

Could anxiety/depression vulnerability be predicted?

Many different health conditions can cause a person to no longer be able to hold a job. This includes certain mental health conditions. Anxiety disorders and depression are among the mental health problems that can sometimes affect a person so deeply that the problems can have employment implications. An important thing to note is that an anxiety disorder or depression can sometimes be a qualifying disability when it comes to Social Security disability benefits.

Getting early treatment is among the things that may be able to help mitigate the negative impacts of depression and anxiety disorders. Unfortunately, sometimes, depression/anxiety sufferers aren't aware that they need treatment and do not seek out treatment until their symptoms are already quite severe.

Occasionally, a person whose mental health was previously perfectly fine ends up developing severe anxiety or depression after a very stressful event in their life. On the other hand, some people seem to be able to get through such stressful events without any mental health difficulties. Thus, it appears that there are some individuals who have a greater vulnerability to experiencing depression and anxiety following stressful incidents. This raises a question: could such vulnerability be predicted, thus giving those who have such vulnerability the chance to get preventive or early treatment when stressful events occur?

A recent study raises hope that being able to predict such vulnerability may be a possibility.

In the study, researchers recorded the amygdala activity of the brains of a group of healthy college students. For a

period of time following this, the researchers asked the students questions about their lives and their mental health. The researchers found that the students had a higher likelihood of exhibiting severe anxiety/depression symptoms following a stressful life event if they had showed higher levels of amygdala activity when their amygdala activity was initially recorded.

Some significant questions are raised by these results. Can a person's amygdala activity in fact be an advanced predictor of vulnerability to stressful-life-event-triggered depression/anxiety? If it is, could a test be developed to reliably predict such vulnerability? What applications could such a test have? Could such a test be able to help prevent/mitigate depression/anxiety problems in some individuals?

One wonders if future research will provide some answers to these questions.

Source: Huffington Post, "[Measuring This Brain Region Could Predict Depression And Anxiety Years Before It Hits](#)," Carolyn Gregoire, Feb. 4, 2015