

Trauma, PTSD and Children and stress

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What do we know about children and war??

Räsänen E. Excessive life changes during childhood and their effects on mental and physical health in adulthood. Acta Paedopsychiatr. 1992;55(1):19-24

- During World War II, Finnish children were sent to Sweden to be protected from war events. In Sweden they lived in fosterhomes. The majority could return to Finland but not all. In Kuopio County Council, Eila Räsänen compared those children who returned to Finland "the war children" with children who had stayed in their families during the war.
- The results showed:
- The children who had stayed in Finland suffered from chronic illnesses more than the group of war children, esp cardiovascular diseases.
- As regards mental illnesses the groups were similar.
- The group of war children was more capable than the control group at recognizing and expressing their feelings
- Conclusion: It seems reasonable to protect children from war experiences

Mando Dalianis-Karambatzakis 1994

Children in turmoil during the Greek civil war 1946-49 : today's adults : a longitudinal study on children confined with their mothers in prison. Thesis.

Conclusions: High IQ protects; Essential to provide early support

Ahmad A, Sofi MA, Sundelin-Wahlsten V, von Knorring AL.
Posttraumatic stress disorder in children after the military
operation "Anfal" in Iraqi Kurdistan.
Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry. 2000 Dec;9(4):235-43

Five years after the military operation "the gas-attack
Anfal" in Iraqi Kurdistan, Posttraumatic stress disorder
(PTSD) was reported in 87% of children and 60% of
their caregivers

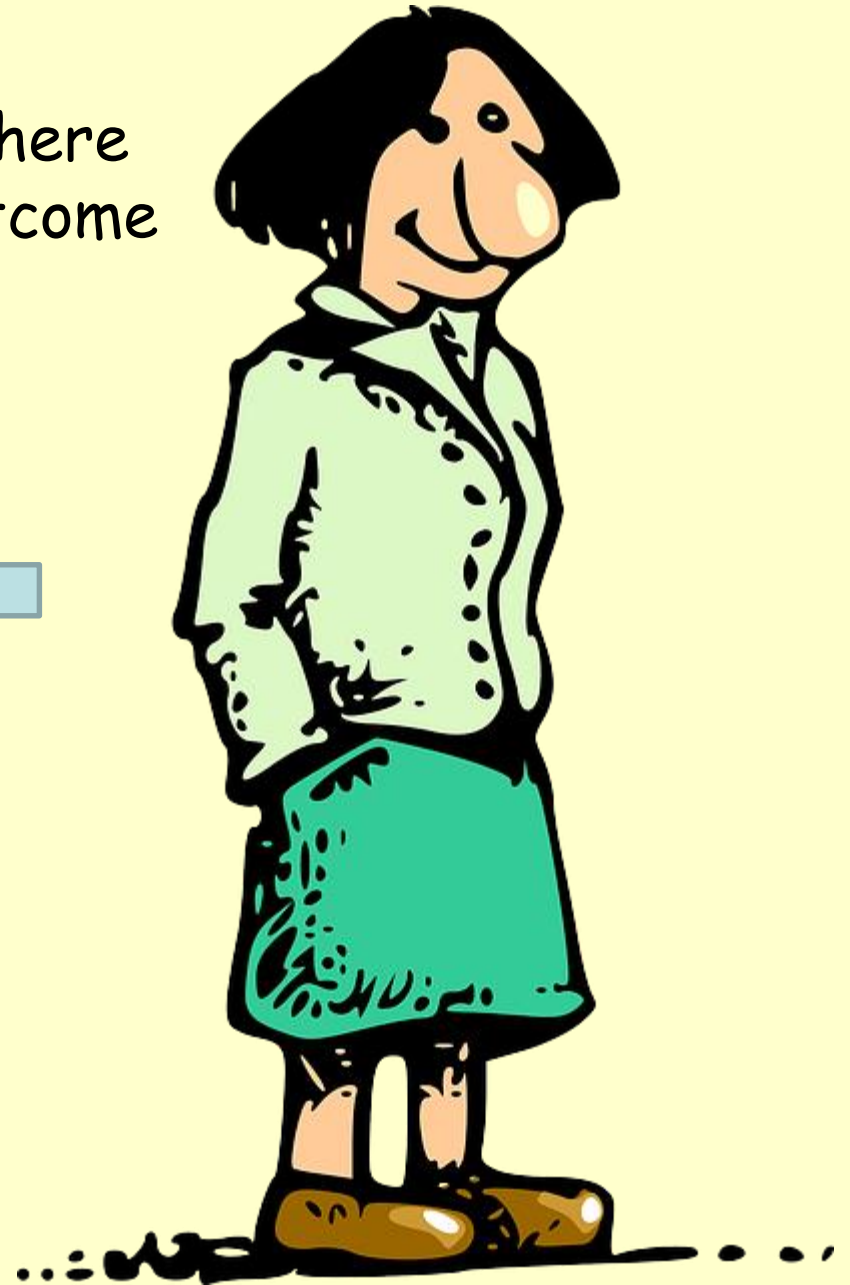
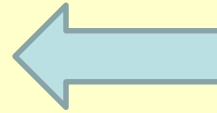
Conclusion: Severe stress may give longstanding effects

