



Child Neglect and Brain Development

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Neglect Definition

Neglect is the chronic failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child under 18 with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunity, protection, and supervision



General Criteria Used in Determining Neglect*

1. Malnourished, ill clad, dirty, without proper shelter or sleeping arrangements
2. Without supervision, unattended
3. Ill and lacking essential medical care
4. Denied normal experiences that produce feelings of being loved, wanted, secure and worthy (emotional neglect)
5. Failing to attend school regularly
6. Exploited, overworked
7. Emotionally disturbed due to constant friction in the home, marital discord, mentally ill parents
8. Exposed to unwholesome and demoralizing circumstances

We must ask: Is a child's physical, emotional, and intellectual growth and welfare being jeopardized? Can it be documented?



Types of Neglect

1. Physical Neglect
2. Educational Neglect
3. Emotional Neglect
4. Unspecified Neglect



Physical Neglect

1. Health care refusal
2. Delay in seeking health care
3. Abandonment
4. Expulsion
5. Other custody issues
6. Inadequate supervision
7. Other physical neglect



Educational Neglect

1. Permitting chronic truancy
2. Failure to enroll
3. Inattention to a special education need



Emotional Neglect

1. Inadequate nurturance or affection
2. Chronic or extreme violence in the child's environment
3. Permitting drug or alcohol abuse
4. Permitting maladaptive behavior
5. Refusal of psychological care
6. Delay in obtaining psychological care
7. Other inattention to developmental needs



Medical and Mental Health Neglect

1. Caregiver's failure to provide prescribed medical treatment for their children, including required immunizations, surgery, prescribed medications, or other interventions in cases of serious disease or injury.
2. Caregiver's refusal to comply with recommended therapeutic or corrective procedures in cases in which a child is found to have a serious emotional or behavioral disorder.



