The Pandemic’s Persistent Effects on Our Children and Ourselves: A Child Psychiatrist’s Perspective for Schools

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Content
- The profound stressors we have all experienced. And the impact on children and youth.
- Drivers of risk and resilience
- Insights into human development and the relationship to stress and trauma
- What are hopeful investments in schools
- What are some things you can do as an individual or as a school / district

Unprecedented Stressors
- COVID-19 shutdown Spring Break, 2020
- George Floyd’s Murder May 25, 2020
- Fires
- Capital Insurrection January 6, 2021
“...habitual social media checking early in adolescence is associated with divergent brain development over time.”

“Longitudinal decreases in neural activation among participants with non-habitual checking behaviors may indicate a developmentally normative decreasing sensitivity to social anticipation.”
Great recession
Smart phones and social media
Youth Suicide Prevention Funding
Pandemic
Association of Birth During the COVID-19 Pandemic With Neurodevelopmental Status at 6 Months in Infants With and Without In Utero Exposure to Maternal SARS-CoV-2 Infection

“In this cohort study of 255 infants born between March and December 2020, exposure to maternal SARS-CoV-2 infection was not associated with differences on any Ages & Stages Questionnaire, 3rd Edition, subdomain at age 6 months, regardless of infection timing or severity. However, both exposed and unexposed infants born during that period had significantly lower scores on gross motor, fine motor, and personal-social subdomains compared with a historical cohort of infants born before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The Pandemic’s Toll on Young Adolescents: Prevention and Intervention Targets to Preserve Their Mental Health

• 3000 11-14 yo youth and parents enrolled in the Adolescent Brain Cognition Development Study
• May-August 2020
• Depression, Anxiety, Stress
• Positive Affect

Risk Factors: Being Female, pre-pandemic internalizing, sleep problems, poor quality and function of family, more screen time, witnessing discrimination during the pandemic

Protective Factors: physical activity, taking breaks from the news, maintaining positive routines
Prefrontal Cortex
Regulation, Judgment, Reasoning

Amygdala
Reward, Emotion

Develops with age/experience; matures late in adolescence.

Triggered with puberty/hormone changes; activated early in adolescence.

Vulnerability!

Gogtay et al., PNAS, 2004

Emotional Context Influences Teen’s Inhibitory Control

From Somerville et al., 2011, JCN
Stress Impacts Inhibitory Control and Brain Functioning in Adolescents

From Rahdar & Galvan, NeuroImage 2014

High stress impairs adolescents’ ability to practice inhibitory control.

Levels of Stress

Positive
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable
Severe, temporary stress response; suffers by supportive relationships.

Toxic
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.


The True Nature of Preventive Medicine

Death

Birth

Mechanisms By Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Adult Health Status
Toxic Stress Cascade

Elements Necessary for Trauma:

- An Experience/event:
  actual/threatened death or serious injury
  threat to physical integrity of self/others
  (sexual abuse)

- A Subjective Experience of Fear
Functional impacts of developmental trauma:

- emotion regulation
- forming trusting relationships
- learning
- flexibility
- hopefulness

TRAUMA CAN LEAD TO MIS-DIAGNOSIS

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- ADHD
- Conduct Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder

TRAUMA INFORMED

“A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.”

(SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014 http://store.samhsa.gov/store/item/TO13-4888/TO13-4888.pdf)
Trauma Informed Care

• Safety
• Trustworthiness and Transparency
• Collaboration and Mutuality
• Peer Support
• Voice and Choice
• Provider wellness

Trauma Informed

INTERPRETING BEHAVIOR:

The trauma informed person recognizes that behavior represents underlying attempts to cope.
Think: “what happened to you” not “what is wrong with you”

Recognize that you are also subject to vicarious trauma and may have your own history triggered.

Take care of your needs by reaching out to colleagues and having shared moments to reflect on your experience.

Figure 1. Trauma-informed care (TIC) minimizes the negative impact of critical illness on individuals with prior trauma. Trauma is an experience of emotional or physical harm that is known to have developmental, behavioral, cognitive, social, and physical effects. Clinicians may view these adaptive responses as disruptive. As a result, patients and families who have a history of trauma may be labeled as “difficult” and experience poor communication. This triggers a cycle of clinician disengagement and conflict between the clinical team and the family, which creates further medical trauma. We believe TIC has the potential to disrupt this cycle.

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Parent Child Protective Factors

- SECURE ATTACHMENT
- PARENT KNOWLEDGE
- PARENTAL SELF AWARENESS (CAPACITY FOR MENTALIZING)
- SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Youth Protective Factors

Ginsberg’s 7 C’s

- Competence
- Confidence
- Connection
- Character
- Contribution
- Coping
- Control

A sign of health in the mind is the ability of one individual to enter imaginatively and accurately into the thoughts and feelings and hopes and fears of another person; to allow the other person to do the same to us.”

- DW Winnicott, "Cure"
Co-regulation and mirror neurons
https://childrenbloom.com/pages/emotional-control-and-regulation

Good things coming or already started

INVESTMENTS in the SCHOOLS

2019
• Student Success Act
• Early Learning
• Student Investments
• Education Initiatives

2021
• Social Emotional Learning
School districts implement SEL Framework & Standards

Timeline

Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group
- HB 2166, Section 4 directs the ODE to convene an advisory group to propose to SBE recommendations for SEL Framework and Standards
- Students & staff well-being
- SEL Framework: HB 2166 Report & submitted to SBE on September 22, 2022

Phase 2 SEL Advisory Group
- Established to develop SEL Framework & Standards to be considered for adoption by SBE by September 2023

Timeline:
- 2023: Phase 2 SEL Advisory Group established to develop SEL Framework & Standards
- 2024: School districts implement SEL Framework & Standards
SAMHSA 988
Crisis System Components

Call 988

Resolve and/or refer to local supports
Mobile Crisis and Stabilization Services
Crisis Stabilization Centers?

Good things you can learn about or do

https://casel.org/

CASEL was formed in 1994 to establish high-quality, evidence-based SEL as an essential part of preschool through high school education.
The CASEL 5...

Five broad and interrelated areas of competence:
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

The Collaborative Problem Solving Approach

Children do well *if they can...* (vs Children do well *if they want to*)

...if they can’t, we adults need to figure out what’s getting in the way, so we can help.

Think:Kids
https://thinkkids.org/cps-overview/

NurturedHeart
https://nurturedheartinstitute.com/
Take Care Of Yourself So You Can Take Care of Others

Mindfulness Moments For Building Resilience and Well-Being

Compiled by Rachel Sirota, RN, BSN

Away for the Day

Stop Phone Use In Schools
Research shows that kids and teens do better with fewer distractions during development. Help your school's faculty and staff create a phone-free space in your school and help educate students about phones and get away.

3/31/2023
Thank you for being a teacher. You are love personified.