

DR. MAYER'S MEMO

Center for Youth Research
and
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PLAY!

Yes, that's correct, let's consider play. We focus so much attention on the issues of responsibility, school performance, motivation, discipline, etc., but have you ever considered how handicapped this generation of young people are without knowing how to play with one another?

As we approach that glorious extended play period, summer vacation, I think it is important to consider how poorly kids play together. The computer or video games are such ubiquitous companions for today's youth that they often are not with other young people during their leisure hours. And, if they are in an activity that puts them among other people their age, it is often such an organized activity that they don't get unstructured time to play and interact with others.

When they do have totally unstructured time, is it any wonder that they may act inappropriate, wild, or hyperactive-like? At school, as well, don't be baffled that students act-out when they are given unstructured time or given the opportunity to govern or supervise themselves? They simply don't know how to handle this.

We can eliminate our surprise of the above conditions by helping young people learn how to play. Yes, young people need to learn how to play together. In my observation, they need this now more than ever. Most adults assume that playing is one of the innate behaviors that a child just can do without being corrected or taught how to do it.

It is important, maybe critical, for us (adults) to observe and correct how today's kids play and to stop negative, anti-social behaviors as they occur.

Further, many psychological and cognitive deficiencies that label young people may be more attributable to a young person's inability to handle unstructured time in a world where they are constantly being controlled or isolated from peers, than they are actual disorders.

A case I was recently called on is a good example of this last point. This girl was a perfect young lady in the classroom, in structured school activities, in sports, but at recess, lunch and outside of school when she was visiting relatives her own age; she became overly aggressive, hyper-excitable, and inappropriate in her actions toward others. She was being considered to be ADHD but after examination she showed excellent signs of attention and control over her behavior. Significantly, she had a long history of not being corrected in how she interacted with other children and now teenagers. Someone needed to step up and show her how to behave when around others her own age. She was not attention deficit, she was undeveloped, immature, in this area of her life and her behavior.

Over Please

That's the theme here. We adults need to be more attentive to young people in these unstructured times in their lives. They need us to call them aside and let them know that you: "don't play like that." Or that they need to rest for a minute because they have gotten themselves too excited while playing. Or, that you don't pout, or whine or whatever during this play time when something just doesn't go your way. In the age of all the self-help gurus and media advice givers we have lost the simple guidance of saying to our young people....

STOP...NO... YOU DON'T DO THAT or DON'T PLAY LIKE THAT!

Please share this Memo with parents.

Parents, a great way to look for how well your child plays with others is to hang around a while either after you drop them off for an activity/sport or come 15 minutes early to pick them up. Stand back, even stay in the car, and just watch how they are interacting with their peers. Then, when you are alone with them, if you saw something about their play that needs correction, this is a perfect time to say something. Don't be punitive; just make your comment or observation. Be firm and if it warrants a strong admonition, don't be afraid to say, "...you know, you shouldn't act like that to _____"

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Reminder

Summer break is a great time to help young people and their families with problems and get the student ready for the next school year. If you are suggesting help for a student or family please tell them to call me early. So many times a school may make a referral and then the family waits until August 17th to set up the initial appointment. They may have followed your recommendation, but the student starts the school year with the same problems locked in as they had before. Please let parents know to call right away so that we can make a difference before the next school year.

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Special Note:

Many of you receiving this email know what a success we have with presentations I give. Please keep in mind to contact me early to book a date. I hate to disappoint because I am already booked and I don't have your date open.

Look at my website for some topic ideas!

By the way, getting the faculty charged up for the new school year is one of my fortes.

Please keep me in mind for next school year.

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FINAL ANNOUNCEMENT

(Really)

MY FIRST NOVEL, SHADOW WARRIOR, COMES OUT ANY DAY NOW.