

Low socio-economic status, fear of abandonment early in life can lead to poor adult health

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Low socio-economic status and fear of abandonment early in life can lead to poor health in adulthood, regardless of adult socio-economic status, according to a new study from psychologists at Rice University.

"Attachment Orientations, Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia and Stress Are Important for Understanding the Link Between Childhood Socio-Economic Status and Adult Self-Reported Health" appears in the current edition of *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. The study examined the self-reported measures of childhood [socio-economic status](#), attachment orientations (such as fear of abandonment or difficulty in forming relationships), stress and adult health of 213 participants from 2005 to 2011.

The study found that people who were in the lowest 25 percent of the sample for socio-economic status as children had 65 percent worse self-reported health as adults than people who were in the top 75 percent of the sample as children. The researchers noted that this [poor health](#) later in life occurred regardless of adult socio-economic status.

"Low socio-economic status places burdens on parents where they are less available to their kids at times," he said. "This can lead to the development of 'attachment orientations' - which include fear of abandonment or difficulty in forming close relationships - that can compromise adult health," said Chris Fagundes, an assistant professor of

psychology and the study's co-author.

Fagundes said the study is one of the first to examine how these attachment issues link early adversity and adult health. He and his co-author, Kyle Murdock, a postdoctoral research fellow in psychology, also found that a person's biological capacity to regulate their emotions—including stress—had a correlation to overall health.

"If individuals are better at managing negative feelings and levels of stress, they are more likely to be healthy as adults," Murdock said. "However, if they are not so good at managing emotions, they are more likely to be less healthy."

Fagundes and Murdock hope the study will encourage further exploration of why low socio-economic status during childhood is associated with an increased risk of experiencing health disparities in adulthood.

"Ultimately, early childhood is a critical time for adult health, regardless of whether you move up the socio-economic ladder as an adult," the authors concluded.

More information: Kyle W. Murdock et al. Attachment Orientations, Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia, and Stress Are Important for Understanding the Link Between Childhood Socioeconomic Status and Adult Self-Reported Health, *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1007/s12160-016-9842-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12160-016-9842-4)

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