What do we know about children and stress??

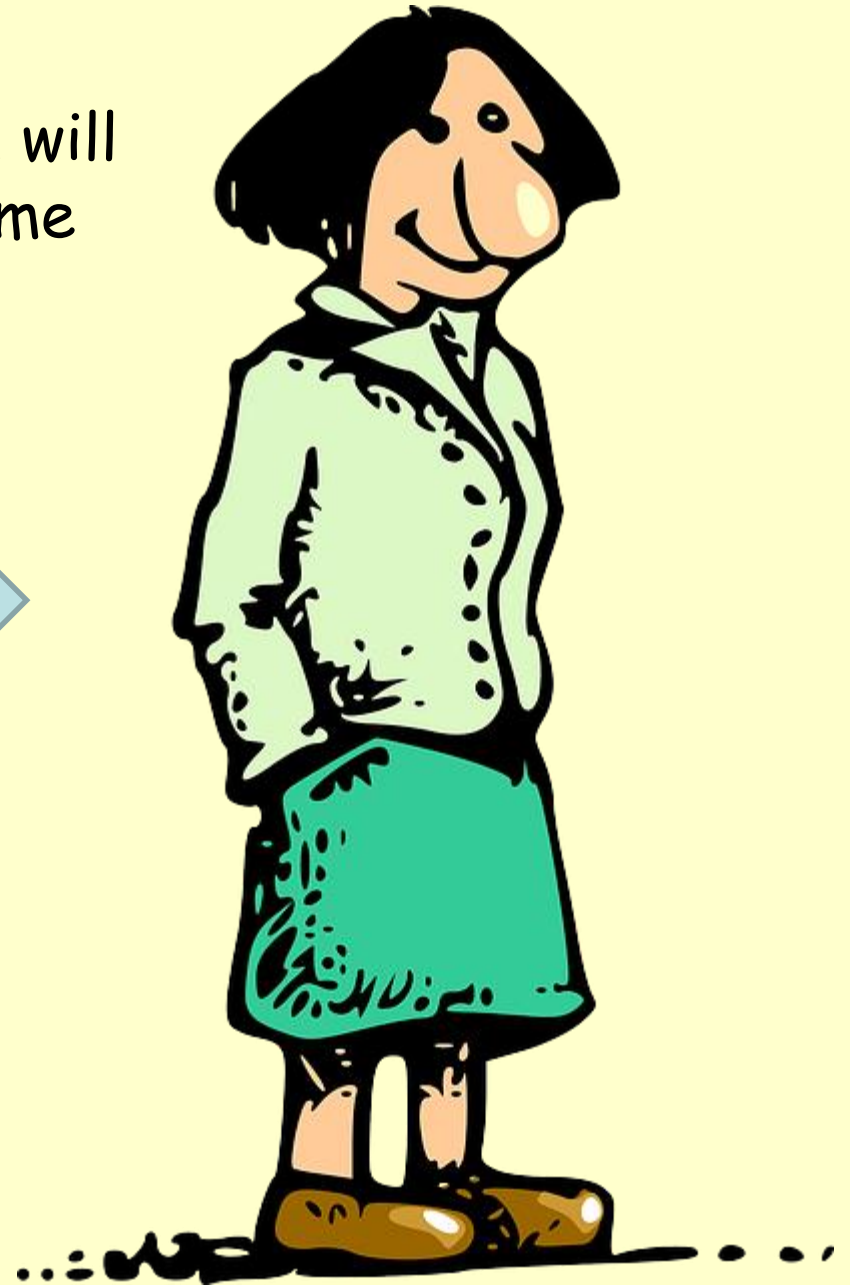
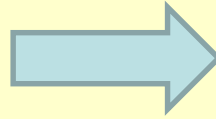
A problem

