

Children as Teachers^{*}

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Yes, my dear Wilhelm, nothing on this earth affects my heart so much as children. When I look on at their doings; when I mark in the little creatures the seeds of all those virtues and qualities which they will one day find so indispensable; when I behold in the obstinate all the future firmness and constancy of a noble character; in the capricious, that levity and gaiety of temper which will carry them lightly over the dangers and troubles of life, their whole nature simple and unpolluted; -then I call to mind the golden words of the Great Teacher of mankind, "Unless ye become like one of these!"

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Being on family holiday is a good occasion to write about 27 years of parenthood based on self-regulation. During these days we love to look back and talk a bit with our two sons about their childhood. We've given a series of lectures, taught courses, and written articles on self-regulation; in this article we will present a subjective discussion of selected aspects of this concept.

Self-regulation, according to Wilhelm Reich, means lively awareness of and appropriate response to the child's needs, emotions and impulses. Through his research Reich discovered the muscular and character armoring process and found that this phenomenon had transferred from one generation to the next in "civilized" societies for thousands of years. However, within a secure, caring and loving environment the child has a chance to grow up relatively free of this chronic armoring. Through self-

regulation the necessary protective layer of armoring stays flexible while the "biological core" remains lively.

Reich described how armoring develops in children and how it can be eased by parents or therapists. The earlier this is done, the easier it is. Today detailed literature is available on the principles of self-regulation (1 - 5). In applying these principles parents accept their children's primary needs, emotions, sensations, thoughts and impulses and support their emotional expression, energy flow and pulsation, thus giving their children the best basis for healthy development.

A.S. Neill, founder of Summerhill School in England, and Reich's good friend, described self-regulation as providing maximum freedom for the child while respecting the freedom of the next person as well as the democratic rules of the community. For Neill, the main thing was to stand behind the child one hundred percent, come what may. Neill strove to provide education without fear or anxiety. He said, "No one is wise enough or good enough to mold the character of any child. What is wrong with our sick, neurotic world is that we have all been molded, and an adult generation that has seen two great wars and

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seems about to launch a third should not be trusted to mold the character of a rat” (6, 7).

Neill’s daily contact with children convinced him that the mind cares for itself as long as the emotions stay lively. The principles of self-regulation in learning and the emotional freedom to express and unfold are still alive in Summerhill today, and are applied to education as well as to living within a larger democratic community (8, 9). During the 90 years of Summerhill’s existence, countless valuable experiments have been conducted regarding self-regulation and a naturally-grown, rich youth culture. In the outside world, Summerhill is often described as “anti-authoritarian.” Many people would be surprised to learn that Summerhill has more rules than many other schools; in fact, there are about 300 “school laws” which are known by every student.

Reich and Neill, both pioneers, exchanged and disputed their relevant observations and thoughts, as evidenced by their correspondence (10). Their conclusions, and our personal orgone therapy, shaped my husband’s and my way of parenting. At times, when faced with difficult situations, we doubted the validity of self-regulation. For instance, when our sons were faced with their own weaknesses I began to doubt we had done it “right.” Occasionally we asked ourselves if we should clear some of the hurdles for our sons, find some of the solutions for them. We also looked for other insights and methods of parenting. Yet there was no better model than self-regulation in terms of plausibility, depth and efficacy, so we stayed with it.

The Early Years of Parenthood:

Before I became pregnant at age 30, I worked for five years during my medical

internship in various hospitals and disciplines, including obstetrics. My profession and being a mother were fulfilling. Our children were wanted and the motivation to become parents was love. From the outset we tried to “do it right” in the sense of self-regulation. We had prepared through personal orgone therapy, which continued for several years, and through discussions and books. Although we welcomed our two children with joy and gratitude, living with them was not always easy. Self-regulation is basically a simple concept, but at times it can be difficult to apply.

