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Abstract

Seventy-eight postinstitutionalized (PI) children adopted at ages 17-36 months were assessed 2, 8, 16, and 24 months postadoption on measures of cortisol and parenting quality, and compared to same-aged children adopted from foster care (FC, n = 45) and nonadopted children (NA, n = 45). In kindergarten (Mage = 6.0 years), teachers, parents, and trained observers completed measures of peer relationships and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms. PI children had more peer problems and ADHD symptoms according to teachers and observers than NA children with FC children in between, whereas both PI and FC children were at significantly greater risk of hypocortisolism (i.e., blunted cortisol diurnal rhythm and reactivity). Hypocortisolism and ADHD symptoms mediated the association between preadoption adversity and peer difficulties. Higher postadoption parenting quality was protective.