



Scared Sick: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease

Robin Karr-Morse , Meredith S. Wiley

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The first years of human life are more important than we ever realized. In *Scared Sick*, Robin Karr-Morse connects psychology, neurobiology, endocrinology, immunology, and genetics to demonstrate how chronic fear in infancy and early childhood—when we are most helpless—lies at the root of common diseases in adulthood. Compassionate and based on the latest research, *Scared Sick* will unveil a major public health crisis. Highlighting case studies and cutting-edge scientific findings, Karr-Morse shows how our innate fight-or-flight system can injure us if overworked in the early stages of life. Persistent stress can trigger diabetes, heart disease, obesity, depression, and addiction later on.

Scared Sick: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease Details

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From Reader Review Scared Sick: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease for online ebook

Laurie says

Unfortunately, the title of this book is not borne out in its text. Very little of substance here, and often the references cited are less than reliable sources. Other books, such as "Is It All in Your Head?: True Stories of Imaginary Illness" by Suzanne O'Sullivan, are much more substantive and compelling.

Tirzah says

Love the biological and neurological pieces. So important, yet so overlooked in the healthcare system. Not to mention how early childhood trauma, dismal parenting/care-giving and weak family systems lie at the heart of just about everything wrong in our culture. Toxic adults taking care of vulnerable children...scary! Without intervention, it's a viscous cycle of repetition, when those same kids grow up and have children of their own.

Karen says

This book is rich with research, information, and explanation regarding the impact of trauma. Now that I've read the book and gotten the overview I need to go back and 'study' it. Also, I am completely fascinated that more and more research is 'proving' what has been Biblically espoused for centuries.

Deb says

As a therapist/traumatologist I was very interested in finding a book that explained the connecting between early life trauma and the physical illnesses I was noticing in my clients hitting middle age. Also, as a member of my area's Trauma Institute, I was interested in finding a speaker on this topic to come to our annual conference. So I was very excited to learn about this work and to have the author come to speak to our members and local community of helpers. Overall I was able to cull some very interesting and useful information from the book about the physiological changes that occur when one experiences trauma. What I thought was less than helpful about this book is its singular focus on how women are responsible and to blame for any difficulty a fetus or child experiences that translate to trauma and certain ill health by middle age. Wildly extrapolating from animal studies the authors seem to be saying that Mothers (apparently not fathers) who do things like go back to work before a child is 4 1/2 years old cause trauma equal to abuse on their kids who will die young after horrible illnesses. There's about 100 pages of anti feminist writing in here which for me greatly detracted from the overall message and usefulness of this book.

Jean-Paul Eberle says

This is a much needed contribution to the field where there is a desperate need to evolve our understanding of trauma in a way that is developmentally appropriate and "biologically respectful." It is shocking how blind we have been to the most vulnerable among us, "outsourcing" child-rearing through various marketing, media-driven, and culturally-condoned practices and self-serving views, as if they could possibly substitute for a primary relationship that is interactively-rich, consistent, and attuned. The good news is our burgeoning knowledge (i.e. - ala neuroscience, psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrinology, etc.) and the inherent "workability" of it all; the bad news is time and timing is of the essence. The time is now.

Hands down, a fantastic book that emphasizes thoroughly and in detail the disease-trauma connection that has its roots in the earliest moments of life.

Elizabeth says

from the library

TOC from library computer

Monster in the closet : trauma in the body --

Things that go bump in the night : the biology of stress and trauma -- Scared sick : how experience becomes biology --

Little traumas : prenatal and perinatal --

Little traumas : infancy and toddlerhood --

Nowhere to run : when parents are the source of trauma --

No place to hide : the role of genetics and epigenetics --

Security blanket : the biology of secure attachment --

Rock a bye : therapy and beyond --

It's a small world after all --

Appendix A. Preventing trauma to young children during divorce --

Appendix B. Maltreatment in childhood (correlations) --

Appendix C. Recognizing trauma : early signs of distress in preschoolers -- Appendix D. Working with traumatized children --

Appendix E. Effective programs and policies.

Elizabeth says

from the library

hardcover

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Tom says

I found this book a very good compilation of research informed by some of the new neurosciences, epigenetics and population research. There is a great deal to be gleaned from a careful reading of it. One quibble I have is the number of references that cite a telephone conversations that the author(s) had with some noted researchers. That is pretty weak, but there are many other useful sources in the notes pages. Begins with a deeply concerning picture of the 'health' of the American population which has one of the shortest life expectancies of any industrialized nation; twenty-six percent of adults over eighteen suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder; among the seven largest industrialized nations in the world, the U> ranks last on infant mortality rates and longevity; the well-being of American children ranks twentieth among twenty-one rich democracies, behind Poland, Greece and Hungary;; one in one hundred infants each year is born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), the leading known preventable cause of mental retardation and birth defects in the Western world and a leading known cause of learning disabilities; more children have FASD than are affected by autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida and sudden infant death syndrome combined.

Addiction transfer (switching from overeating to another substance such as alcohol or drugs) is common in people who have had gastric bypass surgery ranging from 5 to 30%. P5. Obese people, alcoholics and drug addicts have in common below average levels of dopamine. Quoting Gabor Mate: "...the susceptible people are the ones with these impaired brain circuits [below average dopamine levels] and the impairment is caused by early adversity, rather than by genetics." P6.