During both pregnancies I blossomed and was happy. I delivered both children at home as I felt safe and wonderfully supported by the midwife and my husband. There were no complications, but the 12 and 8 hours respectively of contractions were quite painful and seemed to last too long. Homeopathic drugs given by my husband, who is a homeopathic doctor, helped to ease the pains. The moments I held the two babies in my arms were the absolute peak experiences of my life.

I breastfed both children – the first for two years and the second for one and a half years – in a self-regulated way. During the first years my husband and I carried our sons close to our bodies. We had a family bed until they wanted to sleep in their own rooms at age nine. One may argue that, for babies and children, witnessing the sex-life of their parents could be energetically overwhelming. This is certainly true for any aggressive sex, but what about the homes of people around the globe where families sleep in one room? At any rate, we had sex only during the day when our children were somewhere else, as we felt too tired at night. Having a caring, empathetic babysitter, relative or neighbor during certain hours is essential in allowing time and space for the parents.

We tried to fulfill our children's basic needs and provided body contact, safety, closeness, tenderness, security, movement, excitement, play and laughter, encompassed in love. We also enforced age-appropriate boundaries and, later on, certain rules. We gave orientation and guidance intuitively. Punishment was not necessary, as boundaries and consequences were enough in most situations. We yelled at them sometimes – and on two or three occasions smacked them, after which we had intense feelings of guilt and apologized.

The houses we rented were spacious and the children could go outside freely and play safely in gardens, meadows and woods. The eating habits of both children were strange, sometimes eccentric, until age 10. Our younger son ate only potatoes, rice, noodles and bread, and drank milk or apple juice. The elder loved sweets. I preached healthy food, but when my eldest son told me, "Mom, I will never marry an organic-whole-grain-wife," I became more tolerant. After age 10 both children began to eat in a more balanced way. Both grew up without needing any traditional medical treatment other than setting a broken bone and tending some mild toothaches. They are not immunized because, as homeopathic doctors, we are aware of the damage caused by immunizations. We put our trust in our children's strong immune systems and classical homeopathy, and their general good health is the result.

Our sons had close friends from an early age, through kindergarten and school, as well as bonds with various adults, including a loving grandmother, neighbors, au pairs and babysitters. When they started school both reacted with the typical symptoms of school children; they became pale, lost genuine interest in learning and exhibited a kind of shrinking. After one year in German schools we decided to let them go to Summerhill as boarders. They

lived there three terms a year until the age of 17, when they started college (equivalent to high school in the United States) and later university (called college in the United States). In the long vacations (19 to 20 weeks) they lived at home with us.

Summerhill is a big family of about 100 people, children and adults, who live in smaller family-like units. The community meets daily to discuss rules, interests and events; decisions are reached through democracy and consensus. This is the backbone of the community. The extensive grounds offer plenty of greenery, with woods, gardens, meadows and stables for animals; fields for tennis, hockey and football; a pool; ateliers for woodwork, pottery, theater and music; and a café. The regular meetings are held in a large lounge, which is also used for dancing, games, feasts and celebrations. Parents, relatives, friends and interested people from around the world – including the media and committees from other schools – are allowed to visit on certain days. After decades of attacks by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and endless dirty campaigns by the British newspapers, Summerhill won a great legal case against the government. In a historic trial before the Royal Court of Justice in London in 2000, it was finally recognized as a self-governed school and has since become an approved model of citizenship, democratic community and self-regulated learning.

We chose Summerhill not only for self-regulation in learning, but because it offered our children an opportunity to live in a greater international community where they could develop bonds with many more children and adults than they could at home. Our parental weaknesses could be balanced by this experience, and friendships at Summerhill often last a lifetime. We sacrificed our family life for two-thirds of

the year – and this was sometimes painful for us, but not for our sons. Summerhill became their second family. The 20 weeks they spent at home were always very dear to all of us and we had no stress with school issues. We spent a lot of time together, but the children also liked to be by themselves. Summerhill gave us all a rich insight and experience.

