

Skipping Your Childhood- An Impossible Idea?

Can you skip your childhood... what a daft question- what on earth has the author been taking? What did they do? Sleep and one day immediately grow up in as a 20-year-old without 18 years of growing up and being a child? Sometimes, I wish I had been able to, but as we all know that is impossible, however: skipping your childhood is only too real.

People think of childhood as being the time when you are young, for example google suggested synonyms for it as infancy, boy/girl hood and preadolescence. All terms which indicate childhood as being an age, however there was not one synonym which I felt genuinely described childhood. For me, these are all terms which state the time of life at which childhood is supposed to occur.

The thing is, childhood is not a time of life. It's a way of being/living. Childhood is when you are just starting as a human, you start to feel emotions and need validation and comfort depending on the emotion. Your parents are the ones who you naturally turn to for this and thankfully most children are fortunate enough to be emotionally supported from their first fears and exhausting tears. Children need to be guided and reassured in the same way you would with an animal because they are growing into a terrifying world and trying to establish how to feel about it. I'm not saying totally protect your kids and don't allow them to be scared, it's a totally natural process but they need someone to gain their strength from and naturally they look to those around them; which normally tends to mean towards their parents.

So, what if their parents fail to validate them? Nurture them? Reassure them? Let them know they're loved? What then?

So, in my case, from a young age my fears or attachments to people/places seemed to mean nothing; and when I acted in the over excitable way which any normal child of my age would have, I was told to calm down, or stop being or annoying, or to grow up. So subsequently I tried to do just that. At an age when I should have been a bubbly, impulsive, young child; I tried to grow up.

Because my emotions never felt validated or significant, I tried to simply not show them. The only times I showed emotions were normally very negative ones when they had got to the point I couldn't mentally take any more without breaking in some way(negative I guess because most the time I felt there was nothing to be particularly positive about), for example massive breakdowns of tears or trying to hurt myself because I needed to feel- because trust me: not feeling anything is very empty and alone.

I tried to grow up, I felt to be expected that I needed to grow up. I tried to be responsible, and sensible and be what I thought I needed to be. Even to this day, I can probably count the number of screaming tantrums I have ever had. I won't lie, I often would cry and shake in a way which probably was easiest to be dismissed as some show of temper, but they were times when I felt like I had literally hit a wall of fear and terror. I felt lost. The best way I can describe it is imagine being lost in a supermarket when you were young, and you don't

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know anyone and even the shop assistants seem terrifying and you think you'll never see anyone you know again. That's the kind of lost I felt- and I had nobody I could turn to because I thought I had to act grown up and that meant not showing those emotions.

So how does this mean I skipped my childhood?

Basically, at the age when other children were playing in parks or running wild and screaming; I was acting grown up. I was trying to fit in, be accepted. Obviously bottling up emotions is not a healthy thing and I genuinely believe that and the massive intuition of feeling both lost and unwanted, were massive contributors in my struggle with self-harm.

It also means that (contrary to the idea at the start of waking up and feeling totally "grown-up") underneath everything, sometimes that lost girl in the supermarket surfaces again, because I never learnt to experience emotions in any form of regulated style as a young child so it's as if I am learning now- and let's be honest it's far easier at a time when you are sheltered in the safety of a child's lack of knowledge or pre-intuition.

It means that in the middle of being a fairly sensible person- I'll do something totally absurd, or say something insensitive without thinking, or have no clue how to act in any emotionally challenging situation because emotions still confuse me, and because at times I revert to that uneducated small girl trying to act in a more adult like way.

That's what skipping my childhood did. It has left a hole in a way and simply because as an idea it's so alien to people, very few people even grasp the concept of not experiencing a full-filling childhood; next to nobody understands the true impact it left on me and misread my inability to act in a reasonable way in situations in many ways.

I only shared this because after speaking to a small percentile of other young adults who have experienced similar circumstances to me, we realised there genuinely has been a massive impact on us all by missing out on a more supportive time when we were younger.

All I want to say is to any other kids who are going through/have been through this, hold on it will get better when you manage to starting solving the mysteries of emotions and I can guarantee that even if your immediate family are not supportive: there will people out there for you that are, whether that be in the form of more removed family, friends or professionals or anyone at all else and whether you have met them yet or not- there are people out there who care about you.

Finally: parents. Got a young kid growing up? Make them feel safe, let them know they're loved and accepted for who they are. Help them confront those demons, whether they are monsters hiding under beds or monsters attacking their thoughts: be there. Make that serious change in your relationship before it is too late, because sometimes it feels impossible to show just how much it is all hurting, or sometimes it feels as if to not have to keep acting that impossible role there is no choice, but to walk away.