

Intergenerational
Transmission of Trauma:
Does Prenatal Life Offer
An Opportunity?

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How Do Traumatic Experiences Move

From Here

To Here



Audio

Could A Prenate Be Listening?

*To our experiences
our words
our thoughts
our feelings
our wounds?*

*Could this influence their development and
sense of self?*

**TRAUMA
CROSSES GENERATIONS**

- Parental experiences prior to child's birth
- In utero experiences
- Parent  Child Attachment
- Parent  Child Interactions

**"TRAUMATIZED PEOPLE BECOME STUCK,
STOPPED IN THEIR GROWTH..."**

*"Being traumatized means continuing to organize your life as if the trauma were still going on—unchanged and immutable—
as every new encounter or event is contaminated by the past."*

"The survivor's energy now becomes focused on suppressing inner chaos, at the expense of spontaneous involvement in their life."

Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps The Score*

***WHAT HAS HISTORY TAUGHT US
ABOUT TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES
THROUGH FIELDS LIKE
NEUROLOGY AND ENDOCRINOLOGY?***

**Our bodies do not forget.
At a cellular level.**

***TEACHINGS FROM
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS'
OFFSPRING***

- Holocaust survivors' children and grandchildren suffer
 - Low cortisol levels
 - PTSD symptoms
 - More likely to occur with maternal PTSD

***TEACHINGS FROM
ORAL TRADITIONS***

- Historical Traumas "Soul Wounds"
 - American Indians
 - African Americans
 - Alaskan Natives

TEACHINGS FROM A NATURAL DISASTER

- 1998 Ice Storms in Quebec
 - Outcomes for children of mothers pregnant during storms
 - As toddlers....lower general intellectual functioning & language development
 - At 5½....obesity
 - At 13....greater insulin secretions

ACTIVITY

TEACHINGS FROM WORLD TRADE CENTER ATTACKS

- World Trade Center Attacks
 - Cortisol levels
 - Low levels in women pregnant who were in the buildings and diagnosed with PTSD
 - Low levels in infants born to those women

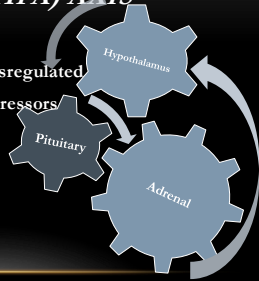
*DOES THIS KNOWLEDGE
PROVIDE AN
OPPORTUNITY
TO INFLUENCE THE
TRANSMISSION OF
TRAUMA DURING
PRENATAL LIFE?*

*INTERPRETATIONS OF THE
DEVELOPING CHILD*

- Sounds and Movements
- Mother's experiences
- Father's presence and influence

*HYPOTHALAMIC-PITUITARY-
ADRENAL (HPA) AXIS*

- HPA Axis can become dysregulated
- Atypical response to stressors
- Impacts:
 - metabolism
 - immunity
 - memory
 - learning



NEURAL INTEGRATION

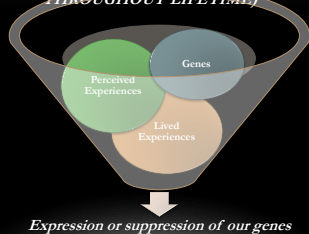
- Daniel Siegel presents in *The Mindful Therapist*
- At about 6 months (24 weeks) in utero, the medial prefrontal cortex is developing
- Medial prefrontal cortex integrates (“links”) all areas of the brain
- Meditation enhances the strength (makes physically “thicker”) of the medial prefrontal cortex

NEURAL INTEGRATION

- Functions of the medial prefrontal cortex include:
 - Bodily Regulation, Attuned Communication, Emotional Balance
 - Flexibility (mental), Fear Extinction, Intuition
 - Empathy (you), Insight (me), Morality (we)

INTERACTION OF GENETICS WITH EXPERIENCES

(FROM ABOUT SIX MONTHS IN UTERO AND THROUGHOUT LIFETIME)



WHAT IF WE COULD INTERVENE DURING PRENATAL MONTHS?

- Offering hope of:
 - Parental healing
 - Differentiating between the parental and the developing child's experiences of the trauma
 - Processing the developing child's experiences before birth
 - Possibilities of preparing the developing child for life after birth

WHAT COULD THAT MEAN?

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