- When do children start to show "adult symptoms"
- Do symptoms described among adults exist among growing children?
- Are there "immature" psychopathological symptoms among children preceding later adult symptoms?

Retrospective view:
which symptoms were there
to predict the adult outcome



Prospective view:
which symptoms, if any, will
predict the adult outcome



There seems to be two different ways for reactions

1. Psychic Anxiety, stress symptoms, personality effects, PTSD and conversion
2. Somatic Anxiety, stress symptoms, motoric symptoms, personality effects, defects of moral control, psychopathy

- 1. Psychic Anxiety, stress symptoms, personality effects, PTSD and conversion

Symptoms seen after long-standing emotional stress

- Rumination
- Hysteria, paralysis, deafness, loss of vision
- Limping
- Astasia-abasia
- Extreme tiredness, bedridden
- Apathy
- Restlessness
- Simulation

Vulnerability, stress and the development of traumatic reactions



An epidemic of apathetic children in Sweden

Bedridden, fed through naso-
gastric tube



2. Somatic Anxiety, stress symptoms,
motoric symptoms, personality effects,
defects of moral control, psychopathy

Anxiety, stress and somatic symptoms - somatic reactions

- A wide individual range of symptoms: i.e high pulse-rate, sweating, flush, involuntarily leaking of urine and stools etc.
- An accelerated number of action potentials in the muscles seems to be universal - "tension"

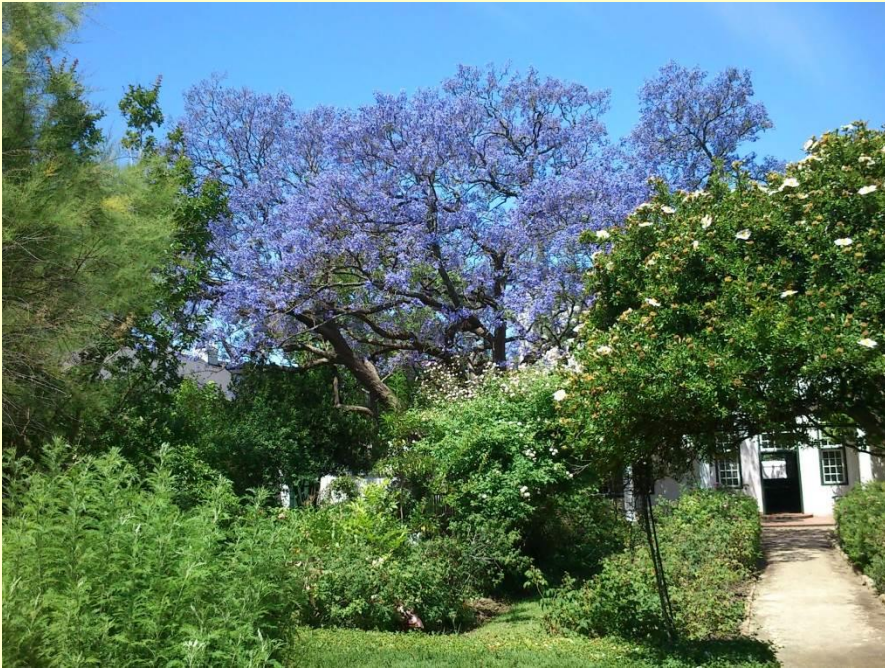
Personality

- Psychopathic features
- Lack of empathy
- No remorse when hurting others
- No psychic anxiety
- Does not feel guilt

Conclusions

- Children at special risk to show severe symptoms from emotional traumatic experiences are those having:
- Low IQ
- Psychosocially and emotionally disturbed home environments
- Disturbed attachment
- Showing aggressive acting out

The end



Thank you for listening
and let's discuss