

## Long Term Impact of Childhood Trauma on Adulthood Experiences

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### Abstract

This article explains how traumatic experiences in childhood may lead to physical and mental health issues later in life. Persistent changes in neurobiological and mental abilities have been related to early life trauma, especially complex trauma. These alterations to structure in the brain lead to improvements in cognitive and motor performance. There is scientific evidence connecting childhood trauma to a host of health issues that may persist into adulthood. This article explores the neurophysiological and psychological consequences of trauma. We discuss the long-term consequences of trauma exposure, such as using drugs, confinement, and in tandem mental health conditions, as well as the significance of recognising protective variables, analysing resilience, and discovering evidence-based treatment methods that can aid with signs and symptoms for trauma survivors.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood trauma, consequence of trauma

### Introduction

Adults who overcame traumatic experiences as children sometimes struggle with memory loss, low self-esteem, and problems forming and maintaining relationships. Addiction, mental disease, or persistent physical sickness are just some of the ways in which a person's health may be negatively impacted by traumatic experiences they had as a child. Every adult has, for better or worse, made it through their youth. However, trauma may be caused by certain situations. Adults sometimes have flashbacks to traumatic experiences from their childhoods due to abuse, neglect, or maltreatment. Others may develop mental diseases like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of these traumatic experiences. Many individuals, depending on the duration and severity of the trauma, are able to recover and go on to have successful and satisfying lives. This article will discuss the consequences of childhood traumas on adults and provide advice on how to cope with these issues and go on to have a fulfilling life as an adult. Adults who overcame traumatic experiences as children sometimes struggle with memory loss, low self-esteem, and problems forming and maintaining relationships. Substance abuse, mental disease, and persistent physical ailments are among ways in which traumatic experiences in childhood might appear in adulthood.

The way adults act is only one way that people who experienced trauma as children tend to think differently. Those who suffered abuse or neglect as children are more likely to act submissively and passively as adults. Adults who experienced trauma as children may have difficulty expressing themselves emotionally and may find it difficult to

assert themselves physically. While being passive may be seen as pleasant or team-oriented by some, it is often the result of severe effects from childhood trauma. Furthermore, parasitic people who take advantage of others are drawn to those who are subservient.

Trauma in childhood is exactly what it sounds like. Traumatic childhood experiences are those that leave a lasting psychological scar. Various people's experiences of Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) seem like various things. Childhood trauma might cause permanent memory loss in certain individuals. There are four broad types of ACEs.

**The four main categories of ACEs are:**

- a) Abuse may take many forms, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence.
- b) Both physical and mental mistreatment fall under the umbrella term "neglect."
- c) Obstacles at Home Many children have difficulties at home. The items in this class are:
  - 1) Failure to provide for a child as a result of parental absence
  - 2) Extreme poverty or homelessness
  - 3) Experiencing or seeing any kind of abuse
  - 4) Problems with substance abuse or mental health in the household
  - 5) Death or serious disease in the family
  - 6) The loss of a beloved pet or family member

4. Incidents in the Community: Natural catastrophes, terrorist activities, community violence, school violence, and social rejection all fall under this category.

Even for a fully grown adult, it might be difficult to make sense of these events. For a young person, they are exponentially more difficult to handle. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have been linked to increased risks of drug abuse, physical illness, and mental health problems in adulthood.

**Childhood Trauma**

Experiencing trauma as a youngster doesn't always have lasting effects. There are several factors that might affect how traumatic an experience is for you and how well you are able to recover from it.

**Five Major Influences in Childhood Trauma:**

- 1) Extremity is relative, but it does matter. Were you physically wounded severely? Were you in imminent peril? I'm sorry to hear about your loss. The after-effects of trauma might differ from one person to another and from one stage of development to the next.
- 2) Even those who are not directly related to us might be affected by trauma. Close relationships tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of trauma. The extent to which a traumatic event affects you depends on whether you were directly involved as a victim, a witness, or a learner.
- 3) Attunement and trust may be fostered by a sense of being understood by one's parents or carers. Feeling welcomed and loved by others and more equipped to handle traumatic situations are all benefits of attunement.
- 4) Trauma comes in numerous forms, and people encounter them all throughout their lives. Let's say you'd experienced trauma in the past, perhaps at home or elsewhere. If that's the case, you could feel the effects of the trauma much more strongly.
- 5) There are innumerable ramifications of the groups and social identities we cultivate. Everyone around you,

regardless of their colour, nationality, culture, or socioeconomic standing, reacts to tragedy in their own unique way. A child's experience of childhood trauma may be mitigated when they are surrounded by caring adults.

Neurochemical and biological responses occur in the brain and body during the time of trauma and soon thereafter. The body makes an effort to relax and deal with the stress. Negative events, however, might have far-reaching consequences. When a person has through a traumatic experience, their mind and body go through a frenzy of activity. The immediate surge of stress hormones that activates your body's "fight or flight" response may wreak havoc on your health long after the immediate threat has passed.

