

# COVID 19 and Children's Mental Health

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# Number of children worldwide impacted

More than 2.2 billion children in the world

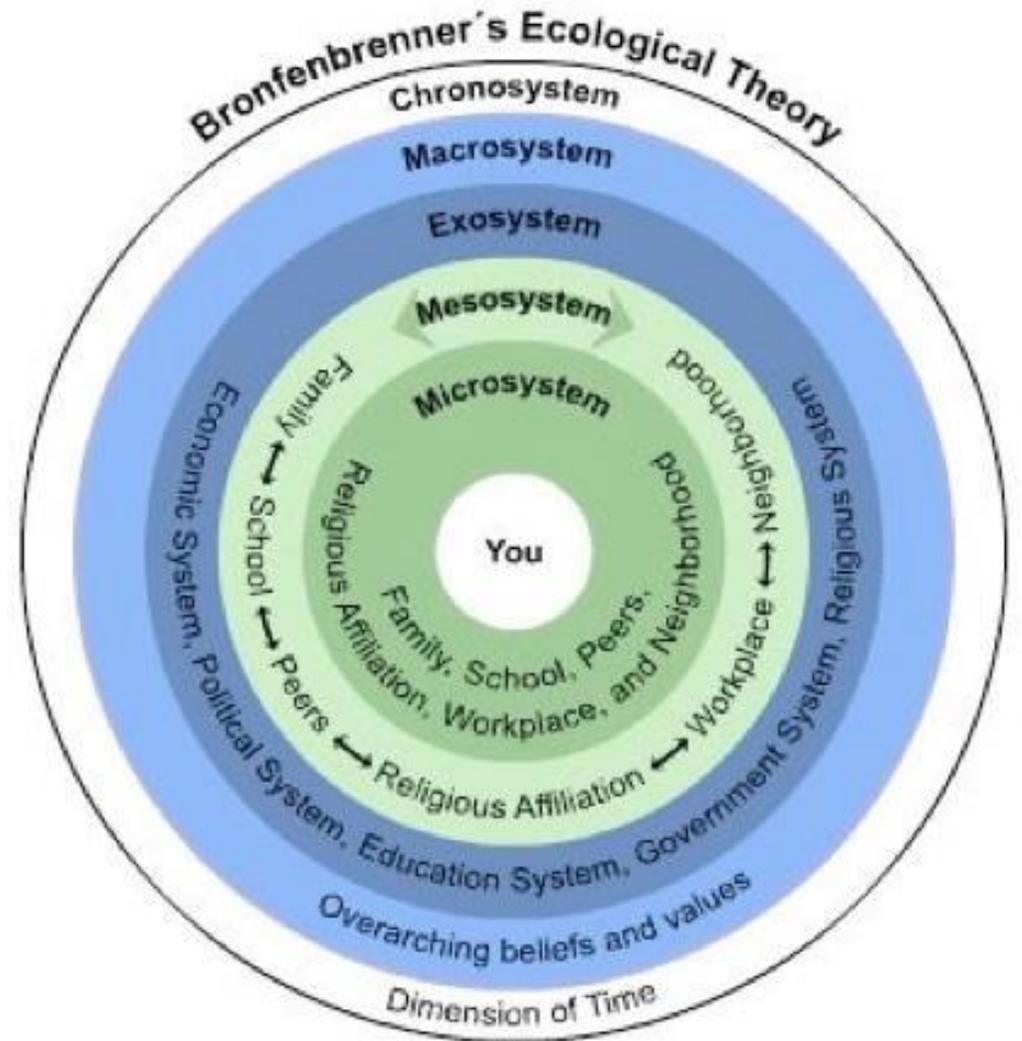
- Approximately 28% of world population
- 16% of population are ages 10-19

Nationwide closures of schools and colleges have negatively impacted over 91% of the worlds student population.

