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## Poverty Mindset? Poverty and Mental Health

NOVEMBER 18, 2013 **PAULISSA KIPP**

print

### Poverty Mindset

Poverty mindset is a term that comes up from time-to-time as a root cause of inner-city violence, lower standardized test scores, lower IQ and many other maladies. Can poverty in childhood also lead to changes in adult cognitive abilities?

### Childhood Poverty Linked to Mental Health Problems



A team of researchers from the University of Illinois, Cornell University, University of Michigan and University of Denver found a correlation between lower family incomes at age 9 and an increased activity in the amygdala in adulthood. The amygdala regulates fear and negative responses and can have an effect on depression, anxiety and aggression. Researchers studied 49 subjects and found that subjects who experienced poverty at age 9 were more likely to have negative brain function as adults.

Researchers found that exposure to [chronic stress](#) from factors such as frequent moves, noise exposure, crowding, family violence and absenteeism can affect brain function negatively. So a small study points to a correlation between poverty and depression, anxiety and fear. But is correlation the same as causation? At times, the answer seems to be yes.

### How Poverty in Childhood Plays Out in Adulthood

Poverty permeates the psyche in ways that transcend the balance we have in the bank, our possessions or the house we live in. In my life, the poverty mindset has given way to spending sprees to convince myself I'm "worthy" of what I wanted. I shopped to fill the seemingly endless pit of NOT ENOUGH. I thought and feared that I wasn't enough.

The poverty mindset set me up for [abusive relationships](#). I thought that I "deserved" the beatings, the verbal abuse, the sexual manipulation.

The poverty mindset has led to difficulty in expressing my needs for fear of being told no, thereby reinforcing my belief that I didn't deserve better

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or being told no, thereby removing my belief that I didn't deserve better.

The poverty mindset has led to feelings of anxiety - being anxious about money, about preparing for any level of "what if?" While being prepared for the unexpected has its advantages, living in a state of hyper-vigilance creates its own level of depression. And so it goes.

### How to Combat the Poverty Mindset

While poverty affects the way a person may process stimuli and life in general, there are ways to combat the poverty mindset. A few that have worked for me:

1. Telling myself that I cannot bankrupt myself for the sake of my bad mood or insecurity.
2. Replacing spending sprees with spending time with friends, creating art, exercise or meditation.
3. Telling myself that the things I deserve are ways of being, not things to be acquired. I deserve to be treated with love and respect. I deserve to be financially stable and as debt-free as possible. I deserve to express myself freely.

Poverty has its negative effects and the old records, with their crackle and pop may bring us uncertainty, but with mindful attention, it does get better.

Source info: [Adult Brain Function Impacted by Childhood Poverty](#)

You can also connect with Paulissa Kipp on [Google+](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Pinterest](#) and her website, [Paulissakippisms](#).

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#### APA Reference

Kipp, P. (2013, November 18). Poverty Mindset? Poverty and Mental Health, HealthyPlace. Retrieved on 2021, December 10 from <https://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/recoveringfrommentalillness/2013/11/poverty-mindset-poverty-and-mental-health>

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**Cindy**

June, 6 2017 at 11:57 am

Where can i find the original research articles? I don't see the reference or citation.

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**judy**

November, 18 2013 at 7:29 am

In terms of the correlation between poverty and lower IQs, that can be due to the quality of the schools themselves. There are countless studies about the accuracy of IQ scores, because they are somewhat standardized, yet the quality of education across the board is not. Schools

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