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10 SIGNS I AM HIDING MY DEPRESSION

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Abstract: Many people are living with hidden signs of depression because of either the lack of awareness that they have the condition or their intentional effort to hide the condition from others. Sound knowledge and understanding of the key signs of hidden depression both by members of the general public and clinicians are critical for ensuring the timely and reliable diagnosis and treatment of the condition. This paper is a critical discussion of the 10 signs of hidden depression, the dangers of depression and the need for future research. From the review of current literature, it is clear that depression is a leading cause of disability, and that diagnosis of hidden depression, in particular, is a complex, challenging process for health practitioners in practice. This is not just due to the hidden nature of the condition, but more in the evident lack of conclusive research on the 'how-to' aspects of the process of diagnosing and treating hidden depression in individuals. Accordingly, the need for future research is recommended, with the view to secure a comprehensive set of guidelines and/or best practices for diagnosis and treatment of hidden depression.

Index Terms - Depression, Compartmentalization, Intimacy, Mental Health, Self-Defeating, Intense Focus, Avoidance.

I. INTRODUCTION

The prospect for the realization of sustainable socio-economic growth and prosperity of a society is subject to the overall health and wellbeing of its population. Depression is among common mental disorders affecting individuals of all ages across the globe with the potential for causing serious complications on the physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing of affected people. The global burden of depression is a major public health concern given that, despite proven efficacy of available treatment options for depression in over 90% of patients, an estimated more than 70% of people with depression fail to receive treatment at all or fall victims of inaccurate diagnosis and treatment of their condition [11]. This is complemented by a prevalence of people living with hidden signs of depression because of either the lack of awareness that they have the condition or their intentional effort to hide the condition from others. The impact on the overall health and wellbeing is the same if left untreated regardless of type, although the likelihood of delayed and/or inaccurate diagnosis is higher for people with hidden depression [8]. Accordingly, the sound and reliable knowledge and understanding of the specific signs of hidden depression both by members of the general public and clinicians is critical for ensuring the timely and reliable diagnosis and treatment of the condition.

II. PURPOSE

This paper is a critical discussion of the 10 signs of hidden depression. Besides, statistical highlights and analysis of the dangers of depression from the existing literature are given and the need for future research subsequently determined and discussed.

III. DISCUSSION

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The signs of depression and associated impacts on the overall health and wellbeing of the affected individuals are real and far-reaching but are often misunderstood by the affected, their families and the general public, and above all, by clinicians. According to Krumm, Checchia, Koesters, Kilian, and Becker (2017), there are many times when depression among individuals goes unnoticed, undiagnosed and/or inaccurately diagnosed, which in turn negates on the prospects of timely and effective treatment. The population of patients presenting with hidden depression is a particularly vulnerable one here given their lack of the express signs of the typical depression either due to the hidden nature of the presentation or due to intentional attempts to council their signs of depression from others. Regardless of the reason behind the lack of defined signs of depression among patients with hidden depression, delayed or failure to timely and accurate diagnosis is a risk factor for continued progression of the pathological effects of depression on patients [11].

There are many challenges that people go through in their daily lives, but depression means an addition to the issues of hopelessness and sadness associated with depression to the normal challenges in the life of the affected individuals [8]. The successful identification, diagnosis, and treatment of individuals with hidden depression in a timely and effective manner are critical. Depression is a common cause of suicides as it accounts for an estimated about 800, 000 suicide-related deaths across the globe every year, with the risk of committing suicide among people with depression being dependent on both the severity and duration an individual, has lived with the condition in absence of effective clinical intervention [7]. Knowledge and understanding of the key signs of hidden depression is an invaluable resource for ensuring a well-informed, evidence-based approach in addressing hidden depression as a major cause of disability and a leading reason behind the escalation of the burden of disease across the globe.