People who experience childhood trauma are at a higher risk of developing:

1. Coronary illness
2. Type 2 diabetes
3. The cancer
4. Being overweight
5. An addiction

Some of the worst after-effects of childhood trauma are the psychological and emotional damage that it may do. The trauma may affect the individual for a long time if they are unable to deal with the strain of the event. Childhood trauma may cause a range of emotional issues, including: Anger and aggression

1. Anxiety
2. A failure to trust
3. Self-Esteem Problems
4. Modifications to Appetite
5. The emergence of new concerns
6. a heightened preoccupation with issues of life and death
7. Disinterest in previously enjoyable activity
8. Negative actions against oneself
9. Depression and thoughts of suicide

The state of a person's mind and body may have a negative impact on both his or her personal life and professional prospects. The effects of childhood trauma on an adult's emotional stability may be seen in intimate relationships.

1. Unsatisfactory work output
2. Difficulties in social and romantic relationships
3. Problems in keeping to regular schedules or completing basic jobs
4. Low Academic Achievement

### **Impact of Childhood Trauma on Personal Relationships**

Adult relationships are another common victim of childhood trauma, along with one's sense of self. According to an article published in Psychology Today, victims of childhood trauma may seek out unhealthy relationships as adults. Untreated and unresolved childhood trauma may have lasting effects on an adult's views and relationships. Adults

who experienced traumatic events as children may come to believe they are not worthy of happy, healthy relationships as a result. They may also lack motivation and desire since they believe they are not deserving of success. In other words, adult survivors of childhood trauma may experience isolation, an inability to love, and a lack of purpose in life. Adults may get help overcoming the effects of childhood trauma via therapy or counselling.

Psychological Science found that persons who had traumatic events as children were much more likely to suffer from depression as adults. The way depressed people see themselves, other people, and the environment around them is altered. Emotional and bodily distress may both be brought on by depression.

Studies in academics conclude that:

- 1) More symptoms of pain and illnesses were reported by those who said they had been mistreated or neglected as children than by those who said they had not;
- 2) More chronic pain patients than healthy controls reported childhood maltreatment or neglect;
- 3) Patients with persistent discomfort reported higher rates of childhood abuse and neglect compared to community-identified patients with chronic pain; and
- 4) Community members who reported experiencing pain are more likely to disclose allegations of abuse or neglect than those who did not.

Evidence from studies shows that those who report suffering abuse or neglect as children are more likely to suffer from chronic pain as adults compared to those who do not.

Prospective correlations between childhood trauma & adult outcomes were investigated in one of the research. There are a few standout results. Exposure to trauma in childhood is widespread, occurring at about the same frequency across sexes and racial/ethnic groups. Childhood mental disorders and other forms of family distress are linked to such experiences. Results showed an increased risk for adult mental status, as well as heightened risk for critical areas of functioning (health, hazardous and/or criminal behaviour, financial/educational functioning, and social functioning), suggesting that the effects of childhood trauma are long-lasting and far-reaching.

This increased risk persisted when accounting for:

1. Mental health issues in kids
2. Problems beyond the family and personal difficulties
3. Trauma experiences as an adult.

A substantial body of research (most notably the pioneering adverse childhood experiences [ACEs] studies) has shown a connection between exposure to adversity at a young age, particularly traumatic events, and later results. One of the key ideas of developmental psychopathology is that traumatic experiences in childhood may have lasting consequences for a person's mental and physical health. Despite its widespread acceptance, this idea has often been supported by research that evaluate exposures in hindsight, without taking into consideration other characteristics that often co-occur alongside trauma exposure in infancy. Both recollection bias and confounding are possible in such systems.

Studies have been conducted that build on this foundational work by adding:

- 1) Multi-source, prospective evaluation of adversity in childhood
- 2) Assessment of Multiple Risk Factors Linked to Childhood Trauma
- 3) Evaluations of adult functioning at regular intervals from age 19 to age 30
- 4) Evaluation of many mental and functional outcomes in adulthood

5) Evaluation of grownup trauma with great care.

Together, these elements strengthen the present knowledge of childhood trauma and help remedy the shortcomings of earlier efforts. In the first place, it is found that youth trauma has far-reaching effects on adult functioning, ranging from psychiatric status to financial and educational functioning, and that these cannot be merely attributed to already present psychiatric danger or other adversities and challenges in the child's developmental context (such as depression). Recent research has proven widespread consequences of trauma, childhood adversity, and adult outcomes, expanding on the restricted scope of earlier research. Second, the results lend credence to measuring trauma in its whole as opposed to zeroing in on a particular kind of trauma (such as sexual trauma).

