Webinar Series

Biological Adaptations to Adversity: Evidence from Our Genes and Brains

Join Us!

December 12
12:00-1:00 PM MST

Dr. Sarah Merrill

Dr. Tayler Eaton

About the Webinar

In this talk, we delve into the biological adaptations to life's difficulties, exploring evidence from the fields of epigenetics and cognitive neuroscience. Imagine your body as a finely tuned instrument that adapts to adversity to better respond to challenges. Epigenetics, the study of molecular changes in our genes influenced by our experiences, reveals how our DNA can be dynamic to life's ups and downs. Cognitive neuroscience, on the other hand, provides insights into how our brain processes and responds to these challenges. Together, these disciplines unveil the remarkable ways our biology copes with adversity, offering a deeper understanding of human resilience, a discussion of transgenerational effects of trauma, and the potential for interventions that promote well-being. Join us on this scientific journey as we discuss the ways in which our bodies and brains adjust to our experiences.

Featuring

Dr. Sarah Merrill is a research fellow in the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Brown University, and she specializes in developmental psychology and social epigenetics. She earned her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Cornell University with Dr. Cindy Hazan, focusing on markers of attachment formation. She has also held a postdoctoral research fellowship at the British Columbia Children's Hospital Research Institute and the University of British Columbia, working under the mentorship of Dr. Michael Kobor on social epigenetics. Sarah has presented her findings at numerous conferences, contributing to the scientific community's understanding of the biological embedding of attachment, trauma, and their implications for health in children and adults. In addition to her academic endeavors, Sarah has engaged with the media to share her expertise and findings, appearing in various outlets, including BBC One's The Why Factor, CTV News, Global News Morning, and Scientific American's Science Quickly.

Dr. Tayler Eaton earned her Ph.D. from Cornell University in Cognitive Neuroscience, utilising neuroimaging techniques to understand the neural and physiological contributors to maladaptive emotional memory. She is deeply passionate about understanding the nature of trauma and traumatic memory processes with the aim of developing interventions to support people who have experienced severe trauma, and helping to inform the wider mental health policy conversation. Tayler is currently a Senior Analyst on the Workforce Strategy and Analytics team within Mercer, applying bespoke statistical modeling to drive positive workforce change for clients, with a particular focus on content moderation and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion analytics.