

An Overview of the Cause and Effect of Resiliency and Childhood Trauma

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Resiliency is a trait or capacity within people that allows them to use resources and their own self-efficacy, to overcome situations of adversity. Adversity can look like a myriad of circumstances. And one's response to these exposures clearly displays their level of resilience and their ability to overcome. Everyone has a different threshold for stress and anxiety, and we all must learn how to develop coping strategies, or protective measures to move through trials. Development of resilience starts in childhood. Children learn from experience and if the child is exposed to extreme adverse circumstances their ability to have resilience is tested.

Adverse circumstances such as, physical, or emotional abuse, neglect or domestic violence can severely impact a child's developmental growth. Different aspects of development are impacted by certain traumatic events. For example, if a child is physically or emotionally abused this can have a lifelong impact on that individual's mental health and overall well-being (Schafer & Ferraro, 2013). Trauma can also directly affect a child's social development. When a child is exposed to maltreatment by an adult, the child then learns to be wary of adult figures and therefore have a tough time forming trust with adults in their life, like their teachers. Forming a healthy bond with their teacher is essential in having positive role models in their life that can teach them prosocial behaviors and aid in their social development. Individuals with mistrust towards adults have a tougher time learning social behaviors in a way that can help them to form relationships with others around them. (Miller, 2022).

Developmental delays in children exposed to trauma can have determining factors such as attachment and emotional dysregulation, trouble with cognitive learning, behavioral difficulties, and even biological distress. (Gregorowski & Seedat, 2013). A child's attachment and emotional regulation can be profoundly impacted when exposed to trauma since parental figures are not providing a safe and warm demeanor to the child to promote feelings of comfort. Often, children with abusive parents are also not taught how to manage their own feelings when they arise, or they are brushed off. Parents need to teach coping skills to their children and model good emotional regulation to their children for them to learn themselves. A child's cognitive abilities can be impacted by trauma because when children are exposed to chronic levels of stress, the body floods the brain with cortisol and this level of stress hormone can cause functions in the brain to shut off to preserve itself. (Sibcy, n.d.). Because of this protective nature of the brain, when it is triggered by certain senses, it can be flooded with cortisol and the brain can shut down thus causing difficulty with cognitive functioning. Behavioral difficulties are some of the most noticeable factors of trauma in a child. Behavioral difficulties can look like trouble managing emotions or having trouble articulating feelings. These hurdles can sometimes lead to substance abuse, depression and even eating disorders. Biological distress is a result of high levels of cortisol and adrenaline in the body. Too much of these hormones can be detrimental in biological health and can begin to deteriorate the individual's normal biological functioning. (Bates, Salsberry, & Ford, 2017).

Protective factors have been found to help counter effects of trauma in children. Protective factors such as healthy self-esteem, good coping mechanisms, personal control over one's emotions and actions, and internal motivations can all increase resiliency in children. (Wong, Hall, & Hernandez, 2020). Research has recently shown an uptake in how spiritual development can serve as a protective factor for children in countering the effects of trauma. For example, if a child is faced with the trauma of losing a loved one the role of spirituality can aid in coping with that loss. (Upenieks, 2021). The viewpoints of spiritual development and its effects on the individual that has experienced trauma are that it can offer healing and reparative relationships. (Glenn, 2014). This perspective of spiritual development as a means of healing

trauma is difficult because it can only be used in the appropriate environment of having a pastoral counselor. When dealing with individuals that come from a religious background, utilizing their faith in counseling them can be vital to their emotional and cognitive health. Studies have shown that spiritual beliefs have possibly served as protective factors for individuals and has aided in providing a positive adaptation to childhood trauma. (Glenn, 2014). The research on resilience shows that it is essential for an individual to have a supportive person in their life, typically a caregiver or mothering figure. It is also important that individuals have both a positive and meaningful outlook on their lives, and that they believe that they have purpose. The viewpoint of spirituality in the context of being a protective factor is backed by these ideas of having a supportive figure in their life, being God and Jesus. And that they would develop a sense of purposefulness and meaning and hopeful outlook on their life because of how the Holy Spirit would begin to renew their mind. (Roman 12:2-5). For further research, I believe looking at individuals later in their life span and seeing how a spiritual journey can aid in the healing of their past childhood trauma. I think that this perspective of the mind having aged further and becoming maybe more set in its ways, could serve some interesting scientific discoveries in the power of spirituality and its abilities to reverse childhood trauma.



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