



Child Development and Trauma: Considerations for Educators

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About California School-Based Health Alliance

The California School-Based Health Alliance is the statewide non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and academic success of children and youth by advancing health services in schools.

Our work is based on two basic concepts:

- Health care should be accessible and *where kids are*, and
- Schools should have the services needed to ensure that poor health is not a barrier to learning



Objectives

1. Review our knowledge about child and adolescent development, particularly thinking, emotions and behavior.
2. Define "trauma" and understand its impact on the developing brain.



Child Development Review

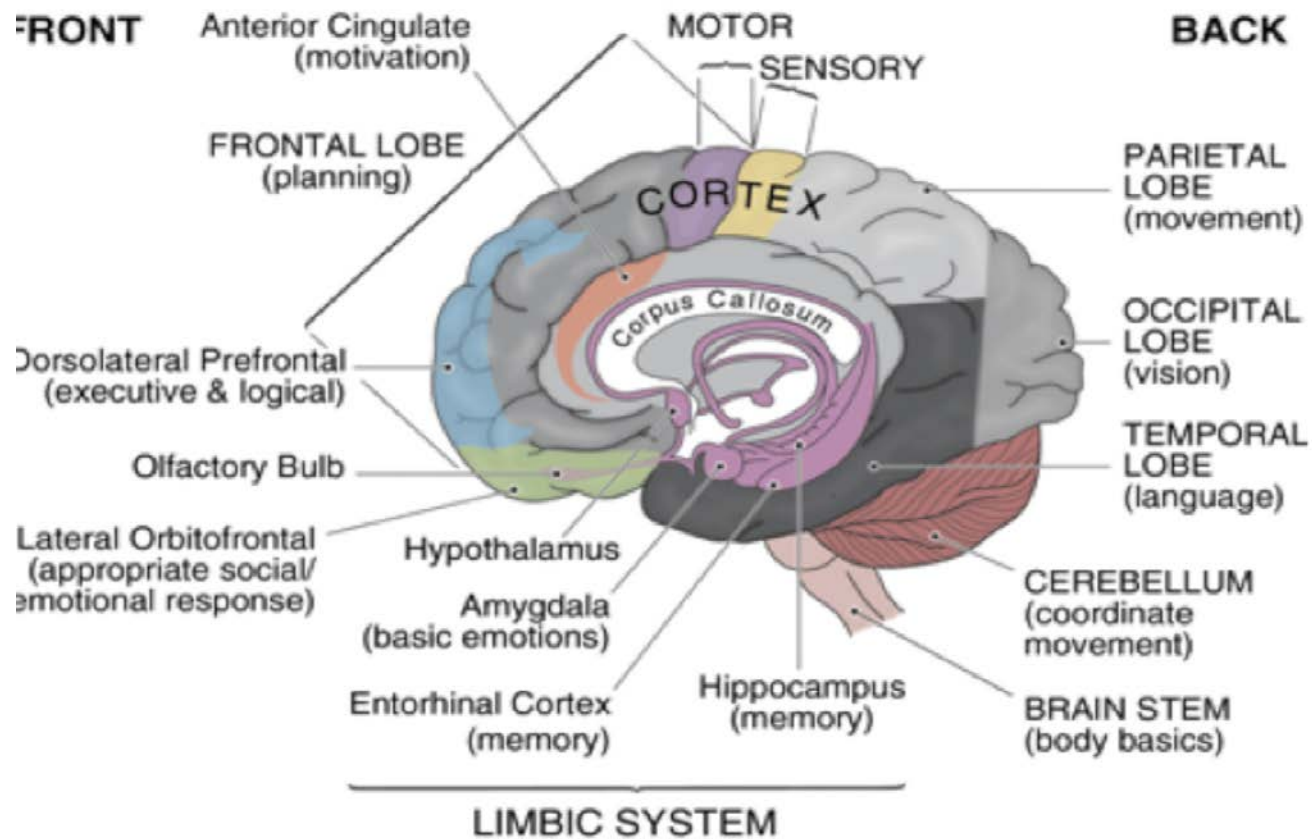


What do infants and young children need from caregivers and their environment?

