

Drug Rehab, Addiction, And Childhood Trauma

by Evolve Indy | Jul 22, 2022 | Drug Addiction, Drug Treatment | 0 comments



Does trauma in childhood lead to addiction, and is there a correlation between addiction and childhood trauma? While not every child who experiences childhood trauma will become addicted to substances, studies have found a correlation between addiction and childhood trauma.

A study of 587 patients from Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, GA, indicated a strong correlation between childhood trauma and substance abuse and lifetime dependency.

What is Childhood Trauma?

Most people will automatically think of physical and sexual abuse when childhood traumas are being discussed. While these are significant traumas that will substantially affect childhood, other traumas can involve the death of a parent or caregiver, witnessing domestic violence, bullying, living in a household where people struggle with mental illnesses, extreme poverty, homelessness, and more.

While these situations would still be traumatic for adults, they will have a more profound effect on children. Adults think with their prefrontal cortex, which isn't fully developed until the early to mid-20s, meaning that children will exhibit poor decision-making skills, and an inability to perceive danger as an adult would as reasoning, planning, judgment, and impulse control, are controlled by the prefrontal cortex.

Children often rely on loved ones or adults for support and guidance during difficult items; if they don't have this support or their loved ones' care causing the trauma, this opens up the need of self-medicate to help them deal with the traumas they are experiencing.

Addiction and Childhood Trauma

The National Survey of Adolescents identified that children who experienced some form of childhood trauma were three times more likely to develop an addiction problem compared to those who did not.

Evidence also shows that childhood trauma makes children more susceptible to compromised neural structure and functions as well as cognitive deficits and mental illnesses. The onset of these conditions can also increase the risk of self-medicating, leading to drug addictions in adulthood as the now adults struggle to process their childhood and learn to live with the experiences they have endured.

On top of this, studies indicated an increased risk of PTSD, which in turn can lead to people toward the use of illicit drugs to self-medicate, thus further increasing the likelihood of addiction.

Dealing with Childhood Trauma in Adulthood

As the brain isn't fully formed and developed until post-adolescence, the dangers of early drug-taking can lead to addiction and addictive behavioral patterns in adolescence and through to adulthood.

Drug rehab for adolescents needs to work with the teen to assist them in changing the pathways created in the brain due to addiction to support their lifestyle changes, increase the ability to remain sober, and reduce the risk of relapsing.

As the prefrontal cortex develops, prior drug use will affect decision-making and reasoning skills as the brain will seek the drug to impact receptors in the brain that release dopamine and give users that euphoric feeling.

From here, drug addiction will be a lifelong issue that will need to be managed and controlled, and drug rehab is essential in challenging and changing these behaviors. Providing adults and teens alike with the skills to deal with their addiction and maintain sobriety through [intensive outpatient programs](#) or [inpatient treatments](#) needs to look beyond the addiction and consider all lifestyle factors for improved success.

Dealing with childhood trauma is vital to allow those with substance use disorders to address why they started taking drugs in the first place and work to process what happened to them. On top of this, those with mental health problems and conditions also need adequate support to help support their mental health as they work through recovery.

Another factor that is essential to deal with is that as adults, those who suffered childhood trauma may exhibit behaviors modeled by parents or those of influence in their lives. This, too, can be repeating the cycle of abuse or addictions; as this is the only behavior they have been exposed to, leaving them with no frame of reference to make different or better choices.

Ongoing [outpatient treatment programs](#) can work to support the better choices required to break the cycle through group or individual therapy and support pathways to overcome childhood traumas.

Rehab for Childhood Traumas

While childhood traumas will not predict addiction and/or PTSD, they increase the risk of addiction and PTSD in adolescence and adulthood. [Drug rehab](#) is vital to get support to those who need it to help them work through addiction and trauma in childhood and support a sober lifestyle for the future.

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