Article Summary

The Bear Necessities of Stress

In this article Mark Wetherell (2022) studies the body's reaction to both long-term and short-term stress. He compares the stresses we face today compared to the stress that would have been faced by our ancestors such as being attacked by a bear. While modern day people don't face wild animals, stress still activates the same reaction from the body as it did then. Whether it be a dangerous event or a hard day at work.

When the body experiences stress, the reaction is known as 'fight or flight'. This is caused by the brain, specifically the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The important hormone involved is cortisol, this is produced to help the body deal with stress. It does this by releasing glucose, which in turn keeps inflammation to a minimum and keeps the blood pressure under control. The body has natural amounts of cortisol in the body but stress drastically increases its production.

Some stress can be helpful, short-term stress enables the body to have the ability to react fast and effectively. For instance, if you are in danger cortisol will enable you to run away or stay and fight. However, exposure to stress over a long period of time will cause your body to keep cortisol high and has been known to do damage to the body and the brain.

Wetherall (2022) goes on to explain that long-term stress exposure keeps cortisol too high for to long, which has a whole host of effects on the body. Health issues linked to chronic stress are, heart disease, depression, anxiety, poor memory, and weight gain. He also suggests that the immune system is also affected causing it to be more difficult to fight off illness.

One of Wetherall's key points is that life today is full of stressors such as pressures at work, issues at home and deadlines. Which means that modern bodies are in a constant state of high survival, that's not what the body was designed to cope with. The stress response is supposed to protect from short-term threats, not long-term mental stress.

Wetherall (2022) posits that finding ways to relax the body and mind will help reduce stress becoming harmful. He suggests meditation and exercise can help reduce cortisol to normal levels.

The Bear Necessities of Stress explains how stress can be helpful when exposed to short bursts but can be harmful if cortisol levels remain high for a prolonged period of time. Learning to manage stress and manage it effectively is important to protect the mind but also the body.

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Essay Plan

Title - Discuss how our understanding of melancholia and approaches to treatment have changed over time. **(Due date 9/12/2025)**

Introduction – This essay will discuss melancholia and its long complex history. It will highlight the changing ideas about body, mind and the nature in which people suffered.

- Introduce treatment evolution
- Influences of culture/religion
- Technology advances – ancient theories to modern psychology/psychiatry.

Main body

Paragraph One –

Four humors: black and yellow bile, blood, phloem & blood

Hippocrates attributed melancholia to excess black bile

Galen theory of temperaments.

Telles-Correia and Marques (2015) posits that Galen also highlighted behavioural symptoms that accompany the symptoms of sadness and withdrawal, describing people as snail like, avoiding others to avoid having their shell crushed. (reference)

Symptoms: sadness, fear, and withdrawal.

Treatment: Diet, exercise and bloodletting (withdrawing blood to cure/prevent illness)

Paragraph two –

Religious/Spiritual

Spiritual punishment or demonic possession for moral failings as apposed to medical issue.

Treatments:

- Prayer
- Confession
- Exorcism

Paragraph Three –

Early psychiatry, melancholia seen more as a mental disorder

Asylums seen as a more ‘moral’ treatment.

Began to distinguish between mental disorders like mania and schizophrenia.

Paragraph Four –

Psychoanalysis & medicine (biological)

Freud’s theory: Melancholia – internalised loss/ unresolved grief.

Freud’s focus: Talk therapy & unconscious processes

Late 20th century – Medication : Antidepressants

‘Melancholia’ replaced by ‘major depressive disorder’ in diagnosis.

ECT

Scull (2022) posits that most psychoanalysts advised their patiants against the use of ECT. However once patients were admitted to asylums there was no one

to challenge the recommendation of psychiatrists and the techniques they insisted on using.

Paragraph Five –

Biopsychological: integration of biological, psychological & social factors together. Highlight the links between major depressive disorder and trauma etc.

New treatments: medications (SSRIs, ketamine, mood stabalisers) Talking therapies

The use of modern psychopharmacology can be traced back to the 1950s. These discoveries altered psychiatric treatment and the lives of countless people who benefited from the dramatic changes to the field. The discovery of these medications is ranked as one of the greatest in medicine. (Perina, 2019).

(CBT, psychodynamic etc) Holistic approaches mindfulness & lifestyle changes.