3.1 High Perfectionist Self-Representation

The human nature is characterized by a general tendency by individual human beings to seek and strive not only for the best possible outcome of their commitments but also to the progressive raising of the bar of their expectations and perceptions of the outcomes over time. According to Hassan, Flett, Ganguli, and Hewitt (2014), a perfectionist outlook is an integral attribute of the human nature and the ultimate contributor of creativity and innovativeness in the human society as a whole. However, the practical relevance of committing to perfectionism is subject to consideration of the extent that doing so is deemed worthwhile and in the best interests of an individual. According to Hassan et al. (2014), the interests and expectations of the self, and not those of others, should be given priority consideration as the ultimate reference point of significance in deciding on whether to pursue perfectionist or non-perfectionist result.

There are a variety of critical factors in choosing on whether to pursue perfectionism or not, including differences in the resources needed for overseeing the successful execution of either alternative, the likelihood of success or failure in the two alternatives, and the risks and benefits the failure and success of each alternative is expected to have on the interests and expectations of the engagement by the self [12]. Specifically, while the perfectionist approach to leading personal life promises great value as an effective platform for fostering competitive success through creativity and innovation, such an approach has been criticized because of its destructive nature based on its link to maladaptive and psychopathological outcomes. According to Hassan et al (2014), there is a high rate of suicide among those who have failed to achieve their level best and they end up feeling guilty of not being able to maintain their status.

3.2 Heightened Sense of Responsibility

The general valuing of high performers and loyal partners in any relationship is clear in the critical significance such has in fostering the values of trust, confidence, and reliability of each other as a supporter, defender, and promoter of the interests and expectations of each other [6]. On the contrary, however, according to Dognin and Chen (2018), within any relationship, the commitments and engagements by individual partners cannot be assumed sustainable in the absence of reciprocation of value for value between the partners or evidence that the relationship is founded on exchanging of value for value and responsibility for responsibility. Specifically, while caring too much about the wellbeing and every aspect of the relationship can be praised as a form of good leadership, such an approach suffers from heightened risk of poor rating of the leader in terms of delegating of responsibility and related effects of such on fostering the sense of inclusion and appreciation of the other(s) as valuable parties towards a shared vision [3]. This increases the likelihood of self-criticism as the demand from assumed responsibilities become more complex and impractical to deliver sustainably.

3.3 Rigid Over-Compartmentalization

The ability of an individual to prioritize issues and feelings in a relationship is natural and fundamental to the performance of humans in social relationships and involves capacity to experience a hurting and abusing encounter in a relationship, but withholding expression of personal feelings or reactions to a later moment when situations will provide for dealing with the feelings (Karp, 2017). According to Epstein and Goodman (2018), however, the ultimate competitive value of discounting or prioritizing on issues and feelings to respond to and those that can be discounted is dependent on the extent that the discounting process is rooted on the temporary postponement of the feelings under consideration to another moment, rather than on denying and/or dismissing their very existence. Karp (2017) notes that a deny and dismiss approach to painful moments and experiences only leads to the development of a personality and personal culture that promote the locking in of painful feelings, sadness, and concerns in the non-immediate access mind over time. Although it serves to mitigate undue confrontations, it mounts, rather than ills the mind of such feelings.

3.4 Accompanying Mental Health Issues

According to Saleem, Sattar, Zafar, and Ismail (2014), at the core of the daily life of a person suffering from hidden depression is a general priority tendency by the affected person to ensure that their life is lived with the least possible if any risk and threat of losing ability to control and govern. The central focus here is in ensuring that the life of the individual is well-planned to assure of its controllability and that it can be governed in a predictable and a well-fashioned manner. For Puccio, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, Ong, and Krug (2016), mere organizing of the life of an individual with hidden depression around the priority valuing of controllability and governability qualifies that the individual is highly likely to present with suffering from an actual diagnosis of at least one of the psychiatric disorders associated with the prioritizing of control and predictability. The most common psychiatric diagnoses that co-exist with hidden depression in such an individual include eating disorders, drug abuse, and obsessive-compulsive disorder [10]. This implies that a successful diagnosis of hidden depression can be qualified by considering proven associative relationships or co-existence of hidden depression and actual psychiatric diagnoses.

