

The Possible Causes and Effects of Teenage PTSD

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Abstract: It is now well recognized that teenagers can develop PTSD following life-threatening traumatic events. This paper studies the causes and impacts of teenager Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). How PTSD affects their lives, and the psychological barriers of American children after being abused. Psychological disorders will deeply affect a child's life. It is an issue that deserves our attention.

1. Introduction

Imagine a teenage boy who has amnesia. Every time people ask him about his past, he says he can't remember. Imagine another situation that a teenage girl who is hypervigilant and constantly feel anxious about the environment. Either of them—or rather, both of them might have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to their traumatic experiences. Since they are teenagers, there would be slight differences between their causes and adults' causes of PTSD. There are many different types of symptom of adults' PTSD, including disorder memories, horrible dreams, self-containment, anxiety, numb, or insomnia that lasts for one month or more after a trauma [1]. To teenagers' PTSD, however, there are indeed similar symptoms but with different possible causes for that: the loss of family members, early education, or physically abuse. Either of them would leave serious effect on those teenagers.

2. What is PTSD

In recent years, social development and psychological care, as well as the in-depth study of human psychology, have been brought to people's attention. PTSD has become a very popular vocabulary. The emergence of a person's growth crisis can be divided into situational crisis and development crisis. The so-called development crisis does not mean an imminent disaster, but a significant inflection point in life. It is not only a decisive choice in the development of life, but also a collection of resources needed for growth, recovery and further differentiation. The crisis is an unusual or unexpected event whose condition is that the individual cannot predict or control [2].

Mental trauma (or psychological trauma) refers to those serious injuries in life. This abnormal state may be mild, and it can be cured automatically after a period of self-adjustment (usually within three months) [3]. However, there are also some mental injuries that will last for a long time, even for life. Severe mental trauma is called "post-traumatic stress disorder" in the classification of psychology and psychiatry [4]. People often judge the severity of mental trauma according to the severity of traumatic events. They think that if a person encounters a serious and terrible disaster; he is inclined to suffer severe mental trauma. On the other side, if the traumatic events are not severe, they will think that this person's mental damage will not be very severe. In fact, this view is very wrong. For a person with a strong heart, a very serious traumatic event may not cause serious mental trauma. On the contrary, for a person with relatively weak psychology, it is generally believed that an event that is not very serious is enough to cause serious mental trauma. Therefore, we judge the severity of a person's mental trauma not according to the severity of the warehouse injury, but according to the psychological, emotional and physiological reaction degree of the client.

3. The Possible Cause of PTSD

The diagnosis of PTSD is related to many factors, which can be roughly divided into different parts including family, social psychological factors (such as gender, age, race, marital status, economic status, social status, working status, education level, personality characteristics, defense style, childhood trauma, domestic violence, war, social support, etc.) and biological factors (such as gene, neuroendocrine, neurobiochemistry etc.) Among them, the primary traumatic event is the necessary condition of PTSD, which is extremely unpredictable.

Experiences may lead to symptoms which include physical or psychological abuse, abandonment, and sexual assault in childhood. There is a number of traumatic events that have been shown to cause PTSD in teenagers [5]. Gender and age, and the impact of the level of exposed and parental monitoring are factors contributing to adaptation to a traumatic event. Teenager's trauma reactions are influenced by parental reactions. In addition to imitating their parents' actions, they probably also inherited characteristics to react to traumatic events. Some events, for example the sudden loss of parents or siblings can striking impact the environment of the teenagers, and may lead to a mix of trauma and grief with PTSD [6]. Another factor cannot be neglected is that the children who live in refugee. It has a significant relationship between teenager's PTSD and the quantity of migration traumas experienced by the families. There is also a close correlation between the families migration pressure and teenager's depression [7].

