

Is psychological maltreatment a primary driver of harm and violence?

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**Learning
Targets**



**The Nature of
Child
Psychological
Maltreatment**

**Recommended
Definitions and
Standards for
Intervention**

RELEVANCE FOR YOU
PERSONALLY
&
PROFESSIONALLY

REASONS FOR CONCERN

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▶ Is this **EGREGIOUS?**

▶ ***i.e., outstandingly bad, shocking!***

ACEs RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

ANDERSON ET AL, 2021

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- ▶ Of All **ACEs** Types
- ▶ **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** was MOST STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH:
 - ▶ **POOR MENTAL HEALTH**
 - ▶ **SUICIDAL BEHAVIORS**

FROM A RECENT PSYCHOLOGICAL MALTREATMENT ALLIANCE OP-ED

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REGARDING SCHOOL MASS SHOOTERS, AVAILABLE EVIDENCE ARGUES....

They have been **exposed to violence and have experienced unaddressed childhood trauma**. “The worse the crime, the worse the story”.

They are trying to “achieve revenge against **the humiliation of life and the persons** believed to be the cause of such misery”

(See Support in Peterson & Densley, 2021, *THE VIOLENCE PROJECT*)

St Louis School Shooter

October 25, 2022

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“I don’t have any friends.

I don’t have any family.

I’ve never had a girlfriend

I’ve never had a social life.

I’ve been an isolated loner my entire life.”

FOR AN EXPANSION OF TODAY'S CPM HIGHLIGHTS

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GO TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MALTREATMENT
ALLIANCE WEBSITE:

▶ WWW.PSYCHOLOGICALMALTREATMENT.ORG

FOR AN HOUR CPM-101 VIDEO PROGRAM

Nature of Psychological Maltreatment

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The **MOST PREVALENT FORM** of child maltreatment – i.e., child abuse and neglect

CPM NEGATIVE EFFECTS ARE THE LONGEST LASTING of all forms of CAN

CPM IS GIVEN THE LEAST ADEQUATE INTERVENTION of all forms of CAN

Human are essentially psycho-social in nature – their fulfillment of needs and development are strongly determined by social relationships/experiences

CPM OPPOSES/LIMITS/CORRUPTS HUMAN NEEDS FULFILLMENT

Most of the good and bad that human beings experience and become are due to their social – interpersonal -- experiences

Why “Psychological Maltreatment”?

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- ▶ “Emotional Abuse” is inadequate and deceptive as a label.
- ▶ The conditions under consideration are “psychological”: involving **AFFECTIVE, COGNITIVE AND VOLITIONAL COMPONENTS.**
- ▶ The conditions under consideration include acts of: **COMMISSION AND OMISSION INDIVIDUALLY AND IN INTERACTION.**

Psychological Maltreatment Definition

(Hart, Brassard, Baker, & Chiel, 2017)

Psychological maltreatment is defined as a repeated pattern or extreme incident(s) of caretaker behavior that thwart the child's basic psychological and developmental needs and conveys that the child is worthless, defective, damaged, unloved, unwanted, endangered, primarily useful in meeting another's needs, and/or expendable. (APSAC endorsed definition; 2019)

Six Types of Psychological Maltreatment

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Spurning

Terrorizing

Isolating

Exploiting Corrupting

Emotional Unresponsiveness

Medical, Mental Health and Educational Neglect

Spurning

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Verbal and nonverbal caregiver acts that reject and degrade a child



Spurning: Examples

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- Cruel nicknames
- Saying “I hate you”
- Looking disgusted
- Mocking child for being sad, angry, hurt, or scared
- Treating one child significantly worse than siblings
- Denigrating the child’s loved ones (friends, family, pets)

Terrorizing

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Caregiver behaviors that threaten to or do hurt the child or the child's loved ones



Terrorizing: Examples

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- Threatening to abandon, expel or disown the child
- Allowing a child to witness the parent harming him/herself or others
- Purposefully frightening the child or playing mean tricks on the child
- Telling the child that someone will hurt them when this is not true
- Expecting perfection and rejecting the child for failing to meet the standard
- **REPEATED PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Isolating

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Caregiver acts that consistently and unreasonably deny the child opportunities to interact with others



Isolating: Examples

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- Locking child in a small space
- Leaving a child unattended in the crib/playpen for extended period
- Interfering in the child's appropriate friendships
- Placing unreasonable restrictions on the child's interactions with family members.