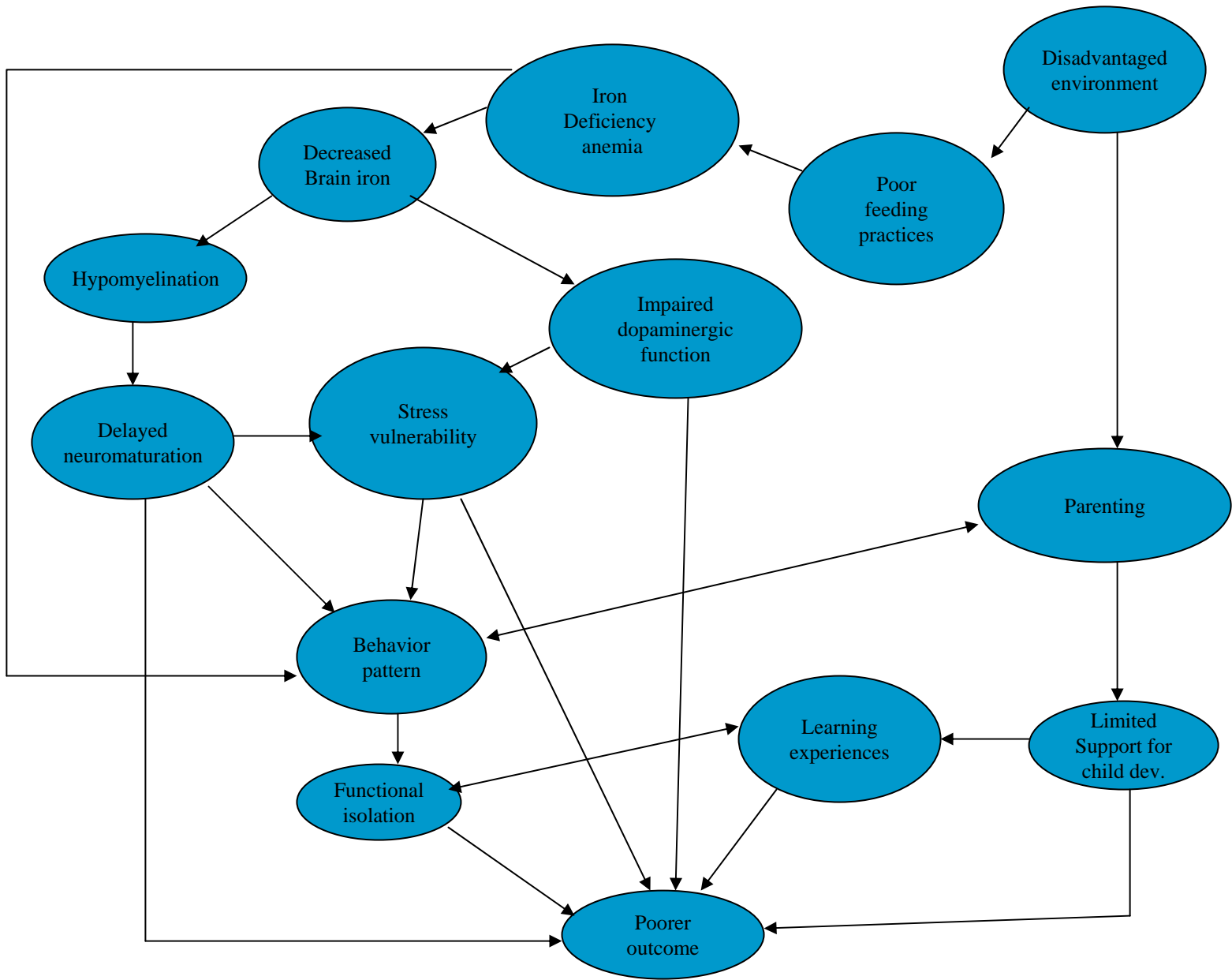
Failure to Thrive

- Failure to thrive (FTT) is a condition in which children show a marked retardation or cessation of growth
- FTT can result from:
 - A medical condition
 - Environmental factors, or
 - Combination of medical and environmental factors



Etiology of Neglect

1. Poverty (risk factor, not a protective factor because of the chronic stress, maternal hardship, and too frequent dehumanization that define the experience of poverty).





Etiology of Neglect

2. Social or ecological influences (consider individual, family, community, and societal factors contributing to neglect)
 - a) Health care
 - b) Education (GED, etc.)
 - c) Child care services
 - d) Mental health services
 - e) Drug prevention and treatment
 - f) CPS/ICW



Assessment of Neglect: Factors Affecting Provision of Adequate Care

■ Family System

- Strengths
- Family size and composition
- Income
- Marital relationship
- Special needs of children
- Stability of family composition/membership
- Structure, organization
- Communication/interaction patterns
- Family boundaries



Assessment of Neglect: Factors Affecting Provision of Adequate Care

- Environmental/Community Stressors and Resources
 - Housing
 - Job/employment
 - Neighborhood
 - Informal social networks
 - Cultural factors
 - Availability and responsiveness of formally organized services



Etiology of Neglect

3. Personality of parents or caretakers
(prevalent types of neglectful mothers)
 - a) The apathetic – futile mother
 - b) The impulse ridden mother
 - c) The mother in a reactive depression
 - d) The mentally retarded or borderline IQ mother
 - e) The psychotic mother



Assessment of Neglect: Factors Affecting Provision of Adequate Care

- Individual personality
 - Strengths
 - Mental status/intelligence
 - Parenting knowledge and skills
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Physical health
 - Cooperation, motivation



Apathetic-Futile Mother

Treatment Goals: The first objective is making an initial relationship, which may be difficult.

1. Since these women are often dependent there is the need to encourage dependency.
2. Increase the mother's verbal accessibility.
3. Help the mother deal with the outside world (school, welfare, credit cards, hospital, utilities, groceries).



Apathetic-Futile Mother

4. Homebuilders or home visitors (provide nurturance and teach the mother since many of these women are ineffective and emotionally crippled.
5. The use of authority.

Polansky, N.A., et al, Child Neglect: Understanding and reaching the parent. Child Welfare, Washington, DC: League of American. Out of print.



Barriers to Work with Neglectful Parents

- Verbal inaccessibility due to IQ, apathy, immaturity, deep loneliness and helplessness
 - 1) The first necessity is a willingness to talk
 - 2) Begin with the concrete, external and superficial
 - 3) Security encourages expansiveness
 - 4) Feelings have names
 - 5) Opportunities pass
 - 6) Talk has a background and repercussions
 - 7) Honesty is the only policy
 - 8) How verbally accessible are you?



Impulse-Ridden Mother

Treatment

1. Establishing a relationship: Get a good history.
2. Treat the drug/alcohol problem if one exists.
3. Use of authority.
4. Concentrate on her strengths but also concentrate on the disadvantages of her behavior.



THE MOTHER IN A REACTIVE DEPRESSION

(reaction to loss of loved ones or despair over some other loss or a drastic illness)

Treatment:

1. Ventilation (letting the mother air her feelings).
2. Restitution: resolve the grief reaction.
3. Frequent contacts, group therapy with others who have experienced loss.
4. Activity (not sleeping all day, etc.).
5. If prolonged depression consider medication.



Mentally Retarded or Borderline IQ Mother

- Borderline IQ: 70-79
- Mild retardation: 50-69
- Moderate Retardation: 30-50



An Ecological Model of Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Neglect*

The ecological model posits that a person or family is part of a larger environment. It helps us view families from multiple dimensions and not solely from the individual who is neglectful. In this model, the person or family interacts with the environment, and there are certain reciprocal processes that occur. Assessing the tribal community and environment may be as important as assessing the family.