While it's possible that different types of trauma have different effects on children, we find the clearest and most prevalent patterns of connection when we look at children's trauma histories as a whole. This fits with what we know about how trauma builds up, according to the accumulation model. Third, it is unclear which subgroups of kids are at highest risk given such exposure, even if children from low-income homes or violent areas are more likely to experience trauma. A cohesive narrative of risk and susceptibility has not been possible despite efforts to identify modifiers of risk (such as sex, ethnicity, or age).

Instead of being used to support the creation of precise medical models to impact or predict specific response to therapy, these insights are more suited to guiding broad-based public policy efforts to reduce trauma exposure and ameliorate consequences of exposure. There has to be discussion and practise of disseminating and implementing evidence-based therapies for children with diverse traumatic stress responses and exposures.

### Overcoming Childhood Trauma

**(i) Engage In Self-Care:** The importance of self-care in surviving childhood trauma as a grown-up is often underestimated. According to Jordan Grey Consulting, people who experienced traumatic events as children may grow up to unconsciously feel unworthy of engaging in beneficial behaviours. This makes them more prone to disregard their health and engage in other unhealthy behaviours. Exercise, restful sleep, and nutritious eating are just a few examples of the healthy habits that may help you recover from trauma and build a positive sense of who you are. The quality of one's connections with one's friends, lovers, and others is an essential aspect of self-care. Our surroundings have an effect on our thoughts, actions, and values.

**(ii) Pursue Hobbies and Extracurricular Interests:** Gratitude is a powerful tool for overcoming the effects of painful past experiences. Adults may grow and develop as people and develop a feeling of identity and purpose by engaging in hobbies and other extracurricular activities. Those who have overcome childhood trauma should know that it is possible to get beyond their experiences. Each individual determines his or her own destiny and standard of living.

**(iii) Alternative Solutions:**

**a. Stay Focused On Future:** Future events are not predetermined by the past. When we're young, we're usually bound by the restrictions imposed on us by our parents and other adults in positions of power. We may feel helpless and as if we have no say in the course our lives go after experiencing trauma. As an adult, though, you may forge your own way, guided only by your own values, principles, and aspirations.

**b. Don't Try To Rationalize the Trauma:** Making meaning of the trauma experienced as a youngster is a basic human response. However, there is no justification for abusing a kid, thus all attempts to do so are futile. We must instead concentrate on becoming well.

**c. Learn From Past:** One's ability to recognise poisonous and abusive behaviour as an adult allows one to learn from one's mistakes and avoid repeating them with one's own children. One need not stick to the routines of one's parents or guardians. Despite how counterintuitive it may seem, people who survived traumatic experiences as children may put those lessons to good use by resolving to never subject anybody else to what they went through.

(iv) **Seek Professional Help and Guidance:** In many cases, counselors and therapists can serve as the greatest allies for adults navigating childhood trauma. This is largely because trained mental health professionals are equipped to help people.

(v) **Embrace your emotions :** Yes, it's certainly easier said than done, but learning to accept the feelings you're experiencing is essential when coping with unresolved trauma. If you stuff your emotions down, they may boil over and cause you more stress in the long term. Don't be too hard on yourself if you find yourself experiencing negative emotions like anger, guilt, or astonishment. Recovering from a traumatic experience is a process that won't be completed overnight.

(vi) **Keep In Touch With Family and Friends:** Although isolation is typical after a terrible event, the support of loved ones may help you recover. Multiple studies have demonstrated that having social support might lessen the stress hormone cortisol in times of stress or anxiety. Do not be shy about telling your loved ones about your traumatic experience if you feel ready to do so. But even if you don't discuss it with your friends, just being around them might help. Getting together with the people who mean the most to you might help you feel more like yourself.

(vii) **Efforts Should Be Made To Reduce Stress :** When you're still attempting to heal after a traumatic experience, it's much more challenging to deal with stress. Keep your stress levels low as your body heals. A healthy approach to stress management is recommended. Traumatic stress may be treated by trained professionals. If you've experienced trauma and don't know how to cope, or if your symptoms haven't lessened with time, you could benefit from seeing a specialist. Several therapies have been shown to be effective in helping people recover from trauma. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is very successful in treating traumatic stress because it focuses on identifying and altering problematic thought patterns. Because of this, CBT has become one of the most popular options for treating PTSD. Some research suggests that CBT may potentially prevent the onset of PTSD. Other effective treatments include trauma therapy techniques like stress inoculation training and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR).

(viii) **Do Not Lose Sight Of Whats' Important:** When coping with the fallout from a catastrophe, it's important to allocate your resources wisely. Just making it through the day is a victory in and of itself, so do all you can to lighten your load. Ordering takeaway instead of cooking meals is a great way to save money. To preserve your emotional and physical reserves, you may save time and effort by doing less activities like shopping and cooking, putting off obligations you don't really have to keep, and concentrating on what really matters.