Symptoms as solutions to bigger, deeper problems. "Obesity was key to their sense of self-protection." quoting Kaiser Permanente study p7. Use of coping substances such as alcohol, nicotine and drugs can also be viewed as attempts to find a solution to deep problems and then, in turn, they become the intermediate variables for health problems. Even people with high ACE scores but no other risk factors had a 30-70% higher risk of ischemic heart disease in adulthood. The picture that emerged was that substances such as alcohol, nicotine and drugs are addictive more because of adverse early childhood experiences and less due to intrinsic addictivity. Use of them is attempt at healing. "The research on an extensive list of disease traditionally thought to be genetically driven is now being reconsidered in the light of the ACE findings, which point to a new understanding of these diseases as the result of a rich interaction among genetics, physiology and experience." P 14.

The authors use slightly different definitions of trauma in the book and it is important to understand how they use the term. "Although child abuse and neglect are obvious forms of trauma, we are learning that it doesn't take either to constitute trauma for a very young human. For a baby or young child, emotional trauma may not look like the catastrophes we typically connect with the word trauma. In fact, most trauma in early childhood-from the First World to the Third World-is accidental, and its major cause is ignorance."p95 "Recall Annie Rogers's definition of trauma as 'any experience which by its nature is in excess of what we can manage or bear.'"p97 and "Lieberman defines trauma as anything that results in the disruption of the 'secure base'-essentially any experience that seriously disrupts the physical and emotional balance and security provided by the child's primary relationship with an adult, typically the mother."p103. Infants and children younger than 2 are especially vulnerable because of the early development of the nervous system. The book is very useful in clearly summarizing the recent literature on neurological development. Traumas that occur in these early years are essentially encoded into the nervous system and

physical body. These 'memories' are not accessible through language since they were laid down prior to the acquisition of language. In a sense they form the body's unconscious. They are important because they influence later development and susceptibility to a myriad of illnesses. Healthy early attachment is essential to the development of normal physiological regulation as well as emotional regulation.

Newer findings in the area of epigenetics suggest ways in which some traits pass from generation to generation. In one study carried out in the Netherlands, it was found that girls born during the famine in that area in 1944 who were malnourished in utero during the first trimester of pregnancy were born normal in size, but as adults were likely to give birth to smaller than average babies. "Subsequent research has revealed that girls born small for their size typically have smaller uteruses, which in turn constrain the growth of the next generation of babies."p159

Given the above fairly broad definition of trauma it is clear that everyone suffers some forms of trauma every day [I was certainly traumatized by the cold this morning]. What is important to add is that the ability to suffer trauma without adverse effects lies in healthy physiological and emotional regulatory systems. Before these develop the infant and child are highly vulnerable. "While many diseases, including several forms of cancer, resulting from the interaction of our physiology with negative factors in our environments, the converse is also true: health and healing are imparted from constructive environments, particularly relational experiences in early life." "The theory is that disease results from the conjunction of individual susceptibility with external threat, and that health results from the match between one's needs and vulnerabilities and what the environment provides. This strand of research looks closely at 'reactive' individuals, whose who are the most susceptible to disease and morbidity. Rather than being a genetic rarity, the individuals who are at highest risk of illness and death from the interaction of biological sensitivities with environmental risks are typically 15 to 20 percent of any given population."

Rebecca says

What might be basic information for others is all new to me. Now having gotten a large window of the many scenarios of the types of trauma we receive and how something effects us so different, helps in understanding my own and all other emotions as adults. Just wish it had more hope toward the end of the book and leave us with more alerts to the sensitivity of childhood and how it effects us as adults.

Alice Burba says

An excellent resource for learning about ACEs. Extremely well written and detailed.

Kim says

Excellent

Edina says

Interesting read. First few years are pivotal but the consequences for the rest of the child's life are

tremendous--affecting things like their risk of heart disease/diabetes to affecting growth hormone and issues with socialization. Also, fascinating what a difference it made in Colorado and Tennessee when nurses followed up on child care for the first two years. The risk of abuse, incarceration, and economic strain dropped like crazy.

Michelle says

Important, but dry, and not what I expected or wanted. Recommended for people who plan on having children. Full review: <http://bit.ly/ZGeCki>

Amy says

I feel this book was written more for doctors and therapists, especially those who practice the different treatment modalities the authors talk about.

I have to agree with another reader about the somewhat fatalistic tendencies this book has in regards to those of us already traumatized. I could feel my heart pounding reading some of the chapters, feeling quite hopeless.

In addition, I thought this would be more on actual childhood trauma verses the mostly talked about infant and pre-birth or birth trauma. I guess what I got most from this book is that I may try one of the treatments they recommend as could-be helpful.

Roslyn says

The first chapter is really annoying: it's all because of childhood trauma! Obesity, everything! Because definitely kids today are more traumatized than kids in the past ever were.... But after that the book is really interesting. I have actually read quite a few of the studies referred to in this book so I can't say much of the information was new to me but I can say this book was not boring, definitely written in a "sensationalizing" style, which I enjoy but also find a little over-the-top and untrustworthy. I thought this book was very similar to Tears and Tantrums except that Tears and Tantrums was a bit more optimistic and had a lot less drama.

The most interesting thing in this book was when the author talked about "ACE" scores. Someone's ACE score (early childhood trauma) can accurately predict whether they will have "addictive personalities" or "seek healing" through various drugs and other addictions. I had not heard of that so I enjoyed that. However, 23andMe.com analyzed my DNA and informed me that I am genetically predisposed to "excess." So.... I will let science keep fighting about that one and continue to focus on solutions. This book did have a tiny chapter on various solutions and different kinds of therapy that I also enjoyed.

All that being said, since most of the info in this book was not new to me, I pretty much skimmed this book so maybe it was better (or worse) than I give it credit for.