In evaluating for neglect we may need to look at the following:

- The mother's family history
- Mother and family risk factors
- Community risk factors

*Cash, S.J. & Wilke, D.J. (2003). An ecological model of maternal substance abuse and child neglect: Issues, analyses and recommendations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 73(4), pgs 392-404.



A. The mother's family history

1. Intergenerational patterns of substance abuse
2. History of childhood abuse and drinking

B. Mental health and family risk factors

1. Psychological distress – low levels of self esteem
2. Maternal depression
3. Social isolation/loneliness
4. Negative life events and/or family stress

C. Community risk factors

1. Poverty stricken communities
2. Limited community resources (child care, mental health or substance abuse services, jobs, health care, etc.)

*Cash, S.J. & Wilke, D.J. (2003). An ecological model of maternal substance abuse and child neglect: Issues, analyses and recommendations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 73(4), pgs 392-404.



Short Term Effects of Neglect

- Cognitive and language effects
- Social and peer relationships
- Physical effects
- Child fatalities



Long Term Effects of Child Neglect*

- Cognitive-academic problems
- Social and behavioral effects
- Crime and delinquency
- Intergenerational transmission

*Gaudin, J.M. (1999) Child Neglect: Short and long term outcomes. In H. Dubowitz: Neglected children: Thousand Oaks; Sage Press.



Possible Negative Effects Associated with Child Neglect

- Intellectual Deficits
 - Receptive and expressive language deficits.
 - Academic problems.
 - Intellectual delays.
 - Lower levels of overall intelligence.
 - Less creative and flexible problem solving.
 - Deficits in language comprehension and verbal abilities.



Possible Negative Effects Associated with Child Neglect

■ Social Difficulties

- Disturbed parent-child attachment.
- Disturbed parent-child interactions.
- Disturbed peer interactions such as deficits in prosocial behavior, social withdrawal, and isolation.



Possible Negative Effects Associated with Child Neglect

- Emotional and Behavioral Problems
 - Apathy and withdrawal
 - Low self esteem
 - Ineffective coping
 - Physical and verbal aggression
 - General behavioral problems
 - Negative affect (e.g., anger, frustration)
 - Conduct disorder
 - Psychiatric symptoms



Effect of Early Neglect on the Child's Development

The absolute necessity of a “competent mother-infant pair” where the infant is competent with respect to securing what he/she needs by influencing the behavior of a responsive mother.

Importance of the caregiving or attachment system within the competent mother-infant pair.

1. Physical care of infant.
2. Soothing and stimulation of emotions by the mother helps an infant to regulate emotions until the child learns to self-regulate.
3. Provides a secure base of operations for young children to explore the environment.



Parent Child Relationship

THE QUALITY OF THESE SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIPS HAS
PREDICTIVE SIGNIFICANCE FOR
SUCCESS IN LATER
DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS.



Neglect: Important Points to Remember

- In office, one-to-one counseling has proven to be ineffective with neglect.
- Services provided in the home and within the neighborhood and community are therefore essential.
- Interventions must be a collaborative process between the family and community when the community has a number of neglectful families.



Interventions

1. Provision of concrete resources.
2. Social support interventions.
3. Developmental remediation.
4. Cognitive or behavioral interventions.
5. Individually oriented interventions.
6. Family-focused interventions.

DePanfilis, D. (1999) Intervening with family when children are neglected. In H. Dubowitz: Neglected Children; Research, Practice and Policy. Thousand Oaks: Sage Pub.



Children who have been Neglected

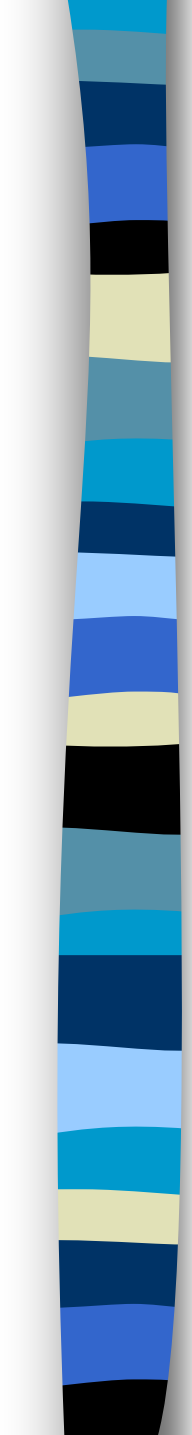
1. Direct fewer positive behaviors toward peers.
2. Initiate fewer interactions.
3. Engage in less complex play.