(ix) **Seek Out External Support :** Others may offer assistance if you let them know about your trauma; now is the time to accept their offers. Let those closest to you ease your burden by lending a hand or just listening to you vent. When you're ready and they have a need, you may return the favour.

(x) **Reduce Your Stress Response :** When you're going through a crisis or seeing a loved one go through a crisis, you could feel constantly on edge. Even while it's not easy to feel "relaxed" during or after a crisis, there are things you can do to reduce your stress, reset your stress response, and strengthen your resilience. Methods including gradual muscular relaxation, yoga, meditation, and guided visualisation may help.

(xi) **Feeling the Process :** Writing in a diary, talking to a friend, or seeing a therapist might help if you are having trouble integrating your experience. It's natural to want to push your emotions aside when you're going through a tough time for fear of "wallowing" and becoming trapped, but it's important to give yourself time to experience and process them so that you can eventually let them go. Keep in mind the importance of self-care. Don't compound your issues by neglecting basic self-care measures like eating well, getting adequate sleep, and being active on a regular basis. You may also reduce your stress by engaging in a hobby you like, like gardening, reading, or watching a movie. It's important to give yourself reassurance when you're feeling down. A weighted blanket, a brisk walk, a gratitude journal, or some quiet meditation time might all help you feel more grounded and strong in mind and body. Feelings and practising self-acceptance go hand in hand. Learning to accept and endure unpleasant feelings is a skill that may help you cope with life. Instead than rejecting, ignoring, or repressing negative emotions, emotional acceptance encourages allowing them to exist and realising that they cannot damage you. The ability to accept one's emotions frees one from the burden of trying to suppress or ignore them. You may get insight into and

control over your emotions by doing this.

**(xii) Put Your Senses To Work:** When you're feeling overwhelmed by scary emotions or ideas, coming back to the here and now might help. The goal of grounding is to divert attention away from upsetting thoughts, feelings, and flashbacks.

**(xiii) Explore Your Creative Side with Creative Exploration:** Expressing oneself artistically is a healthy way to deal with trauma. The use of creative strategies has been linked to improved physical and psychological well-being. Art therapy is an effective method for dealing with PTSD. Another research found that trauma and depression symptoms in persons who had undergone trauma were significantly reduced after art therapy. You're free to explore different methods of expressing yourself creatively. Creating art in any form, whether it colouring pages, drawings, finger paintings, sculptures, paintings, or photographs, may help. You might benefit from seeing a mental health practitioner who is skilled in this kind of treatment.

**(xiv) Use of Deep Breathing:** Stress and anxiety may be better managed with the aid of regular deep breathing exercises. When you breathe via your diaphragm instead of your chest, you're engaging in diaphragmatic breathing. When under pressure, many people take short, shallow breaths, which only serves to heighten the body's natural state of panic. Slowing down and deepening one's breath is a great way to calm the mind and body. To do this, take a deep breath and feel your stomach expand. After counting to three, release your breath gently. Do this breathing exercise for a few minutes until you feel calmer.

**(xv) Do Not Stray From Your Routine :** Protect your mental health by sticking to a schedule even while you cope with terrible circumstances. When life seems out of your control, the routine may help you maintain concentration and composure. According to the studies, such habits help people deal with stress and anxiety. Having a plan in place might help you take more good care of yourself no matter how chaotic life becomes.

**(xvi) Don't Worry About Things Not Under Control :** Feelings of helplessness and powerlessness are common reactions to trauma, and they may be terrifying and overpowering. You can fight this by keeping your attention on positive, manageable things. If you can take your mind off of the things that are beyond of your control, you may be able to make things better for yourself. As you practise these strategies to deal with stress, you will begin to feel stronger and more capable.

**(xvii) Seek Help When Needed :** If, after some time has passed after the traumatic event, you are still having trouble sleeping, having flashbacks, or functioning normally in everyday life, it may be beneficial to discuss your issue with a trained expert. Even if you don't have any serious issues, but you think talking to someone could be useful, it's preferable to err on the side of more support.

## Conclusion

It's a fallacy to think that just a small percentage of people deal with childhood trauma. The idea that PTSD symptoms represent the predominant pattern of difficulties experienced in reaction to such trauma is also mistaken. Instead, trauma in childhood is statistically common, affecting the majority of children at some time, and may have far-reaching effects on how they develop and operate as adults. Despite the fact that childhood trauma is often accompanied by additional risk factors, studies show that its effects linger for two decades or more. Specifically, the more trauma a person experienced as a kid, the higher their risk for negative health and functional consequences as an adult. These findings, taken as a whole, present a definitive order to people who care about expanding access, mitigating suffering, and preventing illness over the life span. Health and well-being may be affected in a variety of ways throughout a person's life by interventions or policies that generally target this cluster of mostly avoidable childhood events.

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