

Effects of Childhood Abuse

By Scarlett Maier

Child abuse has been a problem for centuries, but the enormity of the problem has only been focused on in the last few years. People tend to think that childhood abuse is not a large problem because most child abuse is never reported. Childhood abuse has negative impacts in both the short and long term. In the short term, children mainly show physical effects. Children often obtain many visible marks such as bruises, scratches, burn marks, and broken bones. Other immediate effects are not as visible, especially when sexual abuse is involved. According to Mental Health Weekly Digest, childhood sexual abuse includes fondling and petting, oral sex, actual or attempted penetration, voyeurism, indecent exposure, inducement to engage in sexual activity and sexual exploitation (prostitution). Physical effects of sexual abuse often aren't visible because they are inside the body. For instance, "girls who survived substantiated cases of sexual abuse received 2.1 times as many diagnoses of urinary health issues and 1.4 times as many diagnosis of genital health issues than girls in the general population" ("Childhood sexual abuse: Mental and physical after-effects closely linked."¹). These issues wouldn't be noticed by anyone besides the victim. The most common urinary health issues to stem from sexual abuse include cystitis, inflammation of the bladder, and

urinary incontinence, or loss of bladder control. While most of the short term effects are physical, victims often show both physical and mental effects in the long term.

In the long term, there are many physical and psychological consequences of childhood abuse. Physical aspects include bones that haven't healed correctly over the years and, and according to the article "Men and Women Have Different Responses to Childhood Abuse", those who have suffered childhood abuse are far more likely to become alcoholics or take drugs. In addition, journalist Kari Lydersen says that women who have suffered childhood abuse are 27.7 more likely to become prostitutes.

Furthermore, many people who have been abused as children grow up and surround themselves with abusive people. For example, a woman named Dianne Lake was neglected and abused by her parents. This eventually led to her joining the Manson Family. The Manson Family was a murdering cult led by a man named Charles Manson. When Charles Manson decided Dianne Lake was not submissive enough, he "punched her in the mouth; kicked her across the room; hit her over the head with a chair leg; and whipped her with an electrical cord. Despite the treatment, she stayed" (Bugliosi 277).

Past the long term physical effects, there are many mental effects as well. It is fairly common for children to develop PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as depression after years of abuse. When interviewing adults who had been abused as

children, it was found that those “reporting a history of childhood physical abuse have significantly higher rates of anxiety disorders, ... and antisocial behaviour, and are more likely to have one or more disorders than were those without such a history” (“Men and Women Have Different Responses to Childhood Abuse” 2). In most cases, the anxiety disorders show up as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder. Antisocial behavior includes lack of empathy or compassion, aggression, arrogance, and lack of remorse. These behaviors can cause the cycle of violence to continue, and in extreme cases, can make a criminal. Clearly, abuse has multiple negative consequences and child abuse needs to stop. In order to do this, schools need to do a better job screening for child abuse and neglect. If schools do a better job of screening, child abuse could become a thing of the past.

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