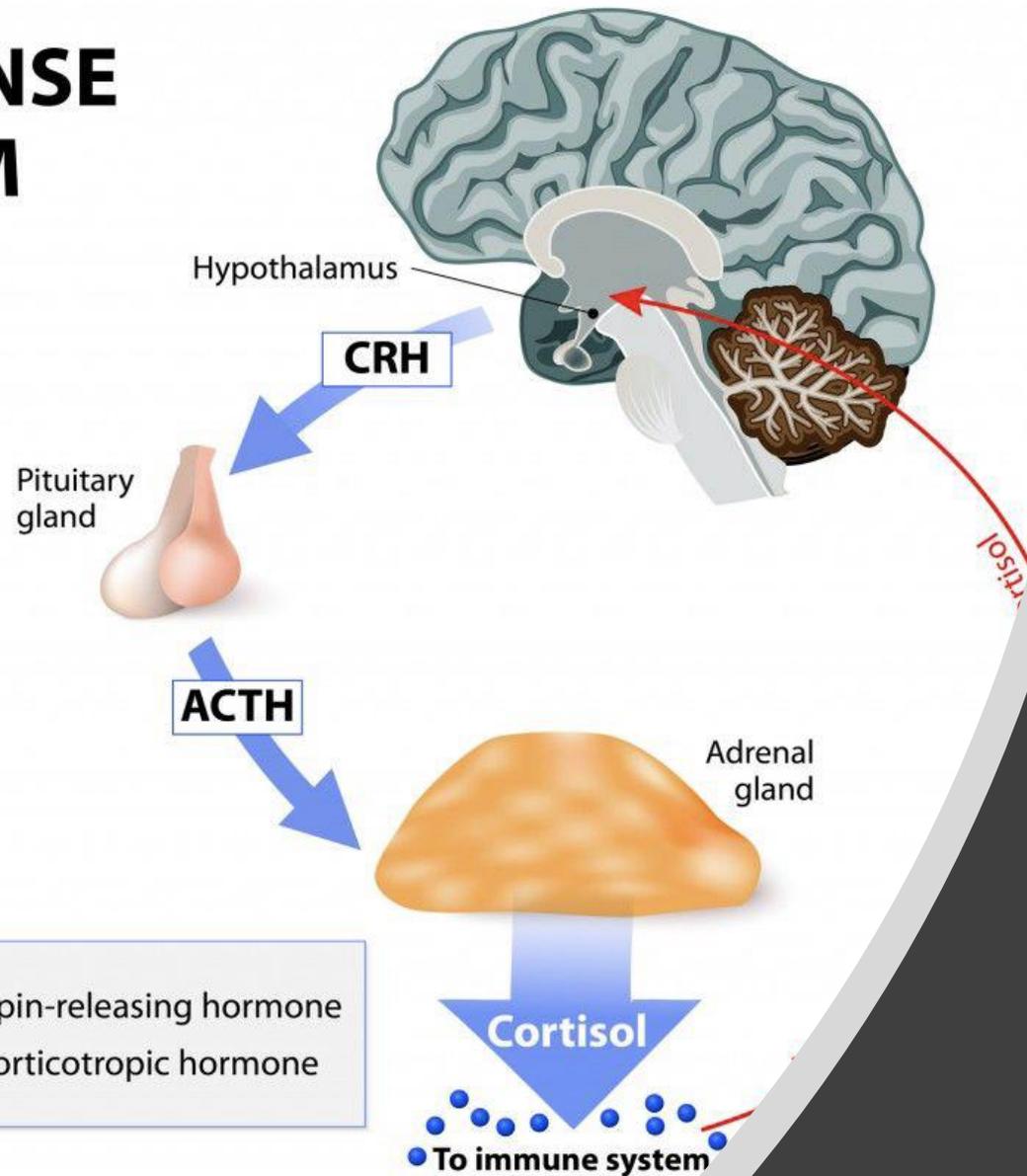
# Impact on youth mental health



# FAMILY SYSTEMS



# STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM



PTSD in children alters brain development. Alterations in fronto-limbic circuits

- contribute to increased threat reactivity and weaker emotion regulation
- neuroanatomical/neurofunctional consequences of PTSD include declining hippocampal volumes, increasing amygdala, reactivity and declining amygdala prefrontal coupling with age.

Lockdown/quarantine: data suggest disruptions in brain development caused by social isolation. There are reciprocal relationships between social interactions and brain development. Disruptions caused by social isolation potentially influences the onset of psychiatric disorders.