What do preschool and school-aged kids need from their school?



Parts of the brain





What influences child development?

- Intrauterine environment
- Endowments at birth
- Attachment and quality of parenting
- Physical and cultural environment





Optimal Child Development

Provision of a safe environment

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Attuned, reliable and consistent care

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Patterned, repetitive responses

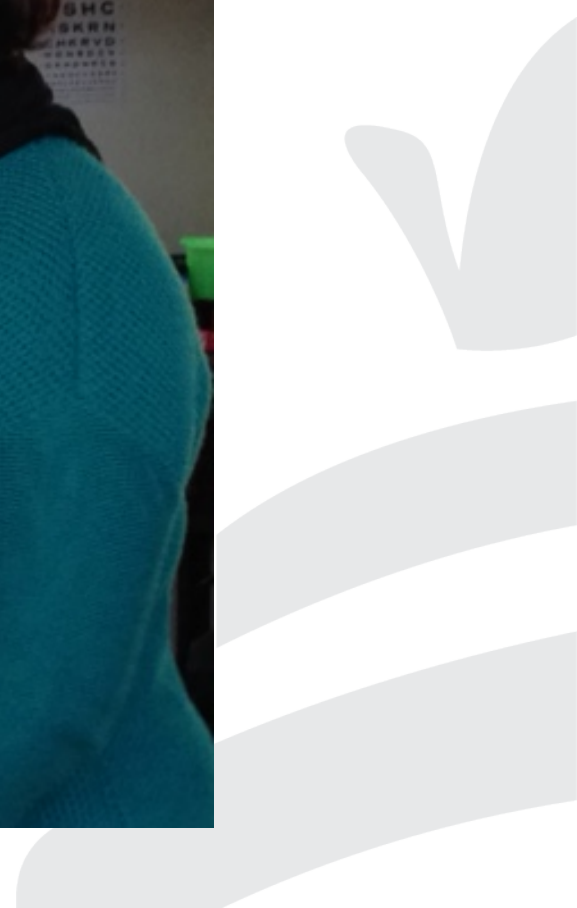
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The best approach to optimizing children's
development.

