RAD, Reactive Attachment Disorder is an early childhood developmental brain injury. It is common in adopted children and infants who are exposed to substances, alcohol or extreme distress in the womb, or who have serious medical issues at birth, delaying caregiver bonding.

It inhibits the growth of the front part of the brain which controls logic, reason and self control, while accelerating the growth of the part of the brain that controls our primal survival instincts of fight, flight or freeze.

RAD inhibits the child's emotional, mental, social and behavioral development . The child lives in survival mode even when there is no threat present. They have an over-exaggerated need for the sense of security and acceptance, yet reject and distrust the consistent love, support and security of their primary caregivers. They will often sabotage relationships when they reach a personal level.

Things that cause mild stress or discomfort in other children will put them into full-on survival mode. They are always in high alert and try to control people and surroundings in caustic, extreme and ineffective ways to create a sense of control. In this attempt, what they often create is more chaos which creates less security.

The diagnosis usually comes as a result of displays of manipulation and lying, extreme attempts to control others and their environment in a maladaptive manner (such as triangulation) and a variety of persistent behavioral concerns.

There is a spectrum in which some kids have less amount of injury, resulting in mild behaviors; while for others the injury and the behaviors are extreme, frightening, and possibly aggressive, creating an environment of secondary trauma for their families.

The disorder can be manageable, but may become increasingly active after a incident of trauma or stress.

The lack of trust, inability to read social cues, impulse control and self regulation will evolve over their lifetime and creates challenges in families, close relationships, school, and work.

Their resistance to trust, respond to positive or negative consequences, and to self-regulate their emotions puts them at risk for being in unhealthy or abusive peer relationships, and for developing abusive behaviors.

Therapy administered by licensed, qualified trauma professionals has been shown to be effective. Clear, consistent boundaries along with a calm and supportive environment is key for progress.