

# Childhood mental health problems blight adult working life

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Mental health problems in childhood blight adult working life, suggests research published ahead of print in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. And problems in working life are associated with mid life depression and anxiety.

The findings are based on over 8000 participants of the 1958 Birth Cohort, all of whom were born during one week in March 1958, and whose health has subsequently been tracked.

Their long term mental health was reviewed during childhood at the ages of 7, 11, and 16, using information from teachers and parents, and into adulthood at the ages of 23 and 33, based on personal interviews.

At the age of 45 the participants were then invited to discuss their working lives and mental health.

Living in rented accommodation, having a longstanding illness, no qualifications, and no partner were all linked to depression and anxiety in mid life.

But so too were workplace stressors, including little control over decisions, low levels of social support, and high levels of job insecurity..

These stressors doubled to quadrupled the risk of depression and anxiety.

Internalising behaviours in early childhood and adulthood strongly

predicted poor quality working life, with many work stressors.

Internalising behaviours are usually defined as depression or lack of concentration, as opposed to externalising behaviours, such as bullying and disruption.

Although mental health problems in early childhood and adulthood did not fully explain the mid life depression, these could have a knock-on effect, suggest the authors.

Mental health problems in childhood could affect the ability to pass exams and gain qualifications, so blighting an individual's prospects of getting well paid and satisfying work.

And people who have experienced mental illness early in their lives may also opt for less demanding, low status work, because it might be more manageable, but at the same time, less rewarding and more stressful.

Source: British Medical Journal

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