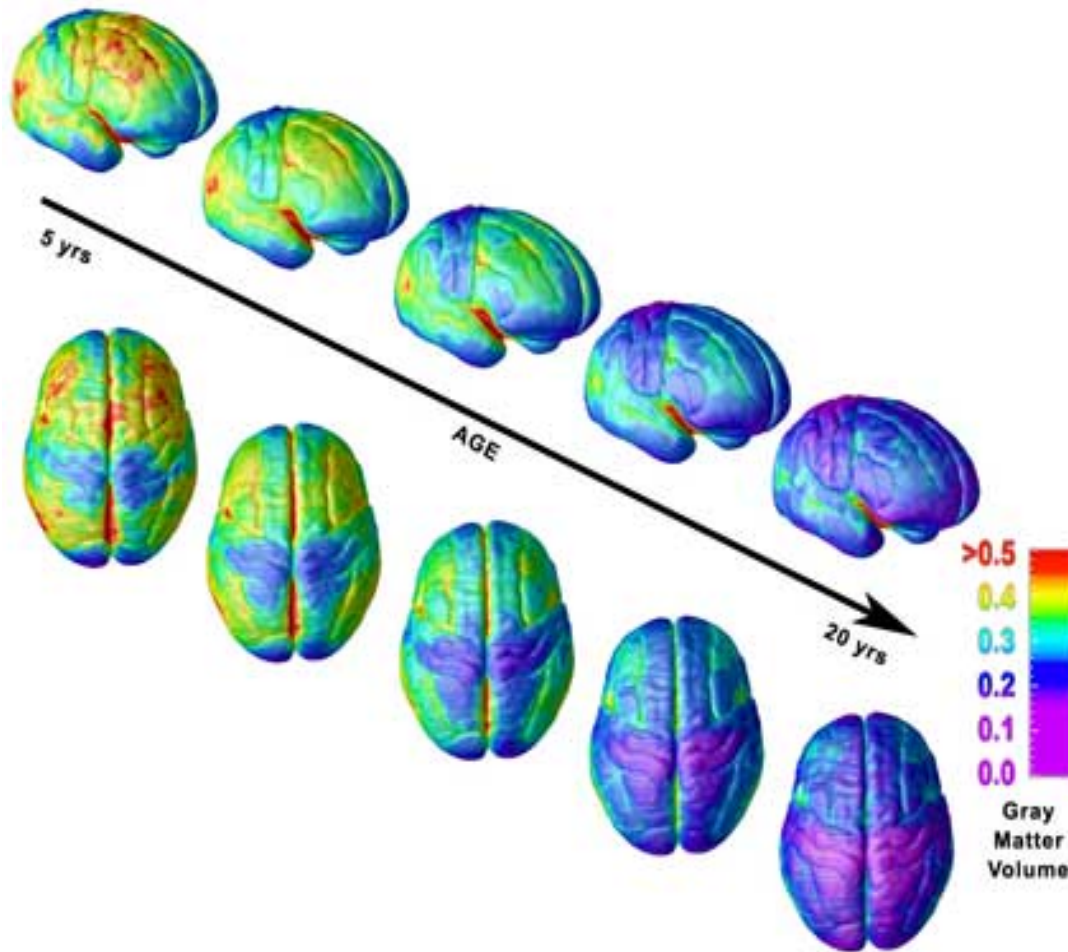




Adolescent Development






What Do We Know About the Teen Brain?



- Brain develops until mid-20's
- Major brain growth spurt during teen years
- “Use it or lose it” principal & brain “plasticity”



What Do We Know About the Brain?

- Brain matures in an environmental context
- Shift from concrete thinking to abstract thinking (“Feeling” brain to “Thinking” brain)
 - Present  Future
 - Increased impulse control
 - Increased emotional regulation
 - Concrete  Possibilities
 - Self centered  Perspective

Psychological & Emotional Development



Empathy
Positive self-regard
Sense of autonomy
Self-regulation skills
Positive coping skills
Conflict resolution skills
Optimism coupled with realism
Ability to comfort self and others
Recognition of right and wrong

DEVELOPMENTAL COMPETENCIES



Physical Development



Healthy Habits

Personal hygiene
Nutrition and exercise
Regular medical and dental care

Risk Management

Seat belts
Condoms
Bike helmets

Sense of belonging to society
Connectedness with parents/cargivers, peers, and other adults
Attachment to pro-social institutions such as school and church
Ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts
Commitment to civic engagement



Social Development

Essential Life Skills:

Literacy Budgeting and banking
Shopping and cooking
Transportation and Safety planning

Essential Vocational Skills:

Job applications and interviews
Time management
Knowledge of more than one culture
Critical thinking and reasoning
Decision-making and planning

