Could Therapy Help With Migraine Management?

by ERIC PATTERSON

How Therapy for Migraines Can Help

Your road with migraines has been a long one. You have seen the specialists. You have tried the medications. You have done the research online for supposed “miracle fixes” only to be let down and disappointed by the results. Should you keep repeating the same patterns hoping for different results? Should you give up altogether and resign yourself to a life with migraines that seemingly intensify as time goes on?

Your answer to both questions is “no”. In your situation, there might not be anything wrong with the treatments you are prescribed, or the professionals who are prescribing them. The problem could be a missing piece to your treatment plan puzzle: mental health treatment.

Mental health therapy is more effective and durable than you might think. Therapy and counseling are extremely useful for those with primary mental health issues like depression, anxiety and bipolar, but it is appropriate in many other situations as well:

- People dealing with a new or chronic medical issue.
- People struggling with issues in their life that cannot be resolved.
- People who have mental health issues like depression and anxiety, that have been triggered by physical health issues.
- People wanting to change bad habits into good ones.
- People interested in finding ways to be happier, have better relationships and improve their overall well-being.

Seeking mental health treatment does not mean that suddenly you are "crazy", “insane” or a danger to anyone. It only means that you are looking to improve the quality of your life. If you are still not convinced, think about the people around you. Think about how improving your life can make their lives better; they likely want to help and support you but they may not know what to do for someone with a migraine. When you start mental health counseling, everyone wins.

What Can Therapy Do?

Depending on your situation, the impact of migraines and other factors in your life, mental health treatment can accomplish a lot. Consider these potential benefits of treatment on your mental health and your physical health.

Gain Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is another way of saying helpful information related to your mental health, and there is no better source than a therapist. A therapist can help you to understand the common association between migraines and the mental health concerns triggered by the diagnosis.

A therapist can also inform you about the strong connection between bipolar disorder and migraines to assess if the relationship is something you are experiencing. Information, even if it seems negative or scary at the time, is always a good thing.

Move Towards Acceptance

Having migraines is a loss. It is a loss of your carefree youth, your freedom and your health. Some people with migraines are forced to quit their job or change their lifestyle because of their condition, which signify more losses. All losses need to be grieved and mourned. If these tasks are not accomplished, the loss will impact your life in more negative ways.

Therapists are experts at moving people through the loss process from shock and denial all the way to acceptance and finding new directions. Finding acceptance does not mean that you have to like your condition, it just means that you understand the role it will play in your life.

Next page: four more benefits of therapy for migraine sufferers.

Track Symptoms to Establish Patterns

Therapists, especially those trained in cognitive behavioral therapy, are interested in finding patterns and connections between thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Perhaps you have done some journaling to monitor connections between your migraines and diet, sleep and exercise, but do you feel like you have done all you could? Do you feel like you have dug deeply enough to find the truth?

Therapists can help to explore your patterns more thoroughly with the potential to find connections that you didn't know existed. Knowing your patterns might help you reduce the frequency or intensity of your next migraine.

Learn New Coping Skills

When times are bad, you need coping skills. Coping skills are behaviors or thought processes that make your situation less stressful and more bearable. Migraines have a way of crippling your creativity as you find yourself unable to arrive at new ways to alleviate your pain. Also, they can make you desperate enough to engage in negative coping skills like drugs and alcohol for relief. Because of this, your anxiety increases and your hope decreases with each passing occurrence.

Your therapist can provide a new perspective into ideas, tools and interventions you have never attempted before. They can also help by training you in tools like deep breathing exercises that you have been doing incorrectly until now.

Revise Your Self-Talk

When you have migraines, your self-talk is always a factor. Negative self-talk will convince you that the next migraine will be the worst one ever. It will ruin your life and there is nothing you can do to stop it. These thoughts will pique your anxiety and depression as optimism crashes.

Your therapist will help you to identify your undesirable self-talk, arrive at a more positive alternative and maintain consistency in the process. Positive self-talk can make you think that each migraine is another battle, one that you are ready to fight, and one that you know you can survive. This breeds self-control, power and hope for the future. Which way would you rather feel?

Find Appreciation in the Good Days

People with frequent migraines may not be capitalizing on their days with low or no symptoms as well as they could. For some, having a symptom-free day means a good opportunity to sit on the couch binging on the shows

their migraines forced them to miss. Others will avoid leaving the safety of their home because they fear the next migraine is lurking around the corner. Either option is a poor one, and a mental health therapist can help you see this.

It is time for you to strike while symptoms are low. Get out of the house. Spend times with friends. Do something physical or thrilling. Push past the fear or self-imposed restrictions to find true enjoyment and happiness in the world around you.

Conclusion

What do all of the benefits of therapy for migraines have in common? They all reduce stress. Less stress usually means fewer migraines. Fewer migraines means a happier, healthier you that can let your life go on without migraines getting in the way. Start your mental health therapy and end your migraines.