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PSY441

08 Aug2021

Hypercompetitiveness and Neurosis

Karen Horney viewed hypercompetitiveness as a dysfunctional form of extreme competitiveness linked to neurosis and the expressed need to win at all costs. This is different from normal competitiveness because hypercompetitiveness is associated with fluctuating self-worth with low levels of self-esteem, decreased need for others, and interest in recognition from others. Other unhealthy behaviors that are linked to hypercompetitiveness are eating disorders, body dysmorphia and problematic relationships with family and friends. Hypercompetitiveness is linked to neurosis because neurosis is characterized by drastic and irrational behavior. Extreme stress and anxiety about how they are perceived is a factor that links both hyper competitiveness and neurosis. While being competitive is healthy when used as a self-motivator for personal growth.

Origins of Neurotic Behavior in Early Family Experiences

All individuals have needs, such as, physiological needs, safety needs, freedom needs, and satisfaction needs. From a childhood age, these needs are preset and grow in complexity as people grow into adulthood. When needs are lacking, it creates future problems with behavior and personality in adults. For example, if a child grew up in a lower class family who experienced food scarcity, they will grow up to experience anxiety while supporting themselves and their future families. Basic anxiety is a result of this lack of need fulfillment. Horney labels

this anxiety as a feeling of helplessness and isolation. This anxiety can vary in severity and develop in small or large amounts. The range of basic anxiety that develops in childhood shows a direct correlation to environments that are not nurturing or loving. However, a home that shelters a child too much could also result in negative results. Children who are too sheltered develop anxiety in performance and social abilities, which makes them less equipped to deal with the potentially hostile world. Even if a child has a perfect home life, they can develop underlying anxiety from witnessing others in their social environments go through stressful experiences. Such experiences could be witnessing a friend's parents lose their jobs or deaths in the family. In response to basic anxiety, Horney identifies that people will develop different strategies to cope with those anxieties.

Defense Mechanisms to Cope with Anxiety

Horney believed that there are a couple strategies that individuals enlist to cope with anxiety. One of the first coping or defense mechanisms is gaining affection from the group or person that is causing the threat. By having the threat approved, it can give the individual the feeling of self-protection. The second coping mechanism is to be submissive. By being submissive, the individual is giving in. By agreeing with the person that is causing anxiety, it saves the person from unneeded stress and anxiety. Essentially, choosing the battles that they want to be apart of and deciding if its worth the stress to fight back. The third coping mechanism is to withdraw. Withdrawing is the act of completely avoiding the person that is a source of anxiety. This minimizes the feelings of anxiety that are associated with dealing with that threatening person. The last defense mechanism identified by Horney is called attaining power. This is when the individual faces the threat and anxiety by fighting it headon. Once the anxiety is battled, the

anxiety could be put away. This prevents recurrent anxiety and relieves the person of future stress.