

**Description:** Recent advancements in social and cognitive neuroscience, including technology such as functional neuroimaging and research to practice dissemination of findings, should be put to more consistent use and wider access in relationship to both prevention and treatment of mental health effects for children and adolescents who have been victims of targeted violence, including but not limited to racism and homophobia. Behavior, including physical and psychological, cannot be understood without first recognizing how the brain develops in supportive environments and the impact violent environments have on neural structure and function. It is essential that practitioners working with these young people understand and can therefore assess and act on the two primary routes by which such violence negatively impacts the brain and therefore mental health. First, the brain is directly and indirectly impacted by stress and trauma that such violence yields. Second, the stress and trauma interrupts sleep, play and nutrient metabolism that are required supporting factors for healthy brain development. This presentation brings light to both pathways and provides resources and evidence-based approaches to integrating these neuroscientific findings into prevention and intervention of targeted violence at both an individual and wider systems lens to improve mental health and wider development.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. To understand how the brain builds and develops with and without targeted violence in childhood and adolescence.
2. To examine how racism, homophobia and other forms of targeted violence impact the three pillars of health (sleep, play and nutrition functioning) that affect brain development and behavior
3. To discover how marginalization and oppression through violence increase risk of loneliness and decrease healthy attachment that both then negatively impact brain development.
4. To apply the brain science of violence and maltreatment to research-informed practice with children and adolescents.
5. To utilize brain science research to argue for anti-oppressive policies in settings beyond the microsystem, such as schools, communities, family service agencies, social welfare systems, law, and policy.

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