

Human Interaction – a social and psychological ability with power to change and transform a child and the world. Without it, the survival of this world ceases to exist.

The importance of human and social interaction goes far beyond practical application. In addition to acquiring the social skills needed to communicate, learn empathy, respect, and honor; it can be used as an instrument to bring forth healing to the mind, soul, and body. However, in the same manner, human and social interaction, or lack thereof, have the potential to be destructive. The manifestation of either outcome becomes a responsibility that lies within the hands of the beholder.

In infants and children, human and social interaction demonstrates necessary to lead a healthy, well-rounded life. According to the Children's Bureau, healthy social interaction is closely related to emotional development in infancy, vital to lifelong wellness, and essential to the growth of their brains. Studies have shown that lack of social connection in children affects their left hemisphere, which may lead to increased risk for depression, anxiety disorders, and a reduced hippocampus, which can contribute to learning and memory impairments. In the same rate, once children become adolescents, social interaction becomes pivotal to the success of their social and behavioral functioning (all4kids.org).

When the pandemic hit, the mandates put in place limited and prohibited the amount of interaction with children, which in turn, caused a spike in mental illness. According to the CDC, "from March 2020 to October 2020, mental health-related emergency department visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 emergency department visits."

Children born during the pandemic, spent the first two years of their life experiencing a different world. A world where social interactions became rare, faces barely seen, and social gatherings limited. Mother's and father's that counted on additional help or support during a transitional time in their life, found themselves limited to resources. Teenagers that were used to their social life at school, or outside the home, suddenly found themselves isolated, without the ability to experience a hug from a friend, a handshake, or important milestones like graduations. Experiences that were crucial to their development, came to a sudden halt.

The lack of social interaction outside the home also demonstrated to be detrimental to the safety of numerous children. With nowhere to turn, children who counted on watchful eyes outside the home, became victims to perpetrators in their own home. According to RAINN, (the Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network,) under the country lockdown, "there was a 22% increase in monthly calls from people younger than 18, and half of all incoming contacts were from minors, a first in RAINN's history... Of those young people who contacted the hotline in March, 67% identified their perpetrator as a family member and 79% said they were currently living with that perpetrator."

Human and social interactions, such abstract concepts, that go far beyond one's own self-benefits. On one hand, extremely beneficial for one's own growth, yet, also detrimental for the growth of someone else. To think about the repercussions children and teens faced, and still face, are worth noting. As things slowly return to what they once were, fear still lingers. Fear of sickness, fear of adapting to new norms or routines. In some cases, attempting to find new ways to heal from the damage that accompanied the last two years can be difficult.

Children need to be loved, held, nurtured, and surrounded by loved ones. All experiences that can only happen with human and social interaction. Never underestimate the power of a hug – the comfort or solace that can be found in it. The ability to be physically present to lend an ear for a child who needs to be heard or saved. The milestones that happen in social gatherings which allow for teenagers to create special memories. All interactions proven to be necessary for survival, growth, comfort, peace, healing, learning, protection, and so much more. Till next time.....

Your Mommy-Friend,
Denize Verduzco