Another reason we chose Summerhill was to give our children a chance to have their first sexual experiences in a relatively natural way. It is refreshing to see how the girls and boys playfully take their time, cuddling and snuggling for a long time before approaching anything more sexual – or not, as the case may be. It is interesting to note that there have been no teenage pregnancies at Summerhill. Both of our sons told us about their first love-relationships, and freely asked our advice.

Children at Summerhill choose what, when, and how they learn. Our sons began academic lessons at the age of 13, which is quite normal. Before that, they played – and learned through playing. They eagerly pursued English, Japanese, music, woodwork, theater, and sports. At 13, their interests turned to computers, film, language, literature, history, and politics. Our modern societies ignore the healthy functions of free play, of creative doing and day-dreaming. In Japan, for example, the students study so much that they barely have time to sleep at night.

Our sons took their state exams at Summerhill, went to college and, two years later, to university. Our older son studied Computers, achieved a Bachelor of Science 1st Class with Honors at the University of Sussex, then a Master of Science at the University of Bristol. He got a good job with a British software company in 2007. Our younger son is studying Film Production and working toward a Bachelor Degree in England. Both completed their

schooling in about half the usual time, which is typical for students who have been allowed to learn in a self-regulated environment. So much precious time is lost and individual potential ignored in traditional schools.

People often ask if children who have learned and lived with self-regulation have a difficult time integrating into society: 75 percent of Summerhill's students go on to college and university and become teachers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, psychotherapists, journalists, craftsmen, business professionals and artists; rarely do they become militarists or theologians. They are socially responsible and integrate into society well as they do not need to rebel against people or situations.

How Our Children Developed:

Our sons are open, respectful, sincere and charming young men. They reveal emotional and mental depth. There is nothing superficial about them. As they have a life-positive radiance they are liked by others while they stay genuine. In communication they show empathy, compassion, appreciation, understanding and tolerance. Their criticism is constructive. They share thoughts, feelings and fantasies. Being with them is, for the most part, an easy and pleasurable experience. This wasn't always the case – especially during puberty. Our feeling is that we are getting back what we gave. They are not only brothers, but have been close friends since puberty. Before that, they quarreled a lot. Since then, they behave respectfully, honestly, sensitively and cooperatively with each other.

Living at Summerhill helped them develop independence, creative thinking, self-responsibility, assertiveness, tolerance, fairness, team spirit, cooperation, leadership

ability, problem-solving and organizational skills, responsibility for others and the capacity to celebrate and enjoy living in a community. These qualities are as valuable as any academic success.

Although uncertain about some aspects of life, our children demonstrate a high level of autonomy and self-responsibility. Through the normal experience of emotional and physical pain and minor traumata, they developed armor. We did what we could to keep the armor soft, including baby massage, ergonomic first aid, tickling, playful discharge of any held back emotions, etc. (11). If there is one characteristic they share, it is a gentle strength. They also have sincerity, humor, depth and authenticity. They show practical intelligence, creative talents, and – thanks to Summerhill – social skills. They are self-aware, for the most part confident, humble and down-to-earth. They can stand on their own two feet, looking positively into the future while living in the here and now.

It is not my intention to boast about how well we did as parents or to imply that our sons are perfect. They have their weak spots, as do we all. I want to describe realistically the observed results of our self-regulated parenting.

Misunderstandings, Errors and Weaknesses:

Today we are faced with strong tendencies toward conservative, repressive parenting and education. The damage caused by laissez-faire, “anti-authoritarian” methods fuels arguments against self-regulated parenting and learning. There are fundamental misunderstandings of the child’s needs, as well as necessary boundaries and guidance. Certain lobbies misuse extremes for their politics of “back to basics.” All parents, nurses, teachers, and

people working with children should know that repressed primary emotions and impulses result in irrational reactions, and the repression of the latter produces self-destructive patterns.

