Anorexia Essay, Research Paper

Anorexia Nervosa

Bizarre, devastating, and baffling are three words that describe the anorexia nervosa disease. By definition, anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder in which a normal-weight person diets and becomes significantly underweight, yet, still feeling fat, continue to starve themselves. The term “anorexia nervosa” literally means nervous lose of appetite. People with the disorder are suppressing a strong desire to eat, because they are afraid of becoming fat. Anorexia is characterized by extreme starvation that leads to a disastrous loss of weight. Anorexia nervosa affects a large number of people today in the world, and does not discriminate against anybody. Its victims can be overweight, thin, young, old, or either sex although, its primary victims are young girls between the age of thirteen and nineteen. This disorder has become more and more common around the world today. It has populated many college campuses, and it is spreading. Recent studies show that almost 20% of college women suffer from anorexia or bulimia (bulimia is a eating disorder similar to anorexia), and the statistic increases to about 50% when so called “fad” bulimics and anorexics are included . This disease takes ordinary, often very beautiful people and drives them to starvation for no apparent reason whatsoever. They do not even seem to realize the extreme danger that comes with not eating a balanced diet. These young people lose so much weight that it makes them extremely fragile and sometimes causes death.

Death was very near to a girl named Patti, who suffered through anorexia for more than two years. She ate nothing but two cream-filled cookies a day for more than seven weeks. The first cookie was breakfast and lunch, and the second was for her main meal. When she decided that these two cookies had too much fat in them, she proceeded to scrape off the cream filling from both of the cookies to decrease her fat intake. But still that was too much fat, so she cut down to one cookie without the filling. She now gets fed intravenously in her arm to get nourishment in the hospital. She is being fed against her will to save her life. But of course not all cases of this disorder are quite as severe or dramatic as this, yet all cases should be helped, because they can take a bad turn for the worse very quickly.

As far as anyone knows, anorexia nervosa first became apparent in the seventeenth century in England, although no one can say for sure that it did not exist before that time.It was only about one hundred years ago that it was finally identified as an illness by modern science, by a professor from the University of Paris named Ernest Lasegue.

How do you identify the signs of this very dangerous disease? Some of the physical signs are intolerance of cold due to the absence of the body’s natural insulator, dizziness and fainting spells, dry skin, loss of muscle, and the most obvious, weight loss of at least fifteen percent .There are also behavioral changes in a person when he or she becomes anorexia. Some of these include restricted food intake, odd food rituals, an increased fear of food, hyperactivity, dressing in layers, and regular weighing. Some of the so called “odd food rituals” include things like counting bites and cutting food into small pieces. Despite what many people think, anorexics are not repelled or revolted by food. In fact, their minds are often dominated by thoughts of food. They often use such ridiculous tactics such as laxatives for weight loss, because they feel the overwhelming urge to be thinner.

Besides making the sufferers very thin, anorexia nervosa has many other harmful physical effects. Some of these include bowel tumors, hypoglycemia, throat infections, and low blood sugar. Women can also have a loss of menstruation and a loss of their sex drive. This list goes on and on with very terrible physical effects. The extreme patients even have receding gums, rotting teeth, loss of hair, and growth of downy hair on their face and back. This problem is serious enough to cause many major problems. Instead of becoming more beautiful by losing weight, they become so thin that you can count their ribs from a distance.

So, where does this crazy problem come from and what causes it? No one knows exactly, but most people believe it is psychologically based. People who have worked with anorexia nervosa patients say that it may stem from family and social pressures, or from other types of stress. They think that many of the anorexic people come from an environment where often times a very high value is placed on being thin or perfect. Sometimes it is triggered by a dramatic change in the person’s life. Frequently, people who have anorexia tend to be perfectionists. They have unusually high expectations, yet they often lack self esteem. Anorexics may feel that they have been isolated or friendless for some time. This leads to the fact that they sometimes feel that they are unacceptable people and then become socially isolated.

Treating the problem of anorexia has never been easy and it never will be, but there are various forms of treatment. Counseling, self-help groups, and psychotherapy often help with the anorexics problem. All of the help that the patient receives may do them good, but to become completely recovered the patient needs to realize themselves that they have a serious problem that needs to be taken care of. This step is called moving from denial to acceptance, and it is a vital part of recovery. Patients also have to realize the problem is curable, that is if they help themselves and try themselves to recover. Doctors alone cannot fix anorexia nervosa. A newer technique to treating anorexia is spending constant time with the patient. This gives them a feeling that they are cared about and that they are wanted. Treatment of anorexia can last anywhere from a couple of months to several years, depending on the severity of the disorder. Extreme cases regularly require hospitalization, and frequently have to use feeding tubes to feed the patients.

Many support groups and associations are helping the fight against anorexia and other eating disorders. The Anorexia Bulimia Nervosa Association (ABNA) is currently tremendous force in the fight against these disorders. ABNA is also accompanied by the National Association for Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD). These groups are paving the way to make these disorders easier to cure. They provide family therapy, psychotherapy, and hypnosis. Since there are so many philosophies about treating anorexia nervosa, exploring for a suitable therapist is suggested.

This terrible, bizarre disorder has became more popular in the past few decades, but there are newer and better ways of treating it. There are no general answers to why people become anorexic and why when on the brink of death they continue to starve themselves, but they need to know that there is help out there and they are wanted. With the continued investigation of anorexia, we will undoubtedly come up with better and better ways to treat it.

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