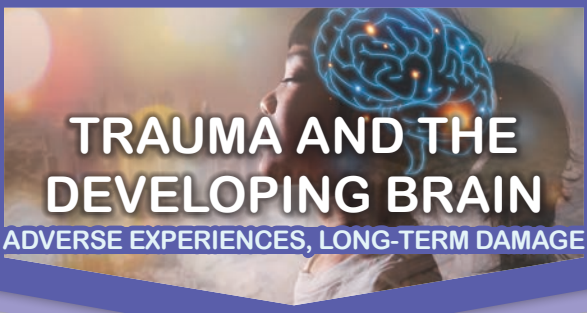

TRAUMA AND THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

ADVERSE EXPERIENCES, LONG-TERM DAMAGE

TRAUMA IS A RISK FACTOR FOR NEARLY ALL SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.

The limbic system, the part of the brain responsible for survival functions such as heart rate, is intact when we are born. The prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making and problem-solving, develops over time. When exposed to traumatic experiences, the brain enters survival mode and sends more resources to the limbic system instead of the prefrontal cortex, which slows its development.

SIGNS OF TRAUMA

Preschool: Fears being separated from caregiver, has nightmares, cries or screams a lot

Elementary School: Anxious or fearful, difficulty concentrating or sleeping

Middle School: Depression, eating disorders, and self-harm

High School: Alcohol or drug use, and/or risky sexual behavior

OVERCOMING TRAUMA

Even with the support of family members and others, some children do not recover on their own. A trained mental health professional can help children and families cope with the impact of traumatic events and move toward recovery. Each child's treatment depends on the nature, timing, and amount of exposure to a trauma.

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66+% OF CHILDREN REPORTED AT LEAST ONE TRAUMATIC EVENT BY AGE 16

EXAMPLES OF TRAUMA

- Psychological, physical, or sexual abuse
- Community or school violence
- Witnessing or experiencing domestic violence
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Refugee or war experiences

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

The impact of traumatic stress can last well beyond childhood. Research has shown that child trauma survivors may experience: learning problems, increased use of health and mental health services, increased involvement with the justice system, and long-term health problems like diabetes and heart disease.

THERE IS HOPE. CHILDREN CAN AND DO RECOVER FROM TRAUMATIC EVENTS.