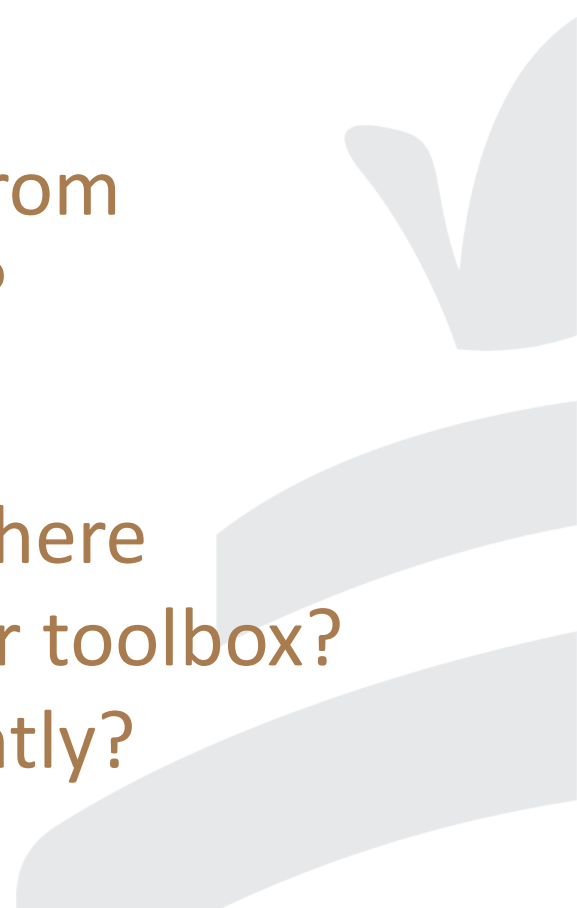


Intellectual Development



Strategies

- What is a strategy you have employed in your school that builds developmental competencies in your students?
- What is something you learned from experience that DOES NOT work?
- After reviewing this research, is there something you would add to your toolbox? Something you would do differently?





Self-Care Is Critical

“It is not uncommon for school professionals who have a classroom with one or more students struggling from the effects of trauma , to experience symptoms very much like those their students are exhibiting.”

-The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resilience, and Academic Success

