

Reversing the Effects of Early Life Adversity

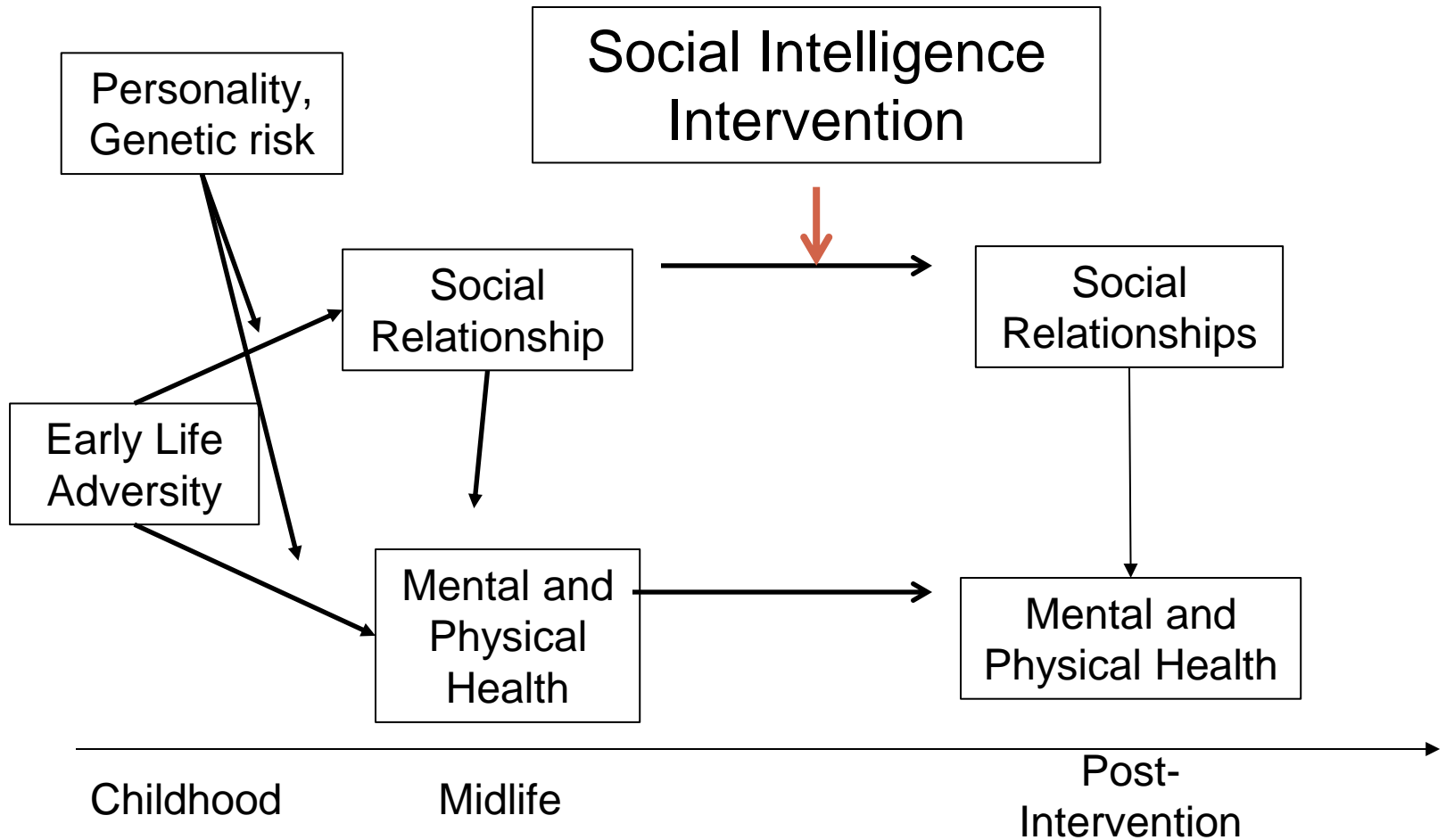
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- Funder: National Institute on Aging
- Key People
 - Eva Zautra (SI Program Architect)
 - Frank Infurna
 - Alex Zautra
 - Kathryn Lemmery

Conceptualization

- Early adversity has long term effects
- Two routes
 - Neurophysiological
 - Social: emotional regulation
- Reactivity to stressors/vantage sensitivity
- Reversibility: Malleability of brain and behavior
- Online Social Intelligence intervention
- Effects on communication practices and relationships

Reversing the Impact of Early Life Adversity on Mental & Physical Health



Design Overview

- Existing Community Sample (N = 800)
- Subsample based on high/low adversity scores (n= 200)
- Assign to training (100) and active control (100)
- Intervention = 42 daily on-line modules
- Measures
 - Genetic markers (existing)
 - Bio markers (saliva swab)
 - Personality (Big 5)
 - Pre and post test measures of social functioning
 - Two week daily diaries pre and post
 - Reactivity to stressors/vantage sensitivity
 - **Interviews with 50 participants and confidants ***

* Focus of current presentation

Our Focus

- **Qualitative evaluation research:** How is the intervention experienced in this context? By this sample?
- **Research questions:**
 - What social changes (if any) do participants experience?
 - How (if at all) are these enacted in relational practices?
 - What changes do confidants notice/experience?

