

Trauma, Long-Term Stress and People

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Nothing is more frustrating than the experience of coming face to face with an individual who refuses to flex as life requires. The bent in their personality is toward having things the way they insist. The insistence may seem endless and is often filled with demands no one could possibly fulfill. Now we all have areas in which we insist on having things our way. The type of person I am talking about is someone who cannot and will not move from square one when it comes to negotiating needs and wants. These individuals typically have been deeply hurt and/or traumatized. The effects of the chemical responses created in the body due to trauma and/or long term stress leave a distinct mark in thinking and behavior.

In thinking of how long-term stress and trauma affect the body, the biological culprits are: adrenaline, plasma triglycerides, and cortisol. These hormones in excessive repeated measures damage the brain in that it kills and shrinks brain cells. The result is the emotional center of the brain becoming overloaded with information. The brain's ability to perceive, code, store, consolidate, retrieve and interpret information is interrupted.

In particular, an individual's ability to move in his or her thinking from the concrete to the abstract is inhibited. This developmental shift is crucial in an individual's ability to reason through events, see his or her options, and grow in his or her ability to understand differing perspectives.

Highly traumatic experiences in one's childhood, such as physical or sexual abuse may be the kind of trauma or long-term stress we are thinking of. This may include but is not limited to severe emotional neglect.

We live in a fragmented world. Extended families and communities no longer provide the support they once did. In today's world children have more difficulty meeting their needs for attachment and identity. The need for an environment providing consistent expectations and emotional security becomes primary.

CHARACTERISTICS: Listed below are a few characteristics that may be exhibited by people who have experienced early childhood long-term stress and/or trauma.

1. Experience intense abandonment fears
2. React with frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment.
3. Show inappropriate anger even when faced with a realistic time-limited separation or unavoidable changes in places.
4. Pattern of unstable and intense relationships.
5. Overly demanding of time together
6. Share intimate details early in a relationship.
7. Sudden and dramatic shifts in self-image
8. Shifting goals, values, and vocational aspirations.
9. Self-esteem is based on feeling they are bad or not feeling they exist at all.
10. Experience increased impulsivity: gambling, spending money, binge eat, unsafe sex, drive recklessly, abuse substances.

11. Suicidal gestures, threats or self mutilation
12. Chronic feelings of emptiness

If you or a loved one is living with or involved with people who manifest these types of characteristics, you will need to remember the following:

1. Learn to be like a rock when coping with people who have experienced this kind of stress.
2. Know, as much as possible, your limits of time and energy.
3. Make it clear to the people you are involved with what these limits are.
4. Be active and directive with them establishing a connection between their actions and their present feelings as needed.
5. If you find yourself tempted to do something you don't usually do, DON'T.
6. Pray regularly as prayer is the most powerful thing you have.
7. Remember: they are coping with severe loss and potentially long term physiological impact.

Resources: www.nimh.nih.gov

www.psychocentral.com

www.psychologyinfo.com

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