

COMPLEX TRAUMA IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

serve as a vitally needed starting place for research, treatment development, and policy

initiatives bearing on children's adaptation to complex trauma exposure.

**Table 1:
Domains of Impairment in Children Exposed to Complex Trauma**

I. Attachment

Uncertainty about the reliability and predictability of the world
Problems with boundaries
Distrust and suspiciousness
Social isolation
Interpersonal difficulties
Difficulty attuning to other people's emotional states
Difficulty with perspective taking
Difficulty enlisting other people as allies

II. Biology

Sensorimotor developmental problems
Hypersensitivity to physical contact
Analgesia
Problems with coordination, balance, body tone
Difficulties localizing skin contact
Somatization
Increased medical problems across a wide span, e.g., pelvic pain, asthma, skin problems, autoimmune disorders, pseudoseizures

III. Affect Regulation

Difficulty with emotional self-regulation
Difficulty describing feelings and internal experience
Problems knowing and describing internal states
Difficulty communicating wishes and desires

IV. Dissociation

Distinct alterations in states of consciousness
Amnesia
Depersonalization and derealization
Two or more distinct states of consciousness, with impaired memory for state-based events

V. Behavioral Control

Poor modulation of impulses
Self-destructive behavior
Aggression against others
Pathological self-soothing behaviors
Sleep disturbances
Eating disorders
Substance abuse
Excessive compliance
Oppositional behavior
Difficulty understanding and complying with rules
Communication of traumatic past by reenactment in day-to-day behavior or play (sexual, aggressive, etc.)

VI. Cognition

Difficulties in attention regulation and executive functioning
Lack of sustained curiosity
Problems with processing novel information
Problems focusing on and completing tasks
Problems with object constancy
Difficulty planning and anticipating
Problems understanding own contribution to what happens to them
Learning difficulties
Problems with language development
Problems with orientation in time and space
Acoustic and visual perceptual problems
Impaired comprehension of complex visual-spatial patterns

VII. Self-Concept

Lack of a continuous, predictable sense of self
Poor sense of separateness
Disturbances of body image
Low self-esteem
Shame and guilt