

Developmental and psychological factors

Connie Stapleton
Mind/Body Health Services, USA

The factors leading to obesity are numerous and intertwined. Genetics, environment, culture, medical illness, metabolism, and psychological factors all contribute to the growing obesity epidemic. Psychological factors are often left out of the discussion, particularly in terms of treating obesity. Yet psychological factors related to obesity can negatively affect a person's self-esteem and self-efficacy, making sustained weight loss difficult.

Research presents information about familial and environmental factors related to psychological issues relative to obesity:

Negative judgments about obesity begin at an early age; children at the age of 6 years describe an obese child as "lazy, stupid, ugly, cheats and liars." All labels impaired their quality of life. Even obese patients had negative attitudes toward other obese. Lykouras, Lefteris (2008). Gerbrand, C., van Hout, M., & van Oudheusden, I. (2004); Vaidya, V. (2006).

Concerning family relationships, morbidly obese patients more frequently had a history of parental loss, parental alcoholism, marital & family dysfunction in their own lives, and dissatisfying sexual relationships. Felitti V.J. (1993).

The prevalence of trauma history among obese patients is important to note; many obese persons have a history of both sexual and non-sexual abuse. Glinski J, Wetzler S, Goodman E. (2001); Felitti V.J. (1993).

High self-esteem during childhood has been linked to satisfaction and happiness in later life. Crandall (1973).

Low self-esteem has been linked to depression, anxiety, and maladjustment both in school and in social relations. Damon (1983).

Addressing psychological issues related to obesity may improve long term outcomes for sustained weight loss.

Biography

Connie Stapleton, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist whose work in the field of addiction and recovery for the past 20 years has resulted in her authoring three books on recovery from obesity. She actively participates with the Obesity Action Coalition, the Weight Loss Surgery Foundation of America, and ObesityHelp. Dr. Stapleton is a national and international speaker: American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgeons, the World Congress for the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders, at the Lifestyles Intervention Conference, at the Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health conference and at ObesityHelp conferences nationwide.

cstapletonphd@gmail.com