Methodology

- Face to Face interviews (40-60 minutes)
- Phone interviews with confidants
- Modified “turning Points,” RIT approach
- Changes: Cognitive, Emotion, Behavioral
- Behavioral = Communication practices
- Qualitative thematic analysis (*NVIVO*)
- Correspondence checking (pairs)

Interview Sample (Current N= 42)

- **Participants (96% agreed to interview)**

- 70% female
- Average age = 63
- Caucasian = 70%
- “High trauma” = 50%

- **Confidants (68% agreed to interview)**

- Role: Spouses, siblings, friends
- 50% female, 50% male




Social Intelligence

Toward a more socially intelligent
society

<http://www.socialintelligenceinstitute.org/>


Creator: Eva Zautra



Successfully
navigating
the world
around you



Social
intelligence



Shift in
sense of self
in relation
to others

New worldview



Social intelligence is a form of expertise developed through experience and thoughtful reflection about ourselves, combined with a greater understanding of our own social world.

It allows us to change, fundamentally, from self-centered, isolated individuals to aware, socially connected human beings,



Consequences of lack of SI

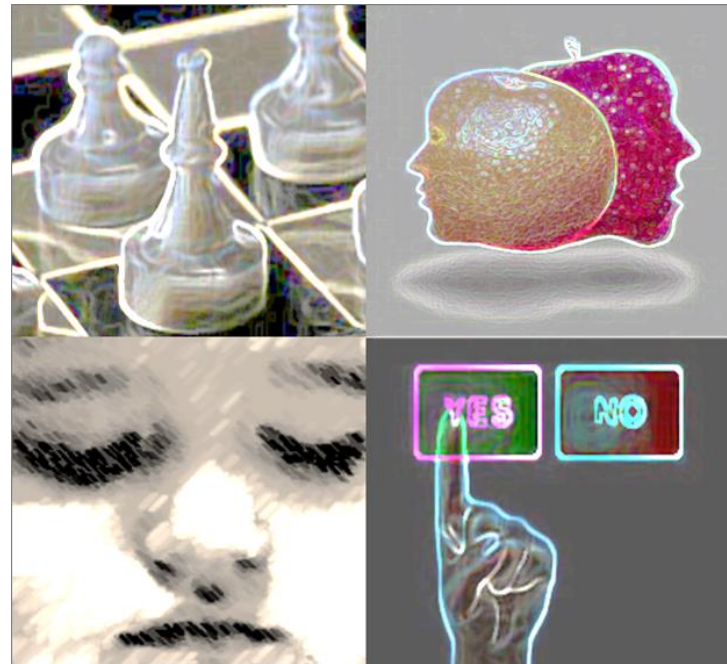


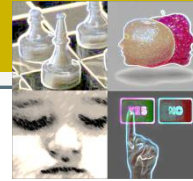
Disregard
for others



Disengagement

Four Course Objectives



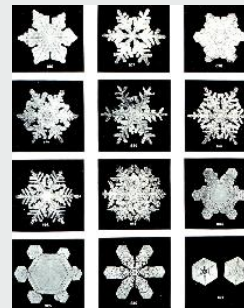


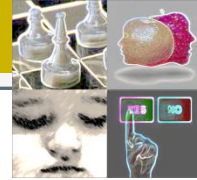
1) See how others see the world



No one thinks exactly like you...

It's simply impossible





2) Understand the automatic brain



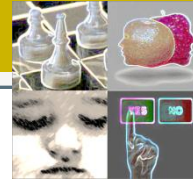
Most of what all humans say, do, and think stems from automatic brain processing

This means that we are not aware of what we are saying, doing and thinking.



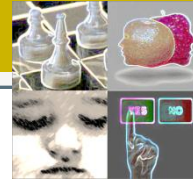
Some automatic behaviors are unique to the individual.

Some automatic behaviors are common to all human.



3) View others as humans





4) Understand that SI is a choice



You make the choice every time you interact with someone else



Key SI Modules

Module 1 Neuroplasticity From birth to death, our brains are constantly changing based on the world around us.

Module 2 Unconscious thought and action How the social brain processes information about ourselves and others

Module 3 THEM In-group, out-group biases and how best to intelligently approach these biases.

