

ADHD vs Trauma in Foster Children

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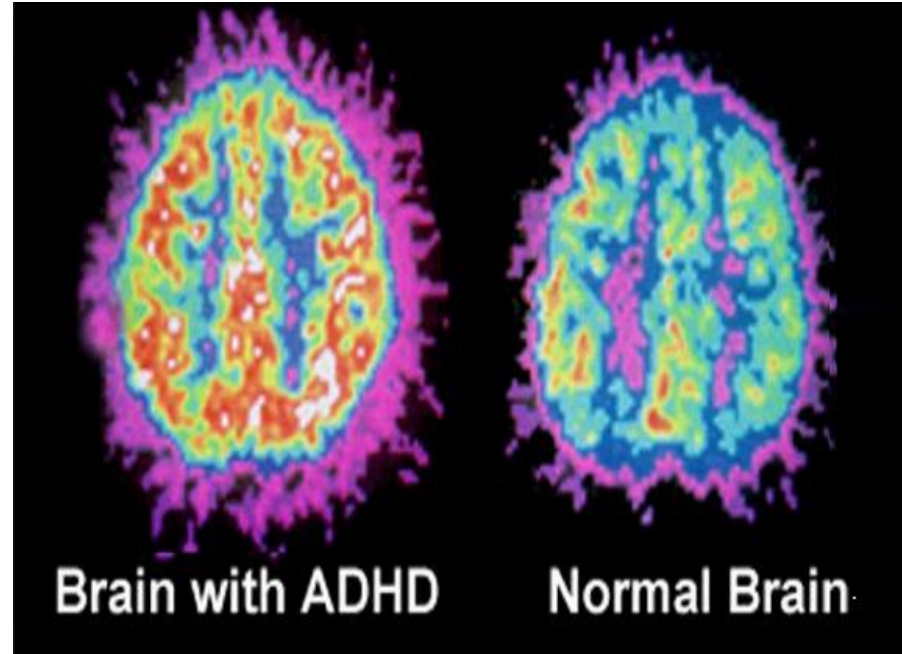
WHY?

What ADHD is not

1. It is not a discipline problem
2. It is not a bad parenting problem
3. It is not the case of a lazy child who is not trying hard enough.
4. It is not a made up disorder
5. ADHD does not mean your child is less intelligent

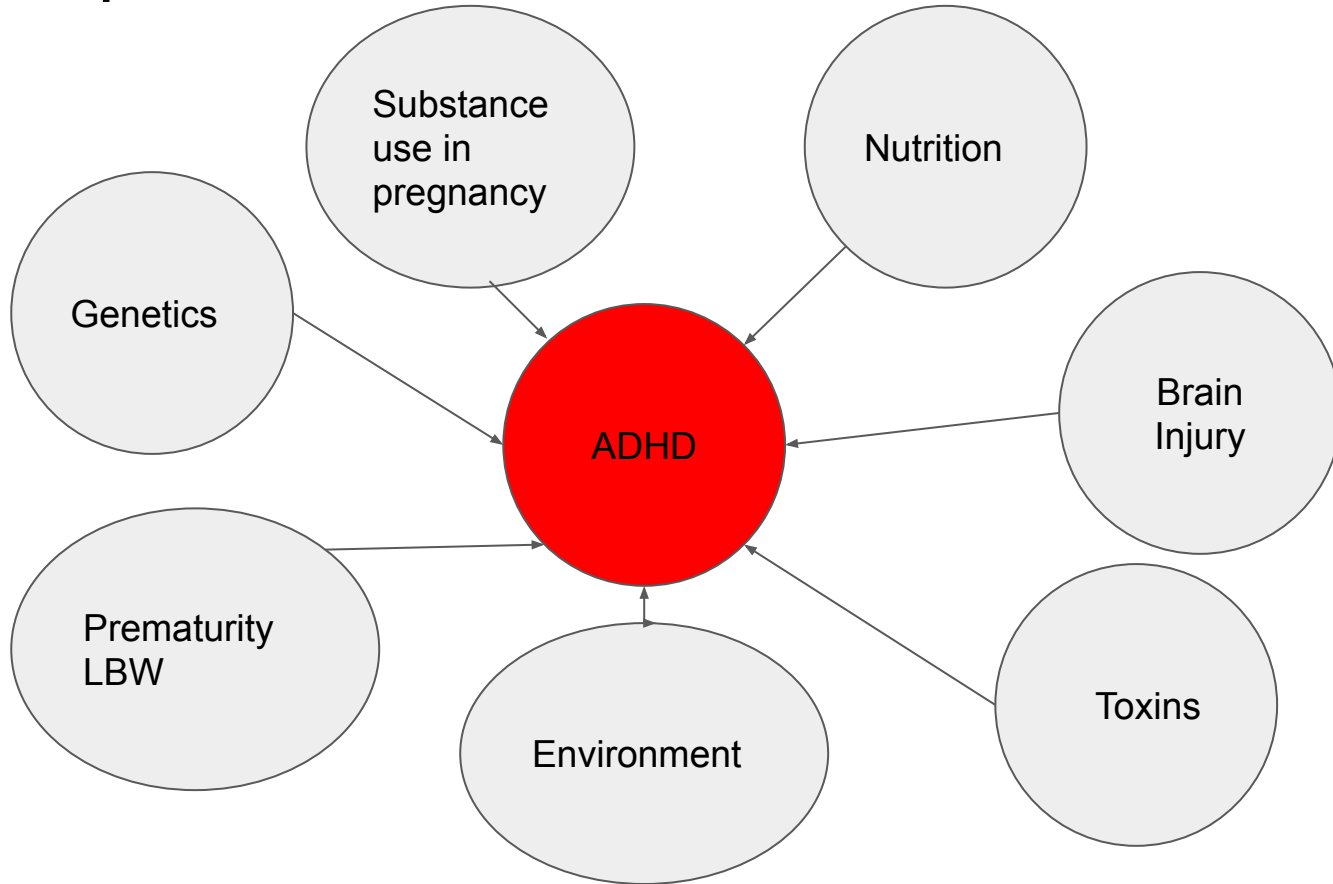
What is ADHD?