3.5 Emotional Difficulty with Intimacy

The qualification of emotional difficulty by a person in handling personal relationship vulnerabilities, while demonstrating a competitive standing in professional performance is clear in the argument by Ganong and Larson (2011) on the existence of a strong relationship between the mental health and sexual activity by an individual. In particular, obsession with the pursuit of professional performance and achievement is blamed for inversely impacting on the ability of an individual to conveniently and effectively relate with others at an intimate level. According to Freak-Poli et al. (2017), among old adults, a higher level of happiness, and not a high level of depression is associated with improved sexual behaviors. Furthermore, Stephenson and Meston (2015), relational wellbeing at the intimate level is associated with an overall improvement of the level of satisfaction with life by a couple by nurturing the feeling of being part of belonging to each other. The absence of such relational valuing of each other at the intimate level fosters a transactional marriage relationship, and hence a materialistic, as opposed to intimate relationships.

3.6 Self-Defeating Concern about Others

That humans are social beings who are marked with a specific set of personal abilities and capabilities relative to those dependent on each other for sustainable growth general valuing of high performers and loyal partners in any relationship is clear in the critical significance such has in fostering the values of trust, confidence, and reliability of each other as a supporter, defender, and promoter of the interests and expectations of each other [6]. On the contrary, however, according to Dognin and Chen (2018), within any relationship, the commitments and engagements by individual partners cannot be assumed sustainable in the absence of reciprocation of value for value between the partners or evidence that the relationship is founded on exchanging of value for value and responsibility for responsibility. Specifically, while caring too much about the wellbeing and every aspect of the relationship can be praised as a form of good leadership, such an approach suffers from heightened risk of poor rating of the leader in terms of delegating of responsibility and related effects of such on fostering the sense of inclusion and appreciation of the other(s) as valuable parties towards a shared vision [3]. This increases the likelihood of self-criticism as the demand from assumed responsibilities become more complex and impractical to deliver sustainably.

3.7 Intense Focus on Task and Accomplishments

The significance of task-related accomplishments as a common measure of the perceived success of individuals in the society cannot be overemphasized given the common association of throughput or performance with status, power, influence, and being valuable among members of the public [14]. In practice, however, for Strosahl and Robinson (2017), embracing rigid positivity with counting on personal activity and accomplishment is a risk factor for an individual to lead a life in which task-based success or accomplishments are used as a means for dismissing or covering up any inner sense of emptiness and unhappiness and feelings of insecurity and fears. The actual value inherent in purpose and effort in life can implicate personal ability to appreciate and commit in aspects of life beyond the tasks and accomplishments as valuable sources of self-esteem and feeling of being valuable and worthy as a person [14]. Intense focus on tasks and accomplishments risks a workaholic lifestyle.

3.8 Worry over Control and Avoidance of Situations

The quest for certainty in life is integral to human nature despite the uncertain nature of life by default. The problem, however, presents with rigidity in the valuing of certainty and control over situations in personal life [2]. Evidence of a strong desire for control over situations in life leads to a situation where much of the time by a person is spent worrying about what might happen if this control is interrupted and the things that might lead to this interruption. Although it is normal for individuals to worry about such things, it reveals a sign of having hidden depression when a person demonstrates intentional determination to hide such worries from the knowledge and assistance of others, including their most significant relations in life. As noted by Strosahl and Robinson (2017), hiding and trying to deny or dismiss the reality that things are not moving as easily has far-reaching self-destructing effects on the long-term.

3.9 Difficulty Handling Painful Emotions

The philosophical foundation of psychology and related therapies is the understanding that, if not managed in a timely and effective manner, the pain has the potential for managing the life of an individual [1]. The secret here lies with the ability of a person to accept the existence of any painful emotions in their life as a reality, and above all, to openly express such emotions and anger, rather than avoid and deny their existence. Letting experience of painful emotions banish at the back of the closet will best translate to the persistence of such feelings of anger and sadness in the mind and on personal thoughts, which denies the chance of connecting with the heart [1]. As a sign of hidden depression, an individual is characterized by an inherent imbalance in their engagement of the body and mind relative to the heart – the source and ultimate measure of the true sense of self-fulfillment, esteem and the feelings of happiness and being and/or leading a valuable life [2]. The freedom of the mind from painful emotions safeguards the inner world of a person from a conflict of interest and purpose in life.

