



Youth Trauma and The Brain

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Implications for Children/Youth

- ▶ **EXPERIENCE CAN CHANGE THE MATURE BRAIN - BUT EXPERIENCE DURING THE CRITICAL PERIODS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ORGANIZES BRAIN SYSTEMS!**

From Dr. Bruce Perry, Trauma and Brain Development

Adolescence

- ▶ Adolescence, transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood.
- ▶ Adolescence can be a time of both disorientation and discovery.
- ▶ This transitional period can raise questions of independence and identity; as adolescents cultivate their sense of self, they may face difficult choices about academics, friendship, sexuality, gender identity, drugs, and alcohol.

Stages of Adolescence

- ▶ What are the stages of adolescence?
- ▶ The stages of adolescence include early adolescence from age 10 to 14, mid-adolescence from age 15 to 17, and late adolescence from age 18 to 26.

▶ (Psychology Today)

The Effects of Trauma

“As the brain is organizing, it is waiting for the world to tell it how to structure itself.”

– Dr. Bruce Perry

Mental Illness

- ▶ A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood.
- ▶ These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others.
- ▶ Mental health conditions are far more common than most think
- ▶ A mental health conditions can have multiple, linking causes.. Genetics, environment and lifestyle will influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. (NAMI)
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health condition each year
- 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24

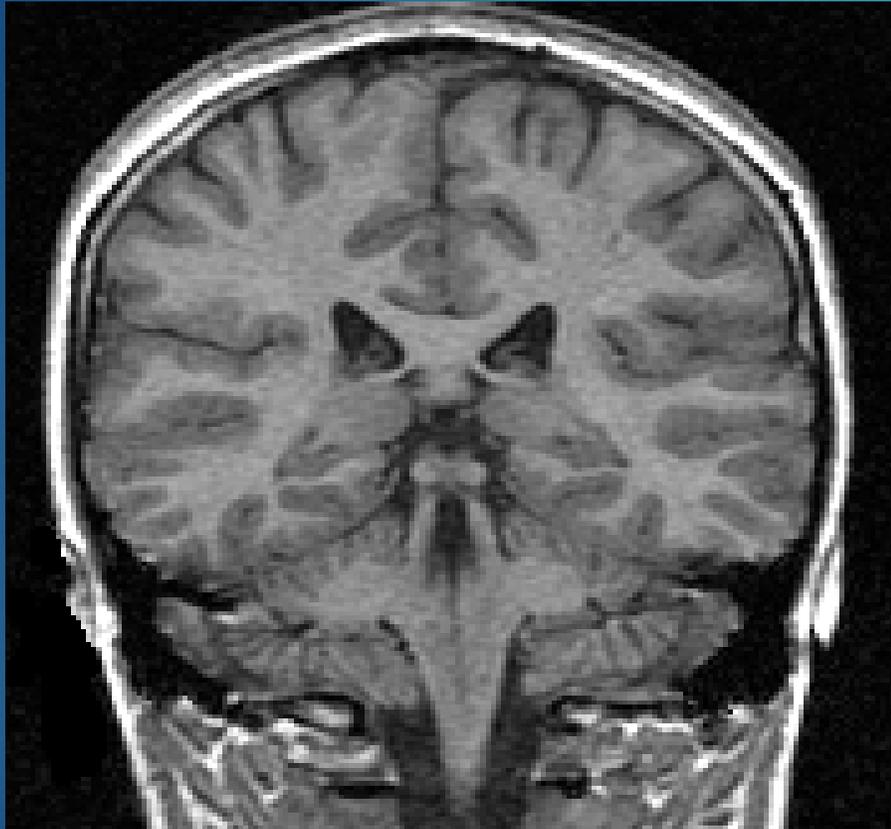
Adolescence and Mental Health Risk Factors

- ▶ Some adolescents have a higher risk than others for developing a mental illness, including a substance use disorder.
- ▶ According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), risk factors include genetic, biological, environmental and cultural considerations. Such as..
- ▶ Genetics: Family History of Mental Illness
- ▶ Stress: Chronic Stress over time leads to (Anxiety and Depression) ex: COVID
- ▶ Trauma/ACEs: School Shootings..(Violence, Neglect, Sexual/Physical Abuse, Cyber Bullying, Divorce etc..)
- ▶ Racial Trauma (Discrimination) and Identity Issues

Trauma and the Brain

- ▶ The effects of trauma on the brain that are impacted the most are the **amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex.**
- Traumatic Stress **Activates** The **Amygdala**. (this part of the brain is responsible for detection of threat and activation of appropriate fear related behaviors/emotions) Alarm System!
- Traumatic Stress Can **Shrink** The **Hippocampus**. (this part of the brain is responsible for **learning and memory**)
- Traumatic Stress Can **Decrease Function** In The **Prefrontal Cortex** (PFC) (responsible for influencing attention, impulse, memory, and cognitions(thought process/patterns))

Lateral Ventricles Measures in an 11 Year Old Maltreated Male with Chronic PTSD (Right) smaller, Compared with a Healthy, Non-Maltreated Matched Control (larger)



(De Bellis et al., 1999)

Adolescence Response as a Result of Trauma affects on the Brain

- ▶ Their learning is negatively impacted because of poor concentration, distractibility, inability to retain information, poor peer relationships, and aggressive behavior.
- ▶ Impulse control issues
- ▶ Cognitive/Thought processing challenges
- ▶ Inappropriate fear/emotional response
- ▶ Suicidal Ideation (Trauma and Severe Depression Major Causes)
- ▶ Suicide is the 2nd leading cause death in ages 10-34
 - ▶ (Young AA males)

State Change

22 year-old young man
with history of childhood
physical abuse
displayed aggressive
behavior on psychiatric
unit and was physically
restrained.



State Change

12 year-old sexually abused girl in school when provoked by older male peer.



Brain Mental Health Matters!

The human brain is the organ responsible for everything we do. It allows us to love, laugh, walk, talk, create or hate..

- **For each of us, our brain's functioning is a reflection of our experiences!**

“The Greatest Natural Power of HumanKind is the Power of the Human Brain!”