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Trauma and Physical Stressors

I recently watched a heart-warming TED talk in which the speaker, Shawn Achor, recounted a personal childhood story. At the age of 7, when entrusted to play “nicely” with his 4-year-old sister (he suggested playing “combat”), she fell off the top bunk bed and plummeted to the floor on all fours. As the shock set in on her little face and the tears welled up, young Shawn racked his 7-year-old brain to save the day and said, “Amy, Amy, wait don’t cry! Did you see how you landed? No human lands on all fours like that! Amy... I think this means you are a unicorn.”

This story is a reminder of just how common knocks and falls are in childhood. It is estimated that by age 3, a child will have had three major falls—for example, off changing tables, out of a cot, or down a flight of stairs. Many infants land on their head multiple times during their first year; by the age of 7, a child may have fallen thousands of times.

The “bounce-back” resilience exhibited by children typically hides subtle damage that leads to poor postural and neurological function over time. Like the adage, “As the branch bends, so grows the tree,” each seemingly insignificant slip and fall adds up.

Physical stressors may impact the body even before birth. If a pregnant mother’s pelvis is uneven, this impacts the position of the womb and ultimately a growing baby’s ability to move freely within the uterus. Movement within the womb is vitally important as it stimulates the development of the brain, as well as the nervous and vestibular systems.



Photo Courtesy of Tia Ohm

In fact, the primitive brain requires movement in the womb to develop fully and a lack of mobility and in-utero constraint may be one contributing factor for a child experiencing learning difficulties.

Chiropractic adjustments during pregnancy help mothers feel more comfortable and mobile and encourage babies to move freely in the womb. Adjustments also encourage more straightforward births due to better alignment of the pelvis, abdominal muscles, and ligaments that hold the uterus and cervix in place.

The birth process and medicalized births may also create tension within the baby’s spine, the skull and nervous system. Contributing factors include false labor, a long or very short labor, failure of the mother’s cervix to dilate, the use of drugs to increase contraction intensity, the use of vacuum extraction or forceps, caesarean section delivery, and the cord around the

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baby's neck. Sometimes even straightforward vaginal births can create subluxations if the baby is unable to move into the ideal birth position and reduce stress on the spine.

This is why chiropractors recommend parents have their baby's spine checked post-birth. When the nervous system is not functioning well it has the potential to affect the communication channels of the body and may impact all aspects of health, including neurological development, respiratory function and the baby's capacity to sleep, breastfeed and digest milk.

Chiropractors use specific techniques with children and tailor adjustments to the infant's size and age.

Chiropractors can assess how your child's spine and nervous system is adapting to the lifestyle stressors placed upon it, including the impact of birth, knocks and falls, and poor posture. Regular chiropractic adjustments help to support optimal growth and nerve function.

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