# The Pandemic and Youth Mental Health

- Parents and youths agree that COVID-19 and related public health measures have made their mental health worse or much worse.
- Those with pre-existing mental health conditions fare worse - a majority report disruptions to access for mental health services as a major contributor to poor mental health
- Different effects of the pandemic appear to contribute to specific mental health challenges
- Specific populations appear to be impacted more than others with-minoritized youth

# Effects of Lockdown for Adolescents

- Chronic and acute stress
- Worries about family health, unexpected bereavement
- Developmental Disruptions
- School disruption
- Sudden separation from friends
- Increased internet and social media use
- Economic worries for family and country
- Lockdown may result in breaks in care or shifts in care for those with preexisting psychiatric disorders

## Effects of Lockdown for Adolescents

- School closures associated with:
  - Decreased physical activity
  - Increased screen time
  - Irregular sleep patterns
  - Peer difficulties and isolation
  - Increased onset of psychiatric disorders

# Quarantine/Lockdown Effects on Youth

## Grief

- Sudden deaths of family members may be first experience of death
- Risk for traumatic grief increased by prevention of visits, rituals, good by
- Traumatic events are associated with longer grief for adolescents

Increased family violence and Abuse and neglect has been reported

Girls have experienced increased gender based and sexual violence

School closures prevent other adults, like school personal, from noting abuse and providing help for victims

# Quarantine/Lockdown Effects and Disparities in Care

Minoritized youth are overrepresented among lower income families. Structural racism, poverty, and barriers to care have disproportionately affected this population.

Economically disadvantaged children face nutritional deprivation and overall lack of protection with increased risk for exploitation, especially among female children

Economically disadvantaged children are at risk for greater violence, increasing risk for depression, anxiety and suicidality. This is worsened by school closures

Lack of Digital Platforms among economically disadvantaged youth contribute to educational disparities

# COVID 19: Emerging Data on Mental Health

Among children and adolescents across studies

- 22.6%-43% reported depression
- 18.9%-37% reported anxiety
- 31% reported anxiety and depression
- >50% reported moderate to severe impact on mental health

Save The Children conducted a survey of 1500 households

- 67% of parents reported being worried about their child's emotional wellbeing
- Half of children reported feeling bored (52%) or worried (49%)
- 52% of children worried that they are not learning enough academically
- 74% of children report concerns about missing out on social activities

College student studies during COVID-19 found persistent negative effects on students behavioral and emotional functioning despite wellness focused strategies

## Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

- Approximately 1 in 6 children ages 2-8 years have some form of neurodevelopmental, behavioral or emotional difficulty including ADHD, Autism, learning disabilities , cerebral palsy and others and face challenges
- Adolescents with ADHD may have difficulty adjusting to lockdown with increased behavioral problems. Current recommendations are that parent focused ADHD interventions to support mental well being should be implemented
- Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders are at risk due to school disruptions, Disruptions of routines, habits and rituals with escalated risks for acting out behaviors

*Sharon et al 2020. RE: Supporting Autism Spectrum Disorder in the face of the COVID19 pandemic. <https://www.cmaj.ca>*

# Predictors of Childhood Resilience

Childrens intelligence and cognitive ability

Positive parenting and caregiving

Self-efficacy and positive self-perceptions

Hope, faith, and religious affiliations

Close relationships with other competent and prosocial people

Self-regulation skills

Effective schools

# Summary

Early Covid-19 data for mental health impact for youth

- Adolescents with pre-existing psychiatric disorders are at greater risk for poor outcomes due to disruptions of care, Covid related anxiety, and confinement
- Covid related sudden deaths, grief, trauma are more likely to cause depression and other psychiatric disorders
- Increased risk for acute traumatic stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety with lockdown and Covid related worries, stress factors and intrafamilial violence
- Emerging data suggests that impact of COVID related disruptions will continue to negatively impact student behavioral and emotional functioning
- Vulnerable youth deprived of school and external support, minoritized youth, girls and children living in poverty are at greater risk for poor mental health
- Excessive internet and social media use increase risk for poor mental health
- Supporting resilient families and children, and building upon strengths for struggling families will support recovery, but we should expect to see impacts on mental health for some time post pandemic