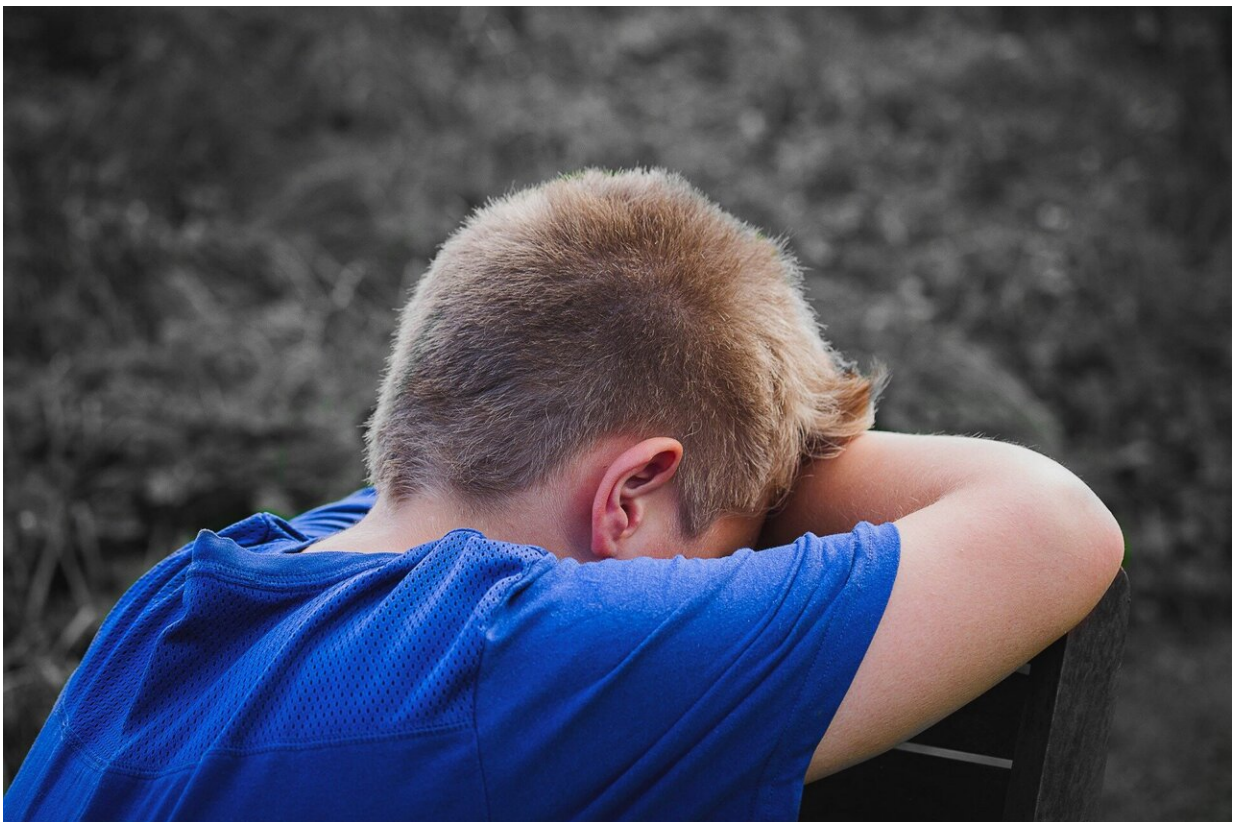


# Adverse psychosocial factors in childhood are associated with worse midlife learning and memory

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A Finnish study coordinated by the Center for Population Health Research at the University of Turku shows that cumulative adverse

psychosocial factors in childhood are associated with worse midlife learning and memory, and specifically child's self-regulation and social adjustment.

Along with aging population, the prevalence of cognitive deficits is growing. Thus, revealing the role of various exposures beginning from childhood is important in order to bring tools for cognitive health promotion. An adverse psychosocial environment in childhood may harm [cognitive development](#), but the associations for adulthood cognitive function remain obscure. Results from a longitudinal Finnish study show that unfavorable childhood psychosocial factors may link to poorer learning and memory in midlife.

"Previous evidence on adverse psychosocial factors and [cognitive outcomes](#) comes mainly from either short-term or retrospective [long-term studies](#) focusing on single psychosocial factor or adversity. This study is one of the first prospective longitudinal studies focusing on the associations between multiple childhood psychosocial factors and adulthood cognitive function," says Doctoral Researcher Amanda Nurmi from the Center for Population Health Research at the University of Turku and Turku University Hospital.

Cognitive performance was measured at the age of 34–49 years. Of more than 2,000 participants with cognitive function data, 1,191 also had complete data on childhood psychosocial factors from childhood. Socioeconomic and emotional environment, parental health behaviors, stressful events, [self-regulation](#), and social adjustment were queried in the baseline. The results suggest that accumulation of unfavorable psychosocial factors in childhood may associate with poorer cognitive function in midlife. Specifically, poor self-regulatory behavior and social adjustment in childhood associated with poorer learning ability and memory approximately 30 years later.

"The results of our study can be leveraged to develop targeted interventions directed towards those families with cumulative adverse [psychosocial factors](#). Interventions towards promoting a better psychosocial environment in childhood might have carry-over associations on cognitive function and thus be reflected also in [future generations](#) via parenting attitudes," Nurmi says.

This study is part of the ongoing national Cardiovascular Risk in Young Finns Study coordinated by the Research Center of Applied and Preventive Cardiovascular Medicine at the University of Turku. Initially, 3,596 participants have been followed up repeatedly for 31 years for their health, psychosocial, cardiovascular and lifestyle factors from [childhood](#) to adulthood.

The results were published in the journal *Neuropsychology*.

**More information:** Amanda Nurmi et al, The associations of childhood psychosocial factors with cognitive function in midlife—The young finns study, *Neuropsychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1037/neu0000877](https://doi.org/10.1037/neu0000877)

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