My husband and I trusted that our natural instincts for feeding and caring for our children were sound. We also had relatively stable personalities and a positive outlook on children and life in general – qualities enhanced by our personal orgone therapy. But we had no true models for parenting, and our search to find the “right way” of doing things often overcame our more intuitive knowledge and perceptions. Sometimes I couldn’t see the forest for the trees. At these times, situations would appear more difficult than they actually were and dealing with them became more complicated than necessary. Mind, heart, and body were not in harmony at those moments.

In looking back I see that we overestimated our parental influence on our children’s personalities and undervalued their inborn qualities, including constitutional factors, prenatal experiences, genetic patterns, and the individual essence of each child. We also underestimated the influence of peer-groups, friends, teachers, and the “Zeitgeist.”¹ The long-term effects of mini-traumata and complex systemic interactions could not be foreseen, nor could we understand them completely.

We experienced moments of helplessness. I felt I was neglecting my children. Although I worked at home in my own practice and had flexibility in planning my hours, I felt I was not spending enough time with them. Also, I wasn’t free of the manipulative and controlling patterns of

¹ “The spirit of the times.” *Zeitgeist* is the general cultural, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and/or political climate within a nation or specific group, along with the general ambience, morals, sociocultural direction or mood of an era.

mothering. The children certainly suffered when my husband and I quarreled and shouted at each other. I assume that both children felt our insecurities, anxieties, tensions, irritations, discrepancies, and emotional pain. Children easily perceive any incongruence between words and deeper feelings as they are naturally very sensitive. I'm sure my sons were aware of this incongruence in me during the times I lacked consciousness of my own emotional pain. We tried to support the individuality of our sons, not knowing if we did justice to their innermost needs and individual essence.

Having said this, I believe we succeeded insofar as we could talk about our problems. We apologized for our faults when we became conscious of them. Fortunately, children are always ready to forgive – and we told them often how special they are and that we love them.

Primary Emotions and Secondary Feelings:

Today, anger is probably the most misunderstood emotion. Primary aggression is not differentiated from secondary destructive aggressiveness. The latter is the result of suppressed primary emotions such as frustration, pain, longing, fear, or sadness. Secondary feelings and impulses are not appropriate or straightforward, but hidden, covert, twisted and destructive.

There is always a rational² reason for primary aggression. This “holy anger” is a genuine reaction arising when a person or situation keeps a child – consciously or not – from his or her own innermost truth. Expressing one's primary anger appropriately dissolves it quickly, so we always tried to accept and understand our

² “Rational,” in Reich's understanding, is synonymous with “constructive” rather than the contrast of “emotional.”

children's primary aggression and allow it to discharge through its different impulses in a safe way. Free expression can also transform feelings from secondary to primary. It is important to provide a framework that allows space, time and means for free expression.

We did not dissuade our children from their fears, but tried to accept and calm them – often discovering playful, creative ways to address each child's anxieties. We held and comforted them when they felt sad. Deep sobbing is a precious valve which can only be supported. To summarize, we endeavored to keep their emotions lively, their bodies soft and flexible, and their energies in a natural flow. Perhaps as a result of this others sense the two as authentic, positive people.

The “Wounded Inner Child” of Parents:

One huge obstacle in living with children is the parents' unconscious “wounded inner child,” which can surface when the memory of violation or pain from one's own childhood is touched. Most frequently these unconscious feelings are projected onto the child in the form of disapproval, negativity, weakness, self-devaluation or self-hate.

Parenting based on self-regulation is not possible while ignoring, denying or repressing one's own pain. If the necessity to armor heavily is passed on to our children, we also pass on the lack of love, freedom, health and joy in living. In becoming conscious my husband and I realized we had a great chance to heal our own wounds. We wanted to cherish our children, from the depth of our hearts, and to fully appreciate their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Through parenthood we became conscious of our own wounds and discussed

them. In this way we were able to learn about ourselves and each other. I was able to let go of my guilt for not being a good enough mother, accept my childhood, and acknowledge my “wounded inner child.” My husband and I recognized our own imperfections and, as a result, became merciful. Attaining self-forgiveness is an inner healing process. Our sons readily forgave us when we asked their pardon – as all children do. It seemed as though they could take our imprint and make the best of it. We learned so much from our children. Children are the greatest teachers, just by being themselves. Parenthood taught me to appreciate life as a gift and to value the important lessons as opportunities to grow.