Caregiver acts that encourage the child to develop inappropriate behaviors and attitudes

(Through Modeling, Encouraging, Coercing, Instructing)



Exploiting /Corrupting: Examples

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Prostitution:

- Having child witness it
- Forcing child to engage in it

Pornography:

- Watching it in front of child
- Inviting child to watch
- Giving it to child

Criminal Activity:

- Engaging in it in front of child
- Forcing/asking child to engage in (steal, join gang)

Substance Abuse:

- Doing it in front of child
- Inviting child to join in
- Leaving it around for child to find

Violence:

- Exhibiting violence in front of child
- Inviting child to engage in violence
- Inciting child to engage in violence

Truancy:

- Allowing the child to be truant
- Forcing the child to be truant

Emotional Unresponsiveness

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Caregiver acts that ignore the child's needs for affection and attention



Emotional Unresponsiveness: Examples

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- Being too busy, bored, depressed, high, self-involved to pay attention to or respond to child
- Ignoring child's pleas for help
- Not spending regular quality time with the child
- Rarely if ever saying "I love you," hugging, or praising the child

Medical, Mental Health, and Educational Neglect

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- Not allowing or supporting the child's need for therapy
- Not allowing or supporting the child's need for academic/educational assistance
- Not allowing or supporting the child's need for medical care

Section 2

Child Psychological Maltreatment

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HARM CAUSED BY CHILD PSYCHOLOGICAL MALTREATMENT

Harm by CPM Falls into 6 Broad Categories

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- Depression and suicidality
- Social anxiety
- Conduct disorders
- Thought problems
- Cognitive decline in infancy and low cognitive functioning
- Physical health problems

Harm Type 1: Depression and Suicidality

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Depression, suicidality, and non-suicidal self-injury are **more closely linked** to psychological abuse and neglect than other forms of CAN.

Harm Type 2: Social Anxiety

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Social anxiety disorder and rejection sensitivity are **more closely linked** to psychological abuse and neglect than other forms of CAN.

Harm Type 3: Conduct Disorders

- ▶ Conduct disorders (delinquent behavior) are **causally linked** to co-occurring psychological abuse and physical abuse.
- ▶ Substance abuse and co-occurring depression and anxiety are **specifically tied** to severe psychological abuse.
- ▶ Sexually risky behavior is **specifically linked** to severe psychological abuse.

Harm Type 4: Thought Problems

Thinking problems, such as dissociation, hallucinations and diagnosed psychosis, have also **been specifically tied to psychological abuse** (including verbal abuse and witnessing domestic violence) and psychological neglect.

Many experts consider these reactions part of the trauma response to maltreatment.

Harm Type 5: Declines in IQ and Low Cognitive Functioning

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Psychological neglect is **related to significant declines** in cognitive functioning in early life – moving from average IQ at age 12 months to well below average at 18 months.

Psychological neglect, with co-occurring physical neglect, **is tied to** low cognitive functioning, including poor academic achievement and low occupational attainment.

Harm 6: Physical Health Problems

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Hearing impairments are **significantly predicted** by verbal abuse, but not physical abuse, of mother while an infant is in utero

Reduced adult height is **significantly predicted** by childhood psychological and physical abuse

Childhood psychological abuse is **specifically linked** to self-report of diagnosed asthma in young adulthood

Takeaways on CPM Forms & Harm

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FORMS:

- ▶ Six forms exist: Spurning, Terrorizing, Isolating, Corrupting/Exploiting, Denying Emotional Responsiveness and Medical/Mental Health/Educational Neglect
- ▶ They occur alone and in combination with each other and with physical and sexual maltreatment.

HARM:

- ▶ Extensive, international, high-quality research supports the existence of a causal relationship between CPM and negative outcomes.
- ▶ There are 6 main domains of uniquely greater harm: Depression and suicidality; Social anxiety; Conduct disorders; Thought problems; Cognitive decline in infancy and low cognitive functioning; Physical health problems

CPM is an adverse childhood experience.

