

The neural architecture of trauma

Mental illness can be a frightening and debilitating experience. Efforts to understand mental illness more accurately and develop more effective treatments are urgently needed. It is the case that many people who experience mental illness report episodes of abuse and trauma in their childhood. From these findings, it appears evident that adverse events in a person's childhood can have serious consequences for their mental health later in life. It is also the case, however, that not everybody who experiences adverse childhood events goes on to suffer the severe psychological distress of mental illness. Understanding why some people are chronically and seriously affected by childhood trauma and some people are not could help us learn more about mental illness and develop better ways of helping these people. One suggestion is that some people become conflicted about the event they experienced whereas other people are able to somehow reconcile the adversity. From this perspective, the ability to control circumstances and events in one's life is paramount to contentment, satisfaction, and wellbeing. People who are conflicted, however, are unable to control the experiences and goals that are in conflict. The focus of treatment, therefore, is to help the person explore, understand, and resolve the conflict they are experiencing. In this way, the focus of treatment is not the past trauma but the current conflict.

Publication

[Conflicted control systems: the neural architecture of trauma.](#)

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