

Explanation of Developmental Trauma

by Dr Nikki Taylor, Therapeutic Parent and Psychiatrist

Ok, here are my thoughts. Medics only diagnose children with conditions that are accepted in the diagnostic classification systems...because they are the only officially recognised conditions. We can't train (unless brave) about ones that are not officially recognised. People like Kolk, Perry, Hughes etc are all ahead of the game. They get it, and we may have been lucky enough to have seen them speak or heard their messages and so we "get it". Nobody, unless they are brave, in the medical world will teach about unrecognised conditions- unless it is they who believe they exist.

Kolk has a huge amount of evidence for Developmental Trauma which he and his team have done reams of research about, and I mean reams, in order to have it officially recognised in the dsm / icd. But it hasn't been accepted yet- for whatever reason, but I think it was a narrow minded rejection by the sounds of things. It will be recognised but we have to wait, and until it is, there will be little point trying to convince medics that it does exist. Attachment disorder will become a sub category of developmental trauma, as it is caused by one type of trauma. It is recognised that various types of trauma at different ages in childhood affect brain development and outcomes in different ways. So it is a large umbrella term in that regard. Folks are right- medics are way behind generally in their knowledge, because the research is ongoing, but given 20 years things will be in a very different place. Currently in our Trust for example we are developing online training courses to get the message out, and trauma clinical pathways- for kids and adults. But our trust is ahead of the game in the UK.

So until the message is out and people are willing to officially accept this diagnosis, just as they have found it hard to accept ADHD and autism spectrum, I'm afraid folks just have to be patient and parent therapeutically, and seek support from the rest of us that "get it". ADHD and autism spectrum are still not understood by many medics, but that is improving. Basically you will be lucky if you have a medic accepting a diagnosis of developmental trauma, so it isn't something to expect. Many medics have a poor understanding of neuroscience too, and so a medic who states that a child won't remember something clearly doesn't understand brain development / the role of the amygdala / hippocampus. Most that I train don't. It isn't taught well at medical school, and it's a specialist field. The catch 22 is that our kids shouldn't be only understood by specialists as they are everywhere.

Role on 20 years time!!!