

Impact of Trauma and Maltreatment on Child and Adolescent Development

Behavioral	Social-Emotional	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Physical violence (to people, animals, objects) • Impulsiveness • Hyperactivity • Out-of-control behavior • Noncompliance • Negative verbal interactions • School discipline referrals and suspensions • Juvenile delinquency • Conduct disorder • Self-destructive behavior (suicide, self-mutilation) • Enuresis, Encopresis • Substance abuse • Psychosomatic symptoms • Sexual acting-out • Perpetrator behavior with other children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with peers (less popularity, fewer pro-social interactions, greater negativity) • Poor attachment to caregiver • Deficits in empathy and social sensitivity • Unfriendliness • Withdrawal • Avoidance • Fearfulness • Anxiety • Negative emotions • Unhappiness • Low self-esteem • Sense of worthlessness • Hopelessness • Mental health disorders • Depression • Post-traumatic Stress Disorder • Low ego control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low academic achievement • Poor problem solving • Poor reasoning skills • Poor listening comprehension • Easy distractibility • Low average to borderline levels of intellectual functioning • Impaired social and moral reasoning (external locus of control orientation, poor understanding of social roles) • Poor receptive and expressive language • Less creativity

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Children Age 5 and Under

Children under five can react in a number of ways:

- Facial expressions of fear,
- Clinging to parent or caregiver,
- Crying or screaming,
- Whimpering or trembling,
- Moving aimlessly,
- Becoming immobile,
- Returning to behaviors common to being younger,
 - ✓ Thumb sucking,
 - ✓ Bedwetting, and
 - ✓ Being afraid of the dark.

Children Age 6 to 11

Children between the ages of 6 and 11 have a range of reactions. They may:

- Isolate themselves,
- Become quiet around friends, family, and teachers,
- Have nightmares or other sleep problems,
- Become irritable or disruptive,
- Have outbursts of anger,
- Start fights,
- Be unable to concentrate,
- Refuse to go to school,
- Complain of unfounded physical problems,
- Develop unfounded fears,
- Become depressed,
- Become filled with guilt,
- Feel numb emotionally, and
- Perform poorly academically.

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Adolescents Age 12 to 18

Children between 12 and 18 have various reactions:

- Flashbacks to the traumatic event (flashbacks are the mind reliving the event),
- Avoiding reminders of the event,
- Drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and abuse,
- Antisocial behavior *i.e.* disruptive, disrespectful, or destructive behavior,
- Physical complaints,
- Nightmares or other sleep problems,
- Isolation or confusion,
- Depression,
- Suicidal thoughts,
- Feelings of guilt about the event,
- Feelings of guilt for not preventing injury/deaths, and
- Thoughts of revenge.

Children React to Trauma. (2010). Retrieved July 08, 2010 from Children React to Trauma:
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-violence-and-disasters/parents.cfm>.

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Poor mental and emotional health: In one long-term study, as many as 80 percent of young adults who had been abused met the diagnostic criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder at age 21. These young adults exhibited many problems, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicide attempts (Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1996). Other psychological and emotional conditions associated with abuse and neglect include Panic Disorder, Dissociative Disorders, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Reactive Attachment Disorder (Teicher, 2000).

Cognitive difficulties: The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being found that children placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect tended to score lower than the general population on measures of cognitive capacity, language development, and academic achievement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

Social difficulties: Children who are abused and neglected by caregivers often do not form secure attachments to others. These early attachment difficulties can lead to later difficulties in relationships with other adults as well as with peers (Morrison, Frank, Holland, & Kates, 1999).

Difficulties during adolescence: Studies have found abused and neglected children to be at least 25 percent more likely to experience problems such as delinquency, teen pregnancy, low academic achievement, drug use, and mental health problems (Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith, 1997).

Juvenile delinquency and adult criminality: A National Institute of Justice study indicated being abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59 percent. Abuse and neglect increased the likelihood of adult criminal behavior by 28 percent and violent crime by 30 percent (Widom & Maxfield, 2001).

Alcohol and other drug abuse: Research consistently reflects an increased likelihood that abused and neglected children will smoke cigarettes, abuse alcohol, or take illicit drugs. According to a report from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, as many as two-thirds of people in drug treatment programs reported being abused as children (Swan, 1998).