- Brain based Neurological disorder
- Brain imaging studies show:
 - Smaller brain volume in certain areas
 - Increase in slower brain waves
 - Impaired neurotransmitter activity
- Characterized by inattention/and or impulsivity, hyperactivity



Zametkin et al, NEJM 1990

Multiple Risk Factors Associated with ADHD



Impact of ADHD

- CDC: 6.1 million kids with ADHD
- Millions worldwide
- Impacts both child and parent

Stress in Childhood

Positive Stress

Mild stress with good support

Tolerable Stress

Serious, Tolerable stress with supportive relationships

Toxic Stress

Prolonged activation of stress response system with no protection

Noticeable effects.

Hidden effects.

Pupils Dilate

Mouth goes dry

Shoulder and neck
muscles tense.

Heart beats quickly

Breathing is fast
and shallow as
oxygen is needed
for muscles

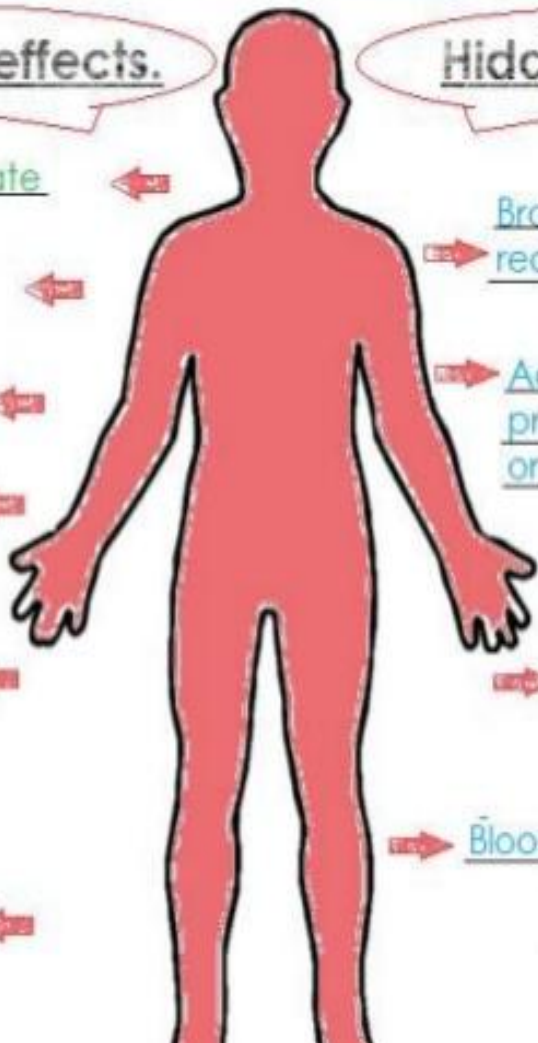
Sweating

Brain gets body
ready for action

Adrenaline
produced for flight
or fight

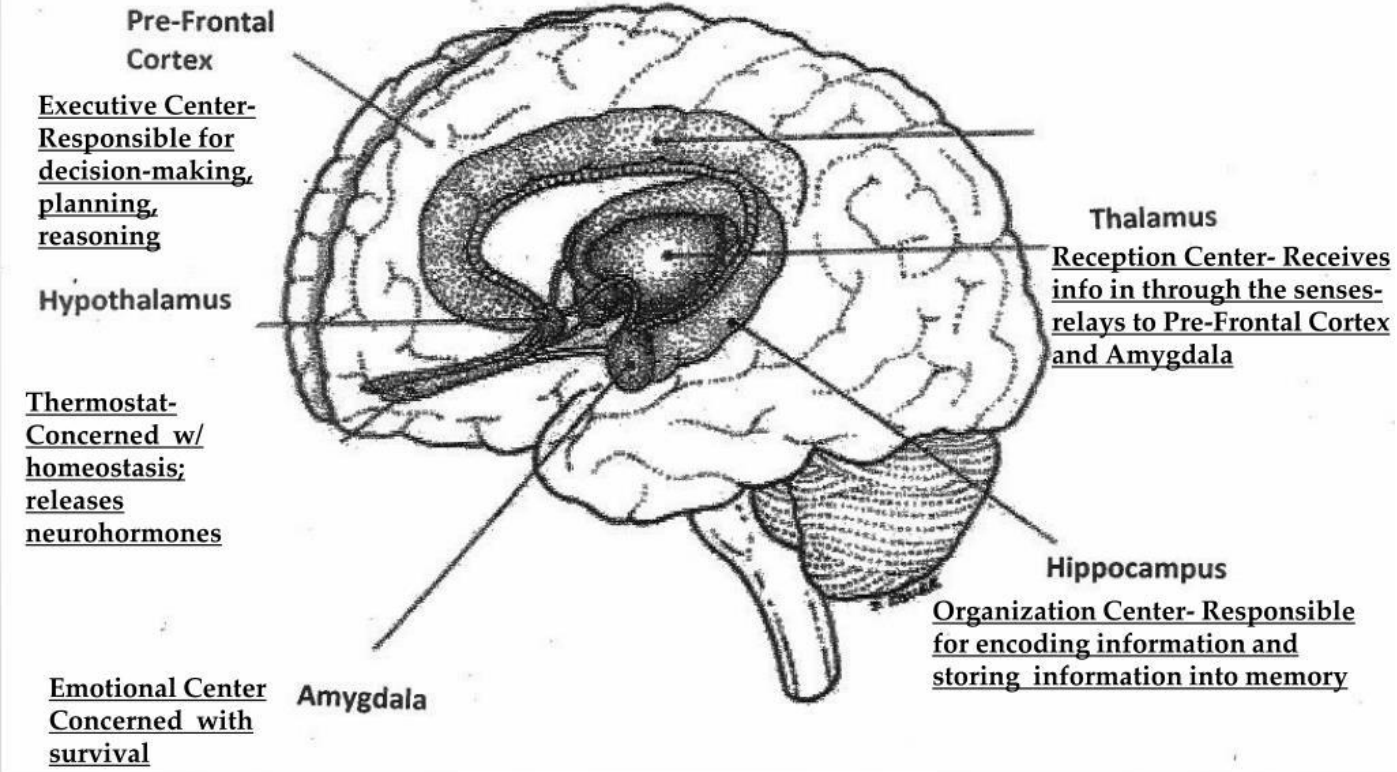
Liver releases
glucose to provide
energy for muscles

Blood pressure rises





Structures of the Brain: The Limbic System



What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)?

Stressful or traumatic events that occur before the age of 18 years that have adverse effects on physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- 17,000 adults surveyed
- Objective: to understand relationship between child adversity and adult health outcomes
- 10- item questionnaire
- Each positive response given a score of “1”