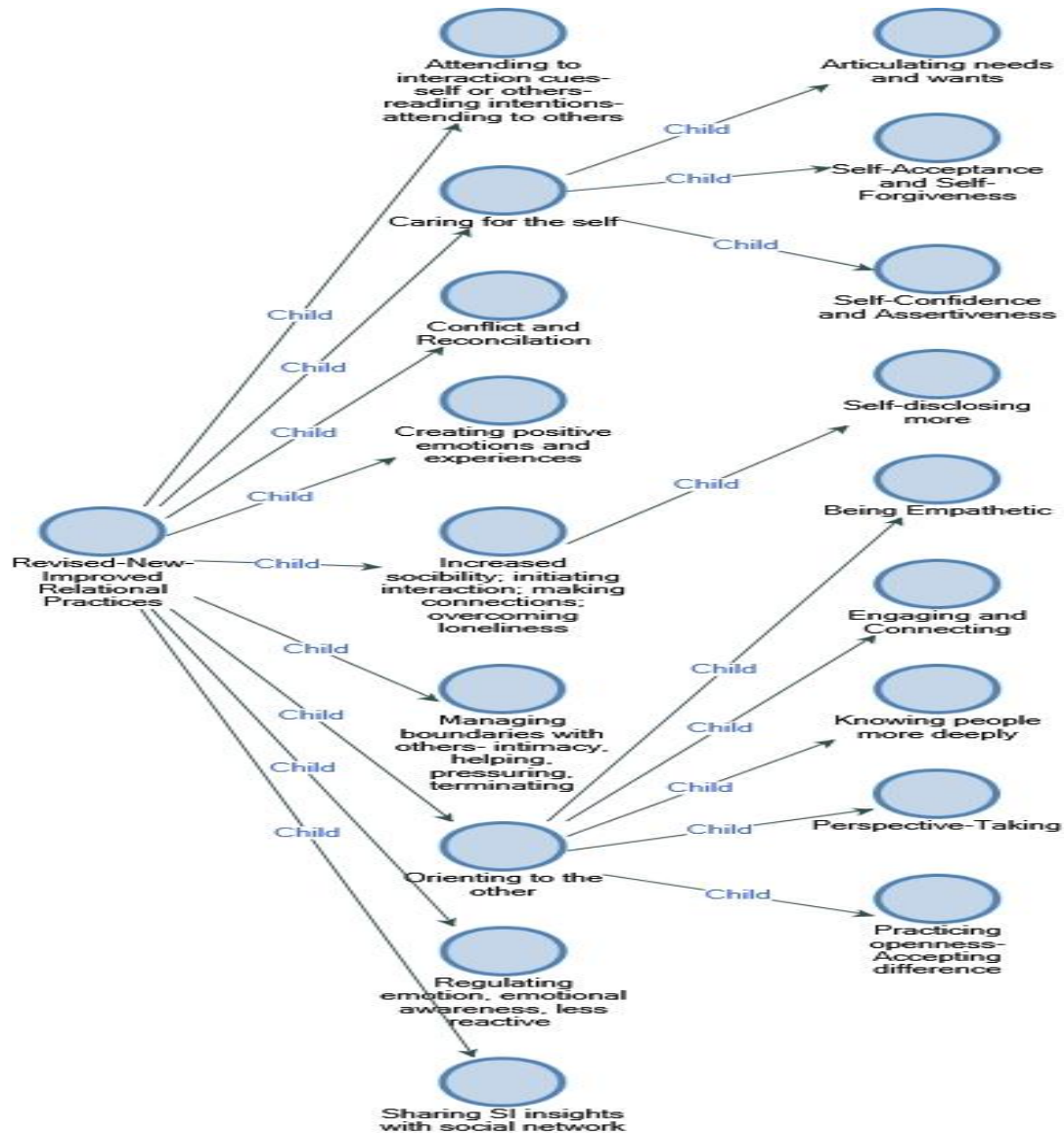
Module 4 Mind Reading Empathy and perspective-taking: Learning the feelings and thoughts of another.

Key SI Modules

Module 5 Face-to-face conversations The ebb and flow of smooth social interactions, and the importance of getting outside of our own heads and genuinely connecting with others.

Module 6 The Past Our early childhood experiences form working models of how “to do” relationships.

Module 7 The Future Becoming aware of a new, more fulfilling social identity.



Results: Participant Reports

- **Self disclosing more**

“This course has helped me better understand the 95%, the bottom part of me and has helped me share with others more than the 5% of me.”

Results: Participant Reports

- Managing boundaries

“This course gave me permission to take a stand for who I am. I am also not going to go to my mom’s funeral. I’m not going to put myself in harm’s way. I did it before because I am a pleaser. (Rebecca: 3755_07)”

“Backing of fwas something I had to learn (Sally: 3470_14).

Results: Confidant Report

- **Increased engagement:**

" I would have to say since she's interacting with people who are difficult that its allowed her to have those relationships and be more engaged XXX (son) stands out because...she would literally hear from him once a month. Maybe a text uh which might be a reply to a dozen texts she sent which would be a word like "Okay" or "Good." Where now they talk on the phone and talk back and forth. That's pretty stout right there. "#4187_11CF"

Attending to Interaction Cues

- like a lot of times when I'm with her, she likes to talk and sometimes... I would have to interrupt her and it used to be she would just override me and keep going and then I would say, 'Heck with it. I'll just let her talk.' But now she'll stop and listen more. She doesn't keep going or interrupt me or sometimes she'll start to interrupt and say, 'Oh I'm sorry' and get back to what we were talking about. (Wendy:3755_07CF)

Participant/Confidant

- **Emotional Regulation**

Participant: "... it is okay to be and feel how you're being and feeling that day...Not placing so much pressure on myself . I feel calmer."

Confidant: "Her emotions have probably [been] a little more on an even-keel then way up and way down... I can relax and speak what I would like to... or how I feel pretty much without her getting all upset. "