Conclusion –

From a punishment from the gods to complex psychological understanding, melancholia has been shaped by cultural & scientific development.

Terminology has changed, but the ability to understand the psychological suffering continues to grow.

Scull (2022) argues that madness is stubborn and has been for millennia, it has not been able to be changed or manipulated. Yet madness is a puzzle we must solve, despite the magnitude of problems that have been encountered attempting to do so.

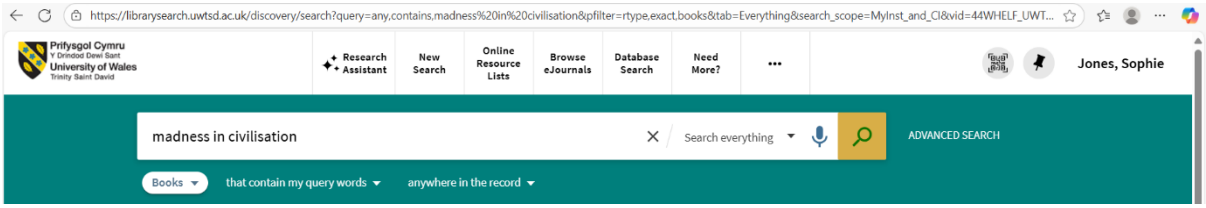
Further Research Required –

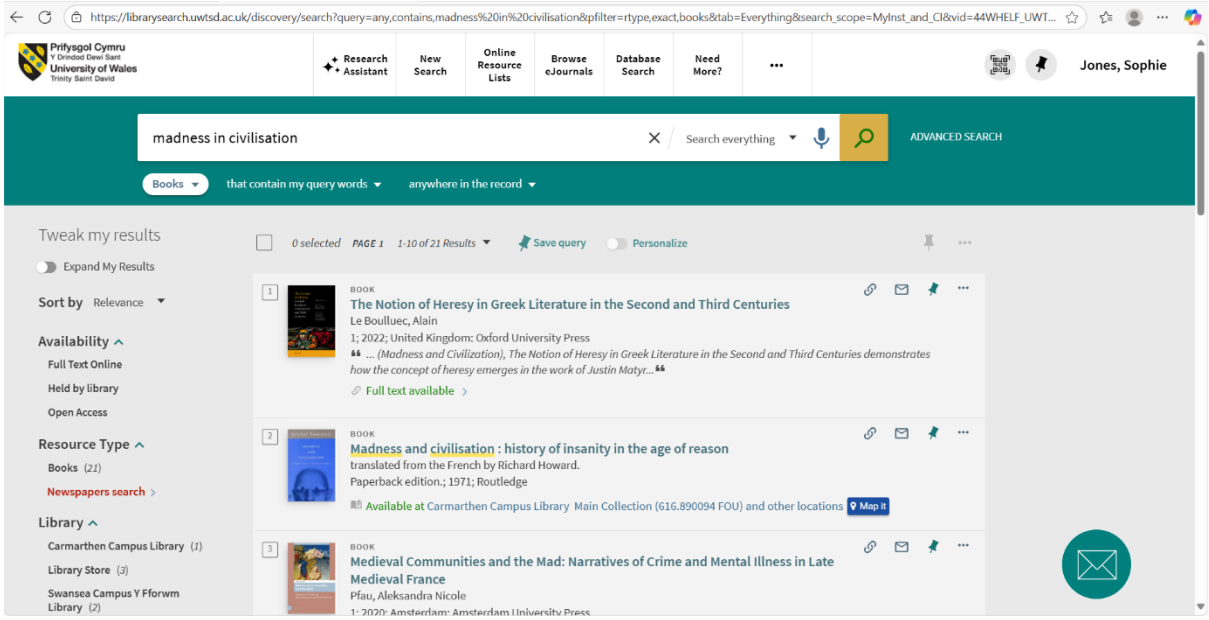
Further information on religious views of madness.

Find references to add. (Pick up reserved books in library)

Add to conclusion for a more rounded closing.

Library Search –





While looking for resources of research I firstly check how current the information is by checking the publication date, I then confirm that the content is relevant to the topic and question that is being asked. Following this I would then look at who the publisher and author is and confirm that they are or are not qualifies and or recognised in the field. I would then check that any information used in an assignment was correct and supported by evidence and/or references. Finally I would investigate why the information was created and look for any hidden bias or hidden agendas.

References –

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