While you were growing up,
during your first 18 years of life --

1. Did a parent or other adult in
the household often

(A)

**Swear at you, insult you, put you
down, or humiliate you?**

(B)

**Act in a way that made you
afraid that you might be
physically hurt?**

- ▶ () SPURNING
- ▶ () TERRORIZING
- ▶ () ISOLATING
- ▶ () CORRUPTING/EXPLOITING
- ▶ () EMOTIONAL UNRESPONSIVENESS
- ▶ () MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

- ▶ () NOT CPM

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever

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(A)

Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?

(B)

Try or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?

- ▶ () SPURNING
- ▶ () TERRORIZING
- ▶ () ISOLATING
- ▶ () CORRUPTING/EXPLOITING
- ▶ () EMOTIONAL UNRESPONSIVENESS
- ▶ () MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

- ▶ () NOT CPM

8. . Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

- ▶ () SPURNING
- ▶ () TERRORIZING
- ▶ () ISOLATING
- ▶ () CORRUPTING/EXPLOITING
- ▶ () EMOTIONAL UNRESPONSIVENESS
- ▶ () MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

- ▶ () NOT CPM

US Child abuse laws

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ACES CPM
11/07/2022

- ▶ CAPTA was passed in 1974 and reauthorized ever since.
- ▶ CAPTA provides general definitions, each states has unique definitions
- ▶ Most state statutes define PM in a way that includes harm to the child
- ▶ Slep et al. (2022) present a definition that focuses on the caregiver behaviors that cause (or have a high likelihood to cause) psychological harm to the child
 - ▶ Developed in a manner to support consistent implementation
 - ▶ A similar, earlier definition is used with strong results in the military (e.g., Heyman et al., 2020; Slep et al., 2022; Snarr et al., 2011)

Definition

(see Slep, Manly, & Glaser, 2022)

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Psychological maltreatment refers to caregiver behaviors toward, or involving, a child (excluding physical/sexual abuse and physical neglect) which cause or have a strong potential to cause serious harm to a child's emotional, cognitive, social, interpersonal, or physical wellbeing or development.

- Operationalized as
 - Meets criterion A (non-accidental acts/omissions)and
 - Meets criterion B (significant impact; check below which criterion met)
 - B.1a (more than inconsequential fear reaction)
 - B.1b (Significant psychological distress)
 - B.1c (Somatic symptoms that that significantly interfere with normal functioning)

California Law: Emotional Damage

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- ▶ The child is **suffering serious emotional damage, or is at substantial risk of suffering serious emotional damage, evidenced by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or untoward aggressive behavior toward self or others, as a result of the conduct of the parent or guardian or who has no parent or guardian capable of providing appropriate care.**

California Law: Cruelty

- ▶ The child has been **subjected to an act or acts of cruelty by the parent or guardian or a member of his or her household**, or the parent or guardian has failed to adequately protect the child from an act or acts of cruelty when the parent or guardian knew or reasonably should have known that the child was in danger of being subjected to an act or acts of cruelty.

Now we want you to read and then vote on whether you think the following vignettes are:

- A) Adequate parenting
- B) Poor parenting but not PM
- C) Close to the threshold for PM
- D) Clearly “over the line” of PM

Vignette 1: Rita

Rita was an active baby. At 14 months, her foster mother still kept her strapped in a portable car seat most of the day, most days because she would get underfoot when she was loose.

Is this?

- A) Adequate parenting
- B) Poor parenting but not PM
- C) Close to the threshold for PM
- D) Clearly “over the line” of PM

Vignette 2: Antonne

Antonne, age 8, the only child of divorced parents who found new partners. Although they try to not fight in front of him about who has to take him during school breaks and weekends, he told his school counselor that he knows neither one wants him. He has depression, low self esteem, and poor grades. He is the last one picked up at the after-school program - twice police were called because no one came to get him. He is enrolled in any available program on Saturdays and is sent away to sleep away camps for the summer. When he is around his parents, he says they ignore him.

Is this?

- A) Adequate parenting
- B) Poor parenting but not PM
- C) Close to the threshold for PM
- D) Clearly “over the line” of PM



More Info

Psychological Maltreatment Alliance
www.psychologicalmaltreatment.org

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