad day
• You have a lousy job
• You’re having relationship problems
• You didn’t sleep last night
• You’re in bad shape
• It runs in your family
• Maybe it’s just the way you are
• Maybe you have one of those biochemical imbalances you keep hearing about
• Maybe it was something you ate
• Your teenagers are acting like well..teenagers
• Etc., etc., etc.,
Is depression a disease?

- Joe: Good eater, bad arteries (has CAD)
- Bob: Bad eater, good arteries (has no disease)
- Bill: Bad eater, bad arteries (has CAD)
  - Where is the problem?
    - Is it the genetic predisposition?
    - Is it the environment in which these people live and learn?
    - Is it the nature of the interaction between the two?

- What if...
  - Your wife or husband announced that they no longer loved you, how would you react? What if you then had trouble functioning normally or became suicidal for a few weeks? In such a case, you would easily qualify for the diagnosis of Major Depression. Do you have a disease?
What is Depression?

• Depressed mood or loss of pleasure
  – Other indicators which may include:
    • Sleep problems
    • Trouble concentrating
    • Agitation
    • Fatigue
    • Recurrent thoughts of suicide or death
    • Changes in appetite
    • Feelings of worthlessness

• Must last for more than two weeks and cause significant personal suffering or loss of function
Causes of Depression

- Disease:
- Biochemistry:
- Innate temperament:
- Environmental influences:
- Life-altering events:
- A history of events:
- Common factor - personality:
Who we are and how we see things

Biochemical factors

Events big and small

The world around us

Disease processes

Moods such as depression

Our upbringing and culture

Innate temperament
What is burnout?

Loss of function at work (or in life???):
(anxiety, frustration, sense of futility, agitation, fatigue, frustration, impatience, pessimism, loss of productivity, etc…)

- The term Burnout originally applied to workers in a helping profession (doctors, nurses…)

- Burnout is not a diagnosis. It is a popular term with no standard definition.
What’s the difference?

• **Burnout is a circumstance:**
  – It can happen when depressed.
  – It can happen because of work conditions alone.
  – It is influenced by many of the personality factors that cause depression.

• **Depression is a mood state:**
  – It can cause burnout
  – It can be caused by burnout
  – It is influenced by many of the personality factors that cause burnout
  – It can happen independently of working conditions
What is stress?

• Stress is any form of challenge to the person
• It can be felt as anxiety when acute or as general tension when diffuse and chronic
• When is something stressful?
  • Novelty
  • Unpredictability
  • Threat to the ego
  • Sense of control
What is Stress?

Number of responsibilities ÷ How we handle them = Stress
A stressor by any other name…

• No two people react the same way to a similar stressor
• The stress response is an interaction between the challenge itself and the individual’s perception of his or her ability to respond to it.
What causes burnout

- We expect too much of ourselves (internally-generated pressures)
- Others expect too much of us (externally-generated pressures)
- It’s never good enough
- Impostor syndrome
- We don’t have what it takes
Internal pressures

Impostor syndrome
(poor self-esteem)

External pressures

Missing skills
(poor fit)

Perfectionism
(it’s never good enough)
Internally-generated pressures

- Inability to recognize one's limits

Externally-generated pressures

- Inability to say no

Number of responsibilities

Perfectionism (never good enough)

Lack of confidence

- Lack of necessary skills
- Lack of support

How we handle them

\[ \text{Number of responsibilities} \div \text{How we handle them} = \text{Stress} \]
Additional causes of burnout

• Your boss is a jerk!

• You are the jerk!
This sucks! What are my options?

- Step one: change it
- Step two: accept it
- Step three: reject it
Dealing with burnout or depression: Making a change

- Personality factors
- Biochemistry
- Circumstances
- Attitude
Core beliefs (schemas) and you (self-confirming biases)

- The small Italian coffee
- Do you remember my name?
- Two questions
- Two accountants
I invite your comments
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