Thus the treatment of choice might be treatment in one-to-one interactions with younger children rather than group treatment with same age or older peers.



Brain Research and Neglect

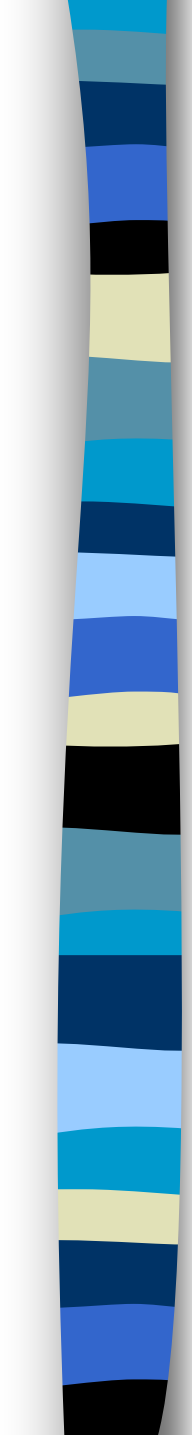
1. Infants of depressed mothers exhibit atypical frontal electrical brain activity.
2. Chronic and severe neglect can reduce the size of the cerebral cortex thus the neglected child's brain can be smaller.
3. Stress early in life can promote long-term changes in multiple neurotransmitter systems and brain structures (demonstrated through animal studies).



Brain Research and Neglect

(cont.)

4. Early stressors such as maternal separation result in lasting effects on stress-responsive neurobiological systems, including the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and noradrenergic systems. The brain areas involved in learning and memory are implicated.
5. Reduced activity within selected parts of the brain can be related to moderate to severe neglect.



Primary prevention is directed at the general population with the goal of stopping neglect from occurring.



Primary Prevention

- a) Affordable, geographically accessible health care for mothers and children that includes prenatal and obstetric care, preventative pediatric care and treatment for illness, public health screening, health promotion and other disease prevention.



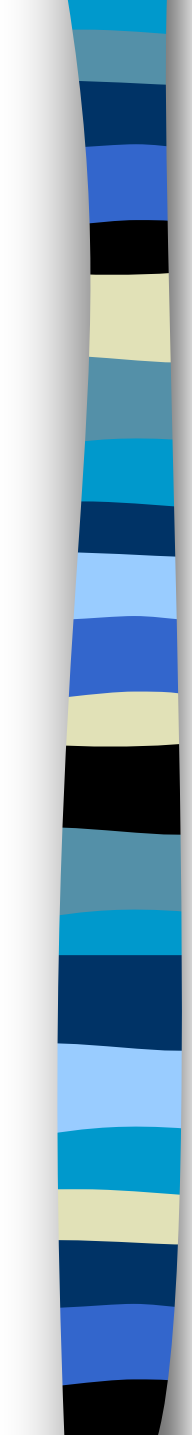
Primary Prevention

- b) High quality public education with curricula that includes age appropriate life skills training for children and parent education for all older elementary and high school students and adults.



Primary Prevention

- c) Parks and recreation programs for children of all ages offered through public and private agencies to provide safe activities to enhance physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development and after school supervision for school aged children.

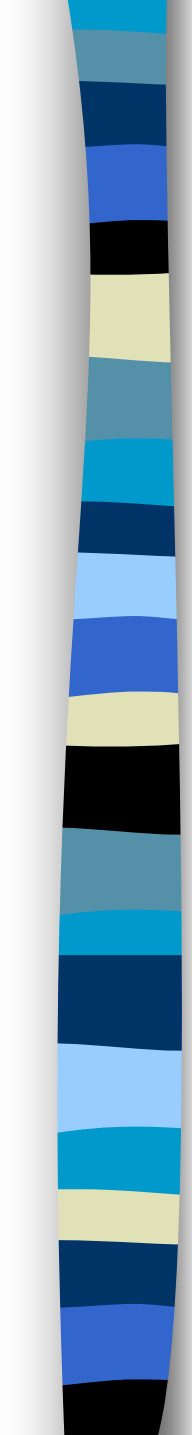


Secondary prevention calls for targeting families at high risk of neglect and alleviating conditions associated with the problem.



Secondary Prevention

- a) Remedying poverty
- b) Early childhood education
- c) Home health visitation
- d) Family planning
- e) Parent skills training
- f) Strengthening social network supports



Tertiary prevention entails targeting services to neglecting parents and their children to remedy the neglect and its consequences on the children and prevent its recurrence.



Tertiary Prevention

- a) CPS/ICW service plan to prevent reoccurrence of neglect
- b) Treatment and treatment planning by mental health for parents
- c) Treatment and treatment planning by mental health for child

DHHS, (1993) Child Neglect: A guide for intervention. Washington, DC.