

RESEARCH ABSTRACT

Sticks, stones, and hurtful words: relative effects of various forms of childhood maltreatment.

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OBJECTIVE: Childhood maltreatment is an important psychiatric risk factor. Research has focused primarily on the effects of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence. Parental verbal aggression has received little attention as a specific form of abuse. This study was designed to delineate the impact of parental verbal aggression, witnessing domestic violence, physical abuse, and sexual abuse, by themselves and in combination, on psychiatric symptoms.

METHOD: Symptoms and exposure ratings were collected from 554 subjects 18-22 years of age (68% female) who responded to advertisements. The Verbal Abuse Questionnaire was used to assess exposure to parental verbal aggression. Outcome measures included dissociation and symptoms of "limbic irritability," depression, anxiety, and anger-hostility. Comparisons were made by using effect sizes.

RESULTS: Verbal aggression was associated with moderate to large effects, comparable to those associated with witnessing domestic violence or nonfamilial sexual abuse and larger than those associated with familial physical abuse. Exposure to multiple forms of maltreatment had an effect size that was often greater than the component sum. Combined exposure to verbal abuse and witnessing domestic violence had a greater negative effect on some measures than exposure to familial sexual abuse.

CONCLUSIONS: Parental verbal aggression was a potent form of maltreatment. Exposure to multiple forms of abuse was associated with very large effect sizes. Most maltreated children had been exposed to multiple types of abuse, and the number of different types is a critically important factor.

Full reference:

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CLINICAL ABSTRACT

The older female patient with a complex chronic dissociative disorder.

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Dissociative disorders are rarely considered in the diagnostic assessment of older women, despite the fact that the existence, appearance and characteristics of certain dissociative disorders in older populations has been known and described since the 1980s. This communication reviews the core phenomena of Dissociative Identity Disorder and related forms of Dissociative Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, the natural history of their phenomena from youth to old age, and describes common presentations of Dissociative Disorders in older women. It also reviews the treatment of complex chronic dissociative disorders and discusses alternative approaches to their psychotherapy in the older female patient. It is crucial to recognize and respect the importance of appreciating individual differences among older dissociative patients and to individualize their treatments accordingly.

Full reference

Kluff, R. P. (2007). The older female patient with a complex chronic dissociative disorder. *J. Women Aging*, 19, 119-137.