

Is the genetic imprint of traumatic experiences passed on to our children?

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.**

As convention has it, there are genes and then there's your environment. Each of us is an amalgam of these intertwining forces of nature and nurture.

In this old-fashioned dualism, the experience of a traumatic event would seem to fall squarely in the "nurture" half of the equation. A young child might witness a scene of domestic violence, for example, and bear the psychic wounds for years after. If the trauma and neglect are sustained over time, the child might suffer the debilitating effects of [toxic stress](#). But can the experience of trauma go so far as to influence the "nature" half of the equation?

That intriguing possibility was given a boost by new research that suggests extremely traumatic events can change the way our genes — and those of our children — function.

Most notably, new evidence from a team led by Mount Sinai Hospital researcher [Rachel Yehuda](#) suggests that genetic signs of trauma can be transmitted from parents to children through changes in how trauma-sensitive genes are expressed.

What this actually means for the health of children of trauma victims isn't yet clear. And it should be said that scientists are still unraveling exactly how this all works. A little terminology is unavoidable: Genes are influenced by environmental factors through "epigenetic tags," which send signals to our genes. While DNA sequences remain the same, the way genes are expressed can change, allowing individuals to respond to cues in their environment — extreme stress, for example.

**Read full, original post:** Can you inherit your parents' worst experiences?