Kathalina Corredor

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Essay M3: Eating Habits

An individual’s eating habits can be determined by biological mechanisms and learning mechanisms. Both also correspond to body weight. Biological mechanisms in eating habits include: chemistry between the body and the brain, genetics, and the structure of the brain. Neurotransmitters like serotonin suppress hunger; the relationship serotonin has with the body to establish eating habits is that it is released when an individual is eating carbohydrates. High levels of serotonin may help satisfy cravings and control appetite. Another body and brain chemical relationship is dopamine. Dopamine leads to the idea of hunger vs satisfaction because dopamine is the “reward” chemical and may highly influence an individual’s eating habits by making the individual want to keep eating until they are *satisfied* rather than until they are no longer *hungry*. The hormone cortisol reduces the production of serotonin. When in stress, cortisol is released as the primary coordinator. Cortisol is known to place fat around the abdomen area. An eating habit of having an irresistible urge to eat may be because an elevated level of ghrelin.

Skipping meals can result in actually the body wanting to eat more frequently and in large quantities. Cravings start when blood sugar levels drop; production of ghrelin increases and levels of neuropeptide Y are lowered, which is what increases cravings for carbohydrates. Few hours of sleep is also linked to the risk of becoming overweight. Levels of ghrelin are elevated and levels of leptin are lowered, a blood protein that suppresses appetite.

Genetics play a large role in body weight and eating habit relationships. An individual may have healthy eating habits and exercise regularly but because of genetics they it is still possible for them to be overweight or underweight. Each individual’s body has a weight that is custom to that individual may it be because of genetics. Attempting to lose or gain weight may be difficult because of this bodily inflexibility and cause intense instability if eating patterns are not made into a consistent life style change.

Eating patterns evolve during the first years of life. An individual’s food preferences and eating behaviors may be the result of early modeling. Children take on the habits of the environment in which they were raised and serve as the foundation for their future eating behaviors. Eating habits also may vary because of cultural differences. A cultural directed towards more fatty foods may afflict an individual’s body weight and habits as also a culture directed that prohibits certain foods or have irregular or small amounts towards feeding practices.

The combination of both biological and learning mechanisms may have implications of the practice of weight management. Culture may collide with biological chemical reactions, leading to the possibility of being overweight or underweight. If an individual’s culture involves high levels of rich protein foods it is more likely for them to have a high and even unhealthier weight than someone who does not live in such culture eating customs. Same could be said with someone with a culture that may not provide sufficient nutrients or necessary body and brain chemicals to benefit the individuals health.