

CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

July 2018 | Volume 1, Issue 5



IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON CHILDHOOD

Childhood trauma is a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of normal childhood experience and involves a sense of fear, terror and helplessness.

Life experiences matter. Experiences may be good, bad and everything in between. Things that happen and things that don't happen affect us.

Any time a child does not feel safe and protected, the event could be seen as trauma.

Children can experience trauma as early as infancy. Children ages 0-5 are the most vulnerable to the effects of trauma since their brains are still in the early formative years.

COMMON CAUSES OF TRAUMA

Accidents, physical trauma, abuse and neglect and exposure to domestic or community violence are all causes of traumatic stresses for young children.

Any situation that makes a child feel unsafe can lead to trauma. Infants and toddlers need lots of comforting touch and adult attention so that they feel safe in the world around them.

- ` Serious injury or illness
- ` Accidents
- ` Death or separation from loved one
- ` Natural disasters
- ` Abuse and Neglect (Physical, emotional, sexual)
- ` Mental Illness and Substance Abuse
- ` Domestic Violence
- ` Community violence

Childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime!

"Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today."

Dr. Robert Block, former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics



It should not hurt to be a child.

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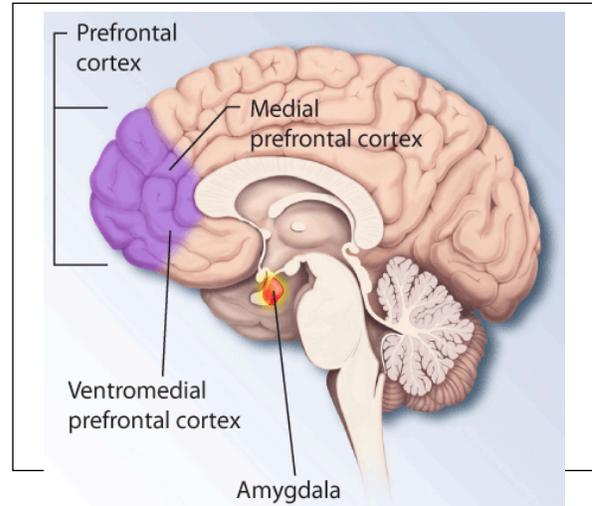
LONG TERM EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

After going through a traumatic event, many children have a hard time dealing with and forgetting what has happened. Sometimes, they have nightmares, or they can't stop thinking about it. Children become jumpy or tense, they feel afraid that the bad thing will happen again.

Children sometimes hurt on the inside, where no one can see. This can be really bad when things began to pile up. Children might begin to feel like there is no one around to help or fix things. Children will feel sad, mad or blame themselves for what's going wrong.

Children will feel like no one cares about them and that they deserve all the bad things that are happening to them.

They enter adulthood feeling hopeless.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Traumatized children need to feel they are physically and emotionally safe. Create an environment of safety. Give children access to adults they can trust and that they see regularly that they can talk to and gain comfort from. Provide positive adult support. Teach children how to calm themselves. Work with the child to help recognize and describe their feelings. Then, give the child alternative ways to deal with the feelings when they happen.

Traumatized children need to feel they are back in control of their lives and that they can cope and overcome bad events. Give the child praise for their strengths and positive behaviors.

TO STUDY PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA IS TO COME FACE TO FACE BOTH THE HUMAN VULNERABILITY IN THE NATURAL WORLD AND WITH THE CAPACITY FOR EVIL IN HUMAN NATURE
 - JUDITH HERMAN, M.D.
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