

Man Is A Social Creature

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Two learned neurobiologists, prof. Danilo Bzdok from the University of Montreal and evolutionary psychologist Prof. Robin Danbar from Oxford, published in the latest issue of *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, a synthesis of the mechanisms behind our need to connect with other people. After reading scientific arguments, the belief that has been known for centuries is confirmed that the feeling of loneliness is the greatest threat faced by modern man. Social isolation lowers our immunity, causing many ailments in adults and a behavioural disorder in children. As they write, "We have never experienced social isolation on a scale like that imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic." And yet "in times of anxiety, crisis and catastrophes, our endurance depends especially on the richness and strength of relationships with other people." So maintain many scholars.

It is obvious that we need closeness. We need another human being. It has been like this for ages, it is and will be. Adam Mickiewicz, a teenager at the time, wrote: "Youth, for you the nectar of life is so sweet when I share it with others. Hearts of blue are filled with happiness when they are together tied by golden thread".

Recently, a friend has told me that a Polish family who lives in our area has been having problems with their oldest son for some time. The boy is already in high school. Two younger girls are finishing primary school. My friend asked if I could go with her one day to see these people. A beautiful, brand new house interestingly situated on the slope of a hill. There is a spacious garage under the house. At the entrance to the stairs, there is a cupboard with slippers - a dozen pairs of all colours and sizes - for household members and guests. The lady of the house led us upstairs. On the way up, she told me that they probably wouldn't be living here for long. It is their fourth home in a row. The first was old, made of fibro. They renovated it, covered it with bricks and sold it for a good price. After paying off the loan, they had enough money to buy another house. They repeated the same tactic three more times. Every time buying a house in a better neighbourhood.

"When we sell this one, we may be looking for something permanent. Anyway, it depends on where we find something to buy," said the nice lady of the house. "That's why we take care of this house and admonish our children not to damage or scratch anything, because the buyers are picky," she added, wiping the invisible dust off the railing or maybe our fingerprints.

We sat down at a table in a large, spacious kitchen. Outside the window, there was a view of the neighbouring houses. "You are saying that it is the fourth time that you are moving, aren't you?" I broke the silence. "When remembering their childhood, which one of those houses do you think will your children look fondly at? Which house did the children invite their peers to? Where did they like to play the most?" I did not have to wait for the answer, because there was none.

However, in my opinion the constant moving was the obvious source of the oldest child's problems. This boy simply did not have an environment of his own. Nowhere has he had time to settle into the new home. This was confirmed by my short conversation with this teenager.

Just as friends are needed by us adults, so much more are they needed by our children. Common conversations and games, unhindered by the presence of us adults, are essential for the proper development of a child's personality.

Lack of friends or schoolmates, lack of acceptance by peers from the immediate environment can easily turn into problems with behaviour leading to aggression or conversely, to alienation and withdrawal into oneself. This becomes a common cause of a learning delay.

During an English lesson in an Australian school, I remember asking my students to write an essay. It was the beginning of the year. I wanted to check their language level and learn more about each of the twenty-something teenagers I was going to teach all year. The topic of the essay was simple, "I have a bicycle. Where would I go, who would I go with and why?"

There was a Polish boy in this class as well. He wrote in perfectly good English that he did have a bike, however, for now it was locked in the garage. He would go to Bielany and definitely with Kazik, because Kazik was his best friend, 'He is my best friend,' the boy emphasized. I spoke to the boy afterwards. It turned out that Kazik was his school mate from the first grade which he finished in Warsaw. Once, he remembers they were at Bielany. They do not keep in touch. Now the boy is in the seventh grade. If this is his only friend, this seems like an obvious warning signal. "He has no friends," I told his parents. It was time to act. For this boy, the offer to enrol him in the Polish Saturday School was valuable. There he found peers like him to make friends with, and his parents hoped that there would be teenagers whom they would also be able to accept.

The bottom line is: we as parents should remember that each of us, including our children, are social creatures and it is important to allow our children to interact with other children.

Translation - Abigail Latecki