

Example Cause-Effect Essay

Chronic Stress

The stress response has always been part of our nature, and isn't necessarily bad. Our body responding to stressors is actually something that serves as a defense in times of danger. When you encounter a stressor, the brain signals the production of stress hormones such as adrenaline. In turn, these hormones stimulate the heart causing an increased heartbeat and a rush of blood to the parts of the body that need to activate to help us fight or flee (Pietrangelo & Watson, 2017). In a time of stress, the body prepares to defend, to think and react quickly. Such a reaction is necessary for survival when the stressor is something dangerous like a bear. However, people are experiencing more stress today from non-dangerous situations, and this stress for many people is prolonged, which is not healthy for our bodies. Why is this happening? According to the research of psychologists, many factors can cause chronic stress. Work and major life changes can be a cause of stress, and in turn, stress is able to exert a strong influence on a person's health and behavior.

Causes of Stress

In addition to changes in life, work often causes stress. There can be many reasons for this. First, work occupies an important place in people's lives, and when they really desire to succeed in their work, they worry about their performance or finishing projects successfully. For many Americans, "workplace ambitions can lead to feelings of self-induced pressure to perform" (Snyder, 2017, para. 3). This desire to excel can be seen as a good stressor, but nonetheless causes stress. Another reason that stress can come from work is that financial security is tied to a person's job. For families, this financial security often comes from the parents' employment, and any member of the family can experience stress due to work challenges because they are perceived as threats to the financial security of the family (Snyder, 2017).

Finally, stress comes from work for many people that feel their supervisor has unrealistic expectations or demands too much from them. When people feel unable to succeed at a task, stress is a very natural response. For these reasons, stress can be induced by work. Major life changes are one of the principal causes of stress. Major life changes include moving to a new home, getting married, pregnancy, or changing jobs. One of the most common life changes that causes major stress is the death of a loved one (Jones, 2016), and it is even more stressful if the loved one is a spouse (Alton, 2018). Especially in the case of a spouse dying, this type of major life event causes stress because there are many changes that occur suddenly. Losing a spouse affects family stability, emotional support, and often financial support (Alton, 2018). These events are also stressful because there are many legal and financial matters to arrange that can be very confusing. There are contractual obligations that must be met as they are set forth in the deceased person's will as well as claiming money from life insurance policies or trust funds. In addition to these matters being new and confusing, they also have serious consequences, so people feel added pressure to take care of these issues properly. It is little wonder that for people who experience major life events, stress is sure to follow.

Effects of Stress

Constant stress on the body has serious physical health effects. Some of the negative physical effects of chronic stress are due to the acute stress response, which hampers digestion, increases blood pressure, makes the heart beat faster, and floods your body with extra chemicals (Snyder, 2017). This makes the heart work much harder than it needs to, and it's not healthy to be in a constant, heightened state. That is why one of the major long-term health effects of stress is cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, heart attacks, and stroke (Marks, 2021). Other physical effects of chronic stress can be caused by the way people cope with stress. For example, unhealthy eating (combined with a lack of exercise) can lead to obesity. Chronic stress can significantly impact a person's physical health.

Mental health problems are also among the major negative effects of chronic stress. Depression and anxiety are very common in individuals who constantly report high levels of stress (Snyder, 2017). Many college students offer a sad example of how chronic stress can have these effects. One study found that the majority of college freshman reported an increase in stress from before their enrollment to after their first semester; they also reported increased levels of depression, anxiety, and isolation (Snyder, 2017). Many research studies have shown that this connection is more than simply a correlation (Alton, 2018). These mental health effects are clearly a result of the stress many people experience.

In addition to health, stress can negatively affect human behavior. The stress response also has a role to play here. When the body reacts to stress, blood is pulled from the prefrontal cortex and goes to the emotion centers of our brain (Snyder, 2017). This affects the logical processes of the human mind. Without enough blood flowing to the logical center of the brain, people often lack mental clarity or the ability to make decisions well. As a result, people who suffer from chronic stress may not seem to make the best decisions. They may rush into a decision or have a hard time prioritizing what needs to be done. Many times, they do not fully consider the implications of an action the same way that they would have if they weren't under so much stress.

In summary, stress has natural causes and can have lasting effects. Stress can come as a result of work or changes in life and it can lead to significant health problems and changes in behavior. Because stress is so common for people living in our fast-paced lives, we need to understand the realities of chronic stress before we take steps to try to change it. Remember that stress isn't bad; it's prolonged exposure to stressors without a break that really does the damage. Once the realities are understood, we should take steps to control our own stress levels so we can live a long, healthy, and happier life.

Exercises

Exercise 5.1: Annotate an Essay

Scan the essay below and annotate it according to the following directions.

Introduction

1. Draw a star next to the hook.
2. Draw a box around the background information.
3. Underline the thesis.
4. Label the Causes with **C** and the Effects with **E**.

Body Paragraphs

1. Underline the topic sentences in each body paragraph.
2. Draw an arrow to show the words that show how the topic sentences support the thesis statement. Draw the arrow from the word(s) in the topic sentence to the word(s) in the thesis statement.
3. Number the supporting details.
4. Circle the cohesive device words and phrases
5. Highlight all in-text citations.
6. Draw an arrow from each in-text citation to their matching full citation on the reference page.

Conclusion

1. Underline the restated thesis.
2. Circle the key words that are kept from the thesis statement or that are replaced with synonyms.
3. Box the background information, summary, or global extension.
4. Draw a star next to the concluding sentence.
5. Label the concluding sentence. What type is it?

Reference Page

1. Underline the name of the section "Reference".
2. Circle the author's last name(s)
3. Draw a star by the year of publication.
4. Draw a box around the title of the article, website, or book.
5. Label the source. What type is it? Is it an article from a journal or newspaper, website, or other?

Exercise 5.2: Analyze a Cause/Effect Essay

Use the questions below to analyze the example essay.

1. Does the introduction provide the general information a reader needs in order to understand the topic?
2. Does the introduction end with an effective thesis? Does it match the style of the essay?
3. Do each of the body paragraphs begin with an effective topic sentence?
4. Are the body paragraphs sequenced in a logical order?
5. Look at each body paragraph. Do the supporting sentences support the topic sentence?
6. Look at each body paragraph. Are the supporting sentences sequenced in a logical order?
7. Look at each body paragraph. Is there enough development? Are there more details or examples that would help the reader?
8. Look at each body paragraph. Does the concluding sentence close the paragraph logically?
9. Does the conclusion paragraph start by restating the thesis?
10. Does the conclusion paragraph have a suggestion, prediction, or opinion at the end?

References

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