3.10 Rigid Self-Compassion Positivity

That cultivating self-compassion remains an invaluable resource for enabling a person to move through suffering, failure, and feelings of inadequacy are clear in the competitive value of such as essential life tools for engaging the self with kindness, compassion, and care during such situations [14]. One common way to achieve this goal is by taking count of personal blessings as a means for nurturing and sustaining optimism and the sense of gratefulness about how valuable the life of an individual has been. However, Caudill (2016) has it that obsession with counting blessings as basis for wellbeing can prompt a sense of guilt and/or shame, especially in the events of challenges in reconciling or making sense of the actual impact or value that such blessings in the life by a person have had on their feeling of being valuable and sense of esteem. According to Strosahl and Robinson (2017), a person with hidden depression has a compromising attitude towards self-compassion as an excuse and cause for complains in life.

IV. Statistical Analysis

Experiencing sadness and grief is integral to human nature. From time to time during the lifespan development, individuals experience such feelings. However, unlike normal grief and sadness, depression or major depressive disorder means more than a temporal experience with the painful emotions in life. It is a diagnosable psychiatric condition that can have long-lasting and far-reaching implications on the overall health and wellbeing of victims [14]. In American society, the prevalence rate of major depression among the adult population is estimated at 6.7% every year. This indicates that about 16.2 adults in the US experience at least one form of major depressive episode in a single year. In particular, according to Corr and Krupić (2017), an estimated 1.5 of American adults fall victim to persistent depressive disorder every year and associated implications on the overall wellbeing of an individual which might last for years.

Among the common dangers of depression on individuals include issues of persistent feelings of deep anger, sadness, and hopelessness in life. Other dangers include low energy, indecisiveness or slowed reasoning and even movement, loss of appetite, and the general loss of interest in things that were valued for bringing pleasure in the past. Psychotic depression is common in one in every thirteen adults across the globe and is leading cause for depression-related hospitalization of individuals – accounting for an estimated about 25% of all hospital admissions due to depression worldwide [14]. This magnitude of the global burden of depression health complications should be considered in light of the findings by Segal and Teasdale (2018) that the intervention-seeking behavior and prevalence for effective diagnosis and treatment among individuals with depression is far below 30% of the total population of affected individuals across the globe.

Furthermore, there is statistical evidence that depression is a leading cause of suicides, accounting for an estimated 800,000 suicide-related deaths across the globe every year [7]. Specifically, the risk of committing suicide among people with depression being dependent on both the severity and duration an individual has lived with the condition in the absence of effective clinical intervention. Given the common association with risk of prompting a persistent feeling of low energy, fatigue, and general lack of interest in things that were once interesting and self-fulfilling, depression is a leading cause for compromised levels of performance of responsibilities by an individual. As a result, depression can implicate the abilities and prospects of an individual in life, ranging from healthy social and intimate living to being responsible and productive.

V. Need for Future Research

Overall, it is clear from this review of literature on the key signs of hidden depression that effective and timely detection and treatment of such is a complex and usually challenging engagement by clinicians. This holds despite the critical value such has in safeguarding victims from the inherent potential of depression in prompting far-reaching and deliberating implications on their health and overall wellbeing. More notably, it is clear that the literature is characterized by a comprehensive information on the various key signs to be considered as indicators or risk factors for an underlying hidden depression problem by individuals, but not much if any research on the ‘how-to’ aspects of the practice of diagnosing and treating hidden depression in individuals. There are no recognized standards or set of industry best practices for facilitating effective diagnosis and treatment of hidden depression. Accordingly, the need for future research with a view of devising and verifying comprehensive guidelines and/or set of best practices for hidden depression diagnosis and treatment is recommended. This will serve in enhancing the proficiency of practitioners dealing with hidden depression by offering a well-informed diagnostic framework.

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