Perfectionist Self-demands:

The fear of making mistakes is a contradiction of self-regulated parenthood. Striving to do everything right at any cost creates a barrier between the parent and child. Feelings of guilt or inadequacy can lead to mistakes in parenting, which are then imprinted on the child.

The expectation that self-regulated children are free from any serious problems or that their lives are smooth and easy is a misconception that springs from a kind of normative thinking. Even so-called progressive parents often reveal unhealthy ambition, rivalry or envy by comparing themselves to other parents or their children to other children. Constantly assessing one’s parenthood or children is not helpful in terms of self-regulation.

Self-regulated upbringing should be governed by the needs of the children – not by dogmas. In addition to the general developmental stages, children acquire such functions as sleeping, eating, talking, walking, cleanliness, sexuality, learning and

other activities individually, in their own time, in their own way.

Kairos³ and Flow:⁴

Looking back, I regret that I wasn’t firm in my inner female wisdom and creative power when my children were babies. If I had trusted more in my intuition and extrasensory perception – which I felt without the need to think – I would have known exactly what my children needed when they cried. My inner connectedness would have allowed me to recognize any specific, subtle feeling of my babies and which element guided it: fire (warmth, excitement, action), water (liquid, food, feelings), air (breathing, movement), earth (stability, support, safety), metal (cosmic light, mental insight), ether (energy, spirituality), or just love.

In this state of consciousness I would have felt the pleasure in every single moment, the timeless being of “Kairos.” Experiencing life as a playful game or adventure makes even the most difficult everyday situations easier to navigate. Also, there is nothing as lightening and energizing as having eye contact with healthy babies; nothing more wholesome than to get involved with children’s inner world – to think, feel, and play as creatively and timelessly as they. I often recommend entering this kind of “Flow-state” to patients – and to myself.

We played with our children, had fun, and laughed a lot. Too often, I played

³ From the Greek, meaning the right moment of time; in contrast to “Chronos,” the linear time which is felt with inner pressure.

⁴ The term “Flow” stems from scientist M. Csikszentmihalyi, who observed this intercultural phenomenon: People who were able to go into “Flow-state,” even while performing difficult or numbing work, felt pleased and satisfied (12).

only half-heartedly while I thought about my “to do” list. Children show us clearly what we need for healing: surrender, living in the now and in the flow, in a sensitive state of receiving life in every moment and by every experience.

The worst of humans is that they become adults too early. As long as they are young they are loveable, sincere, tolerant, curious, and cooperative. They even play with each other ... (13).

Brain Physiology:

Societies are pressuring children to conform, achieve, perform and succeed, primarily through education. The focus is on mental thinking, analyzing, scoring, time pressure and efficiency. This focus goes hand-in-hand with the dominance of one side of the brain and exposure to beta waves all day long. But our Chronobiology needs the ultradian rhythm of 15- to 20-minute alpha and theta states (non-REM states) every 90 minutes throughout the day (14). During these times cells and chromosomes are restructured, genes repaired, hormones and other bio-chemicals produced – the body is recreating. I understand these states as functionally identical with Reich’s expansion, Vagus- or B-function of the organism. In contrast to the changes of wave patterns at night, we are able to override the ultradian rhythm during the day for many years, but sooner or later we become ill.

