

Management of Psychological Aspects Of Asthma

Asthma is a disease that was for a long time considered to be governed by the malfunctioning of the nervous system. For this reason in the old texts this disease is mentioned as *Asthma nervosa*. Only when it was completely established that this was not entirely true, this practice was discontinued. However it is still considered to be a disease that has some connection with the emotional state of the patient. Many patients do show marked changes in their psychological behaviour once they are diagnosed with asthma. Also some studies have established that people with certain temperaments and personality traits are more likely to catch asthma.

The studies by Dr. Bastiaans and Dr. Groen in 1955 and Dr. S. B. Singh in 1977 highlight the personality traits of the people who are most likely to develop asthma. These traits are classified as:

- Excessive egocentric behaviour.
- Marked tendency for dominating behaviour.
- Marked tendency for impatient and impulsive behaviour.
- Reduced capacity for adapting and adjusting to unfavourable circumstances in life.
- High emotional sensitivity.
- Excessive need for love and affection.
- Very stubborn attitude.
- Very strong reactions to rivalry and jealousy.
- Lack of communication with other people.
- Over anxious nature.
- Lack of self confidence.
- Deep rooted dependency.
- High incidence of behavioural problems.

It was also observed that the attitude of parents whose children develop asthma is also to be blamed to a certain degree. Generally it is seen that the attitude of the mother has greater influence than the attitude of the father. As opposed to the popular belief of rejection from the parents, it is seen that the kids who develop asthma have overprotective mothers who encourage very high dependence from the children. This is done in order to satisfy some hidden emotional desires of dependence and emotional connectivity on the part of the parent. The parents also showed development of superegos and excessive anxieties and transferred these traits to their children subconsciously through faulty parenting practices.

Since the above mentioned inclinations are more or less indicative of clear tendencies there are specific situations of aggravation arising from patients who have been diagnosed with asthma. There are indications that the disease aggravates with anxiety, tension and emotional disturbances the management of asthmatic condition on a psychological level becomes very necessary for the wellbeing of the patients. The levels of increase of anxiety can itself trigger off another attack. And till the time the patient remains anxious and tense all sorts of medication fail despite best of efforts. So it becomes very necessary for the patients to be given some kind of sedative for his own

betterment. But it is also important to take care and administer all the drugs along with anti-asthmatic drugs under constant monitoring by competent doctors.

It is extremely important for the asthma patient to remain calm under all situations and conditions, even during an attack. The body and the mind should both be kept completely relaxed. It is very necessary for the patient to not panic. For this he should have a very objective view of his situation. It is extremely important to educate oneself in order to achieve a state of relaxed mind and body. For this purpose it is important to read some self-help material as well as have free communication with one's doctors to have a complete picture of the situation. It is also important to know that it is extremely rare for people to die as a result of an attack. Most attacks can be very well managed if a person is aware of his situation and is well versed with knowledge about tackling an emergency. The adage "knowledge is power" is perhaps most adequately applicable to an asthmatic person's situation.

It is important to make certain changes in one's lifestyle in order to avoid an emergency situation.

- Having some discipline in one's life is extremely necessary.
- It is important to accommodate exercise, morning walks, simplicity in diets, eating well balanced diet, regularising the working and sleeping times.
- Following disciplined habits at workplace so as to avoid piling up of work as this may lead to undue tensions.
- To develop a habit of complete relaxation and avoidance of anger. Most people benefit tremendously by the practice of yoga and meditation.
- The habit of unnecessarily worrying over trivial matters is known to cause aggravation so it should be stopped immediately.
- Prayer is a form of relaxation and most people feel tension free when they pray.
- Complete acceptance of one's situation is very important. Denial leads to avoidance and finally to anxiety. The focus should not be on "Why me?" but the person must count his blessings and be thankful for the life he has.
- It is extremely important to be in a position to pacify and control an asthmatic child. For this it is important that the nursing adult is completely in control of his emotions and not feel sorry or disturbed. Children sense the anxiety levels of the adults very well and they should not feel that their condition is being bothersome to the adult.

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