

1 A Persistent Fear Response

The **chronic stress** of repeated **trauma** can produce **several biological reactions** such as a **persistent state of fear**. This adaptation, while beneficial in a hostile world, **can become a routine of life** that is hard to change, even if a child's surroundings improve.

A **generalised fear response** can lay the foundation for **future chronic stress** and **anxiety disorders** such as PTSD.

2

Hyperarousal

When a **child's developing brain** experiences **chronic, traumatic stress**, **neuro pathways** for the fear responses become routine and create memories **that trigger fear without conscious thought**.

Children **can become sensitive** to non-verbal cues, such as **eye contact or touch** and are more apt to **misinterpret them**.

Increased Internalising Symptoms

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Chronic trauma can lead to **chemical and structural changes** in the brain affecting the **regulation of emotions and stress**. Abuse and neglect can **affect the connection between the Amygdala and Hippocampus** which can initiate development of **depression and anxiety** in adolescence.

7 Minute Briefing

The Impact of Trauma on Brain Development and Functioning - Children

Unexpected Response to positive feedback

7

Children that experience **traumatic stress** are maybe **less responsive to positive stimuli** - **ambivalence or aggression** may be observed as a **response to praise**.

Complicated Social Interactions

Toxic stress can **hinder brain development** in such a way **that makes engaging with others in social settings** feel **uncomfortable and daunting** and trigger a **negative response**.

6

Delayed Development Milestones

Failure to meet a child's **cognitive, emotional, or social needs** constitutes as **neglect**. **Lack of stimulation** during early years **can lead to weak neuro pathways**, inhibiting a **child's ability to achieve developmental milestones**.

5

Diminished Executive Functioning

Executive functioning typically includes **3 distinct features: working memory, inhibitory control** (filtering of thoughts and impulses) and **cognitive flexibility** (adjusting to demands).

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At an early age, **trauma and chronic stress** can **cause deficits** in executive functioning such as **lower academic achievement, intellectual deterioration, and short attention span**.