Human beings use only one-seventh of their brains – and this refers to the dominant side. The other side, usually the right side, is fully used from birth, but isn’t completely connected to the left through the Corpus Callosum. This phenomenon shows that we humans don’t use our whole potential. IQs of 90, 120, or 150 actually

mean 9, 12, or 15 percent utilization of the brain’s potential. How ridiculous these differences are! A marked dominance of the left brain correlates with emotional control and, in the end, with the “intelligence of the craziness and destructiveness” of our society. It means repression of the creative, sensitive side of the core.⁵

The marked right-brain dominance is equally unhealthy, as it is associated with uncontrolled impulses and irrational feelings. Here is the tendency to chaos, dissociation, and destructive behavior. ADD and ADHD may correlate with this, and it may be related to a rebellious development against the left-brain dominance of society (15).

Of course people need clear, logical thinking – but not at the cost of neglected emotion, feeling, sensitive perception and creativity. The full neuronal passage and synchronization between left and right brain is the bridge to rational emotional strength, intuition, inspiration, oneness, connectedness and the capacity to be in the “now.”

Only through inner integration and unity which are also manifested in the brain do we receive the impulses of inner guidance and higher wisdom. Until we integrate our sensitive female side we will not fully understand the child’s soul. Only then can we approach inner freedom, peace, fulfillment and love – our full human potential. Mind, heart and body need to come together, especially in living with children.

⁵ The polarity between the left and right hemispheres is a controversial subject in neurophysiology. The correlations are much more complex than left versus right hemisphere, but the polar functions can be observed in the same way as the sympathetic-parasympathic polarity or female versus male aspects in each person.

The Pressure to Achieve and to Succeed:

The one-sided programming of academic success from kindergarten on is a merciless rigidity and an injustice to the child. Over-stimulation through tasks, training or classes blocks genuine learning and natural development. Many people see the risks, but feel helpless and powerless to change direction. Most parents don't trust self-regulation. They worry that their children will not find a good job or the right place in life and, therefore, constantly pressure them to succeed, either openly or indirectly. In many families every step of the child's life is planned and controlled, especially in respect to performing and achieving. Despite the fact that the economy is suffering, parents should not force their children to take a certain path just because they think it will lead to well-paid professions.

School children are not even allowed to be ill, to have a cold in a natural way, which means to let them experience all the phases – fever, sweat, coughing, and sneezing, skin eruptions, apathy or weakness. Like adults, they must be cured quickly so they can function again. All this does not do justice to the child.

A child having difficulty is often misdiagnosed. Pediatricians, child therapists, educators and other professionals simply fail to draw the right conclusions. They see the causes of the child's problems in television, in being spoiled, or because of brutalization. Although I acknowledge the damaging effects of these influences, I believe they are overestimated and only touch the surface. The true causes lie much deeper. "You reap what you sow." A child who feels accepted, understood, supported, loved, and who is not tormented by parents, friends, school, or medicine, is able to handle television and material wealth without any serious damage.

Unfortunately, many children are abused by their parents – not only are they used as scapegoats, but they are seen as self-ideals. We have to let our children go and trust their decisions and ways of life. The loving connection from heart to heart will remain. We know the wonderful text by Gibran:

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday (16).

And in Reich's words:

We cannot tell our children what kind of world they will or should build. But we can equip them with the kind of character structure and biological vigor which will enable them to make their own decisions, to find their own ways to build their own future and that of their children, in a rational manner (13).

Children from a Spiritual Perspective:

The biological core, as Reich called the lively essence of a child, is covered by "layers." These are the layers of armoring which build up as a needed protection against intolerable emotions. Those familiar with Reich's writings know the function. There are also other aspects which blur the healthy core, including prenatal and genetic

factors as well as patterns of the collective unconsciousness and of the morphogenetic field which imprint in ways we do not yet understand.

There is a spiritual aspect of self-regulation. Over time I realized how open, honest, and innocent children are from the outset, how eagerly they do everything they can to help their parents handle their own feelings – even take on their pain. Children do this from an early age, and they pay a high price for it as they sacrifice their authenticity in the process. They unconsciously defer their own needs and desires, repress their emotions, hold their breath, dissociate, or even split into different personalities. One could argue that they have no choice; yet I perceive this sacrifice as a deep expression of children's love for their parents.