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical

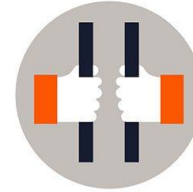


Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



Divorce

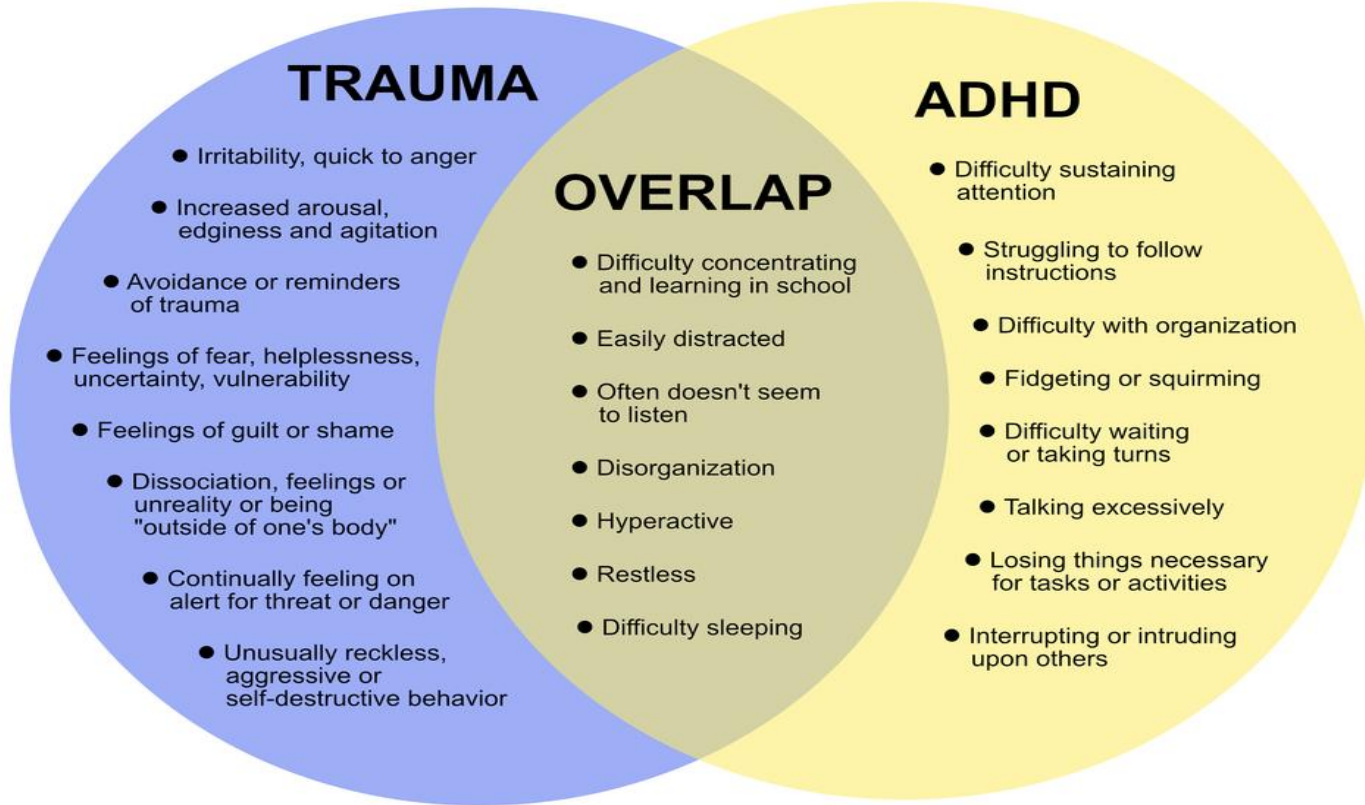
A person with 4 or more Aces is

- 2.2x as likely to have ischemic heart disease
- 2.4x as likely to have a stroke
- 1.9x as likely to have cancer
- 1.6x as likely to have diabetes

Associations between ADHD and Adverse Childhood Experiences in US Children.

- Children with ADHD have higher ACE exposure compared to children without ADHD.
- Significant association between ACE score and moderate to severe ADHD.

ADHD and Trauma Overlap



ADHD and Trauma (PTSD) Symptom Differences

- Largely Heritable
- Symptoms of hyperactivity, inattentiveness, impulsivity that can cause significant functional limitations
- Deficits in
 - Behavioral inhibition
 - Sustained attention
 - Regulation of behavior
- Traumatic events that cause physical brain changes
- Involves:
 - Re-experiencing
 - Avoidance
 - Hypervigilance
- Emotional, cognitive and physiological changes in how a child processes traumatic stressors.

Trauma can worsen ADHD symptoms

- Impact of trauma on specific brain areas may lead to an increase in:
 - Social difficulties
 - Inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity
 - Learning difficulties
 - Co-occurring disorders with ADHD:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Conduct disorder

ADHD May Increase Risk of Exposure to Trauma

- Children with ADHD are at increased risk of
 - Substance abuse
 - Co-occurring mental health disorder
 - interpersonal/relationship problems
- ADHD may increase risk of
 - Accidental trauma
 - Maltreatment

Assessing for ADHD

- Standard ADHD testing does not typically take into consideration family environment, trauma exposure and other adversities
- Advocate for your foster child by asking pediatrician/health care provider to take into consideration history of trauma in child/environment if applicable.
- Get appropriate referrals for clinician with expertise in trauma screening/treatment

Protective Factors for Exposure to Trauma

- Supportive family environment
- Supportive social networks
- Adequate housing
- Access to appropriate health and social services
- Parental employment and education

Treatment Strategies

ADHD

- Root Cause of behaviors
- Medication
- Behavioral therapy

Treatment Strategies

Trauma

- Psychotherapy: trauma focused and cognitive behavioral therapy
- Promote safety and build routines
- Stress management and relaxation skills to help cope with trauma reminders and distress.

Thank you for the Love you give, and the sacrifices that you make to care for our children who are vulnerable and come from hard places.

Contact Information

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