4. The Symptom of PTSD

Generally speaking, TSD occurs within several days to half a year after the appearance of traumatic events, and the development of disease lingers at least one month, which can last for a few months, or years, or even more longer. Among them, acute PTSD generated within 3 months. Chronic PTSD diagnosed more than 3 months. Delayed PTSD, in the other way, is symptoms that occur at least 6 months after traumatic events.

The main symptoms of PTSD include bad dreams, personality changes, mental dissociation, numbness, insomnia, irritability, avoidance of things that can cause traumatic memories, over-vigilance, and easy to be frightened. It also cause symptoms like thoughts, feelings or dreams which have relevant with the events, mental or physical distress. The symptoms last longer than a month after the event. A person with PTSD is incline to suicide and harm himself or herself comparing with people who has no PTSD [8]. If some psychological checking tools can be used to value the mental health status of individuals early after traumatic events, it will be good to screen out high-risk groups of PTSD, which can provide efficient strategies for high-risk groups.

To normal family, the most traumatic event that would happen on a child is losing a close family member like grandparents, siblings, or even parents. While a child's mind hasn't fully grown yet, facing death directly might hurt him or her deeply. Normally parents shall lead their children to understand and accept death, but if the children have no correct guidance, the corpse with familiar faces would form trauma, and eventually it would have a higher chance to come into PTSD. PTSD would follow with life-threatening experience or witnessing a horrible event, like a natural disaster, a car accident, combat, or sexual assault. After those events, even adults might be influenced seriously, so children with weaker receptivity would obviously have a lower chance to be unaffected. To avoid this situation, they need to be guided properly.

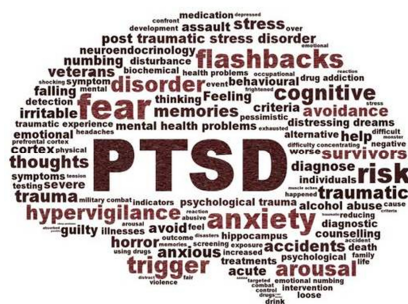


Figure 1. PTSD Effects

5. The Effects of PTSD

Whether in fetus, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood or old age, long-term exposure to stress factors may have an impact on brain structure, thus affecting cognitive function and mental health. This effect is related to exposure time, stress intensity and stress duration. When human beings experience stress in different periods (especially in the early years of fetus, infancy and childhood), it may have an impact on brain structure, resulting in learning function impairment, substance abuse and anxiety and depression related behaviors. Early experience of abuse may have different effects on individual psychology.

As we know, early education would have major effects on children. One of the most improper way to educate a child is mentally abuse them, like telling them they are useless, they are stupid, they are not good at study, etc. Children would remember the comments even after they grow up, and when a people have suffered for such a long period of time, it is PTSD. PTSD could affect a people's life seriously, especially on children. "When you have PTSD, the world feels unsafe. You may have upsetting memories, feel on edge, or have trouble sleeping. You may also try to avoid things that remind you of your trauma — even things you used to enjoy [9]." It's rather important for children to be taught in a way that is suitable for him or her, which is just as important as to not be mistreated by the people they love and respect.

If there's anything that would make an innocent child into a violent adult, it's child abuse. According to American SPCC, they received 4.1 million child maltreatment referral reports, and among them were 7.5 million children abuse in America. This is a horrible fact for anyone to learn about: 7.5 million children in America alone have been abused. About 80% of adults who were abused in their childhood met criteria for at least one psychological disorder [10]. Within this range, it's not hard to imagine that at least thousands of children would experience PTSD during their lives. Doesn't every child deserve a happy life?

6. Conclusion

Overall, every mistreatment in childhood might cause PTSD on children, especially when no other adults show those children the correct direction. The best way to avoid teenage PTSD is obviously not to abuse the kids. Adults should be patient and find the way fits the kid when the child is learning from the environment and the people around him or her. Children are all white paper: they take knowledge from others, and evolve from the knowledge. PTSD would affect a child's mind in a bad way; no child should experience reoccurring nightmares like that. Every generation is the future of their last generation; future shall not be filled with violence and pain.

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