Children will go so far as to offer themselves as victims of humiliation, violence, and abuse in order to give their parents the means of discharging emotional tension and pain. At the highest spiritual level their behavior provides an example for society. Children act, not consciously, but intuitively; possibly guided by a yet unknown form of consciousness. Because of this connection I see armoring not only as a pathology, restriction and protection, but also as an act of love.

Children are mirroring others' denial of their own emotional wounds. They force their parents to face their un-lived and non-integrated aspects of themselves. They reveal to society its destructive patterns, often dramatically. We should see children not only as victims of their environment, but also as teachers and healers. Therefore I prefer to call the "biological core" the "spiritual core."

Outlook:

The evolution of human consciousness encompasses a growing insight and acceptance of one's own parental feelings, wounds, and weaknesses; the acknowledgement of a continuous discrepancy between ideals and reality. Many parents hold the ideal of giving pure love, of fulfilling the child's basic needs. They want to recognize, appreciate, and nourish their child's uniqueness, unconditionally. Conscious parents recognize their inner limitations and the external obstacles to realizing this ideal. These difficulties can be addressed, however, by the parents' readiness to expand their limitations. Through the parents' efforts, energy and space are created for freedom, self-development, and profound love.

To Reich the energetic structure of the child is formed by the age of two and the personality structure by five or six. Although he emphasized that life manifests in endless variations, Reich was caught up in pathology. This has also been the "Zeitgeist." He didn't focus on the self-correcting potentials and healing mechanisms of children and adolescents, including those within groups of the greater family, peers, and community.

According to our experience, especially with Summerhill, some early shortcomings may correct themselves later under good conditions. Developmental steps missed at an early age may be made up for later, and the not-too-deep wounds may heal. I don't know if Reich was aware that problems can transform themselves into helpful resources. Although he described the biological core, he may have underestimated its power to process problems and to solve difficulties, to integrate aspects from the outside world and to unfold inner potential.

It seems there are fewer unwanted children in Germany and that more parents relate to their children in a loving, gentle, and tender way than 30 years ago. Many children and adolescents impress me today with their open, soft, and sensitive expressions. They don't show the old rigid armoring, but a more flexible pattern which tends slightly towards a dissociative structure. In my opinion, this type of armoring is preferable to old muscular and character armor because it preserves more liveliness, sensitivity, and emotionality.

Seeing these children suffer – some enduring torture and disease – within the structure of our society leaves me feeling sad. The role of self-regulation in children's development is generally reduced due to the normative thinking and anxieties of adults. The potential of other life functions are not allowed to unfold. Many of today's problems with children could be dissolved if adults would understand children in a deeper way, if they would apply self-regulation more, and if they could learn to see children as co-creators of their lives and of a better world.

Adults should trust in the children's willingness to learn in their own time and in their own way. Parents need to break free from compulsive education and establish self-regulated learning environments. I encourage parents to trust whatever gives their child inner joy as this could become the child's profession. Joy and enthusiasm go hand-in-hand with the deepest gifts and talents and should therefore be the basis for choice and qualification, even if the economic outlook for this profession is not favorable. Too often the creative, sensitive, empathic and intuitive abilities of children are stunted by the general pressure to conform.

I still have hope that humanity can live in peace, justice and well-being within a restored nature – and the first step toward

making this a reality is to feel compassion for children and the "wounded inner child." Communication with children must be honest and it must come from the heart. We need to stop the constant valuations and judgments and, instead, remember our innocent, spiritual core. Faith in the child and in life itself is the key for a positive future. I count on self-assured people around the world to remove the obstacles standing in the way of self-regulation and freedom, like those courageous people who started reuniting Germany, calling "We are the people!" We must close down the life-negative structures, compulsive systems, and disempowering conditions. This process has already begun, I believe. The destructive aspects of medicine, schools, money, politics, and the economy are decaying everywhere, slowly or suddenly. A truly human global consciousness is spreading, giving us realistic hope for the future.

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