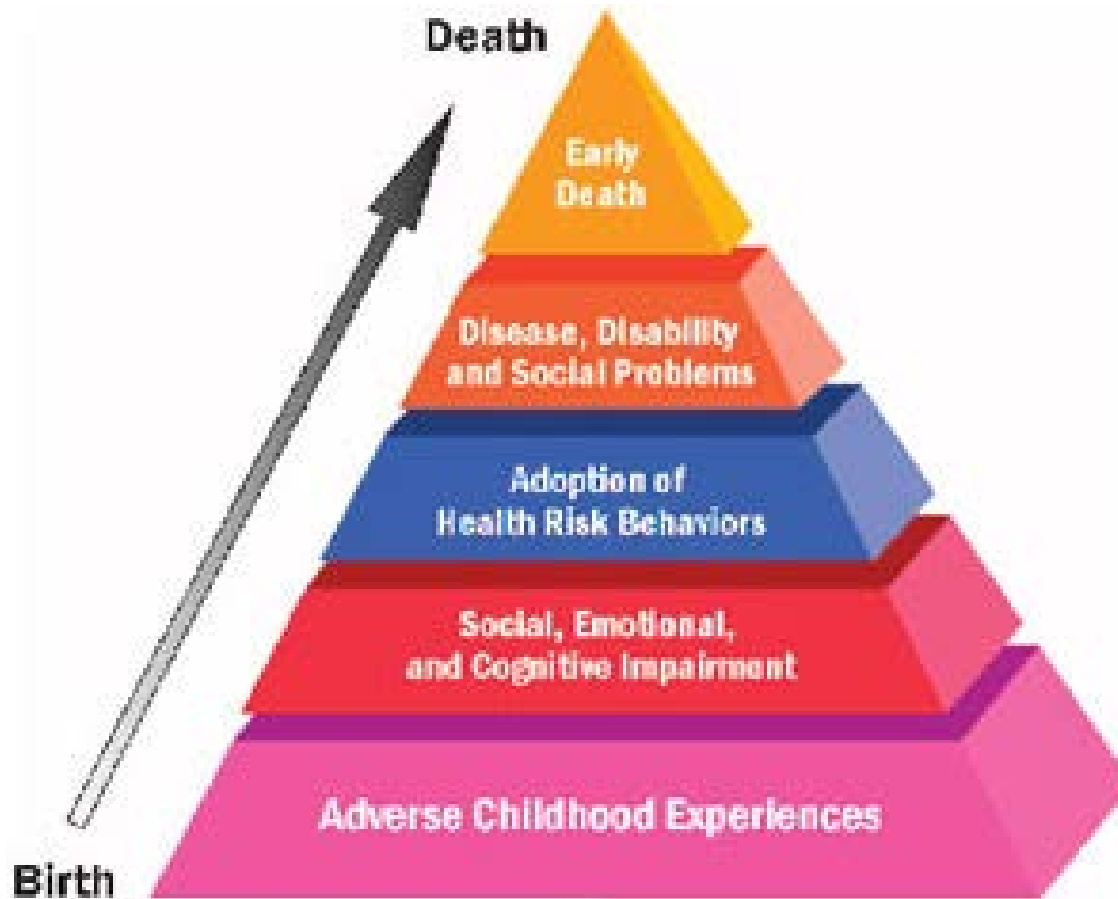




Considerations About Trauma

- Trauma is prevalent in the lives of children.
- Trauma affects learning and school performance, and causes physical and emotional distress.
- Children/teens experience the same emotions as adults, but may not have the words to express them.
- Some behaviors are protective in one environment, but problematic in another.
- Trauma sensitive schools help children feel safe to learn.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study






What Makes an Experience Traumatic?

- Overwhelming, very painful, very scary
- Fight or Flight incapacitated
- Threat to physical or psychological safety
- Loss of control
- Unable to regulate emotions





Types of Trauma

- Acute → earthquake
 - Chronic → sexual abuse
 - Toxic stress → community violence
 - Historical/Insidious → racism
 - Complex → caregiver neglect
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Trauma Impacts on Child Development

Trauma causes brain to adapt in ways that contributed to their survival (i.e. constant fight/flight/freeze).



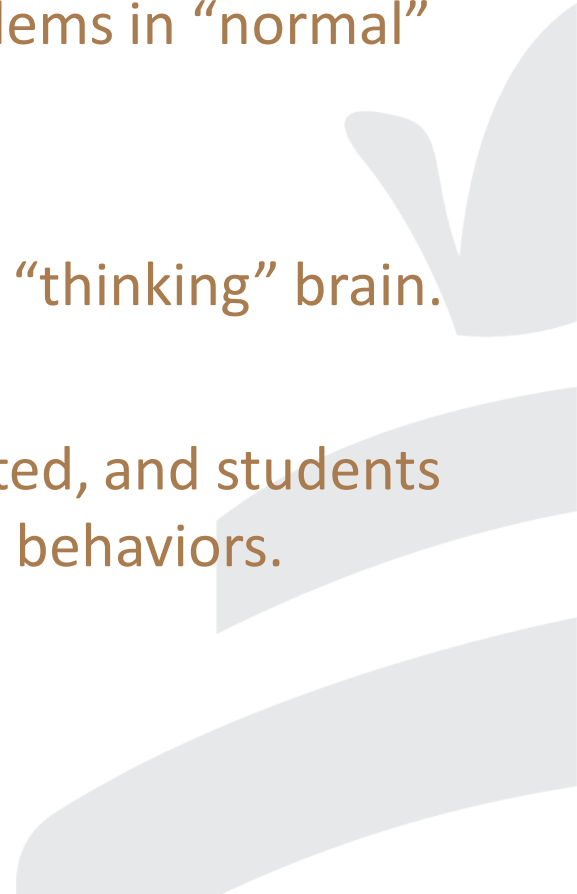
These adaptations can look like behavior problems in “normal” contexts, such as school.



When triggered, “feeling” brain dominates the “thinking” brain.



The normal developmental process is interrupted, and students may exhibit internalizing or externalizing behaviors.





How does trauma impact child brain development?

http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/three_core_concepts/toxic_stress/



Resources for Educators

- Adolescent Health Working Group:
www.ahwg.net
- Harvard Center on the Developing Brain:
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- Trauma-Sensitive School Checklist:
http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_mhtrauma
- School mental health program consultation:
California School-Based Health Alliance,
www.schoolhealthcenters.org



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