



HOW CONSEQUENCES OF MALTREATMENT AND NEGLECT OVERLAP WITH FASD* SYMPTOMS

Abstract/ Presentation outline by Helen Oakwater for EUFASD
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Its not just the womb experience which can be toxic. What happens to a child afterwards can also have a dramatic effect.

If the post birth experience was negative due to maltreatment and/or neglect it can compound the problems created in-utero through maternal drug and alcohol abuse. This legacy of trauma (pre and post birth) impacts brain formation, all the body systems and is difficult to unravel.

Sometimes when so many symptoms overlap, a diagnosis of a condition such as FASD (or ADHD, ADD OD, etc) can stop parents and professionals considering additional root causes. Often its tough to see beyond the child's presenting behaviour and the existing diagnoses.

However we know "the body keeps the score" (Bessel Van Der Kolk) and trauma is stored as a sensory memory.

Sometimes a child's reaction seems disproportionate to the current situation. What if the presenting behaviour is the result of an old toxic sensory memory being stimulated? A reminder of gnawing hunger or an angry face which meant "pain is coming"? These memories are unconscious, deep and easily retriggered.

For some adopted and fostered children their early experiences result in hyper vigilance, poor executive functioning skills, impaired impulse control, lack of cause and effect thinking - all very similar to symptoms in FASD and other 'conditions'. These intertwined components are hard to unpack, yet understanding them provides another dimension to caring for children who have experienced multilayered trauma.

Helen Oakwater has a reputation as an engaging and inspiring speaker. In her presentation she will explore trauma triggered behaviour, its roots, causes and some strategies for living with these complex children. The session will be interactive and offer practical ways to manage the child and yourself in the moment (now) and in the long term (future proofing).

* FASD = Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder