

I Don't Care: Indifference in Today's Children and Teens

In the rapid flow of today's life, there are many things that people need to think about, pay attention to and do. The number of these "important" issues is substantial in the lives of children and young people. What about when there are so many things to pay attention to and do, how do children and young people behave in the face of these?

Many studies show that features such as callousness, indifference, insensitivity, inability to be happy, maintaining a state of continuous pleasure or delaying tasks that will delay gratification are common among children and young people. It can be said that there is a list that can be extended, such as not caring about the person, responsibilities, authority and rules, situations in the environment or society, risks, and insensitivity to reminders about them.

Why don't children and teenagers care?

Mental health experts emphasize the drastic mood swings of adolescence. In these studies, it is stated that they can behave in the opposite direction of the emotions they feel. Considered in this context, although indifference may seem like ignoring events, it may be due to a psychological conflict. Believing that everything is okay and denying the problem can be a coping method despite the anxiety, inadequacy, loss, sadness or mourning. Having such a belief reduces internal conflict and rationalizes the individual not to do anything in the face of the situation. Thus, inaction becomes acceptable to him/her.

Considering the indifference of children/young people to their responsibilities, to the work or behavior they are expected to do, it should not be overlooked that they may feel inadequate here as well. Children may have difficulty assessing whether their knowledge, skills, or experience are sufficient to do what is expected of them. In cases where they realize that they are inadequate, they may have difficulty in solving the problem due to their shyness in asking for help, perceiving asking for help as weakness, not knowing exactly from whom to ask for help, or believing that there will be no one to help even if they ask for help. Therefore, opening support channels consistently in the face of these seemingly indifferent attitudes of children, making them feel that we will never give up on our belief that they can develop in a positive way, and nurturing children's beliefs in themselves can encourage children to take these steps expected of them.

Indifference as a Defense Mechanisms

The concept of "defensive indifference" suggests that people use reckless attitudes to protect their relationships and/or themselves from conflict. With this approach, people aim to consciously prevent the reaction from the outside. For example, your child may act as if he doesn't care at all when faced with a loss, criticism or a sanction for a negative behavior. This may be a method he/she uses because he/she has difficulty in experiencing or expressing feelings such as disappointment, guilt, regret, inadequacy or sadness. In doing so, they may fall under the illusion that they appear to be "strong, unaffected" to both family and friends. And as the number of experiences that reinforce this perception increases, the behavior may become more permanent.

For this reason, it may be useful to consider these attitudes as "don't care" directly, and to open a door for them to express their feelings before reacting to this situation and to think about solutions together to compensate for their behavior that creates these feelings.

So how is it possible to avoid this culture of indifference?

Some mental health professionals argue that this attitude can change when insight into behaviors is gained and the consequences of behaviors are experienced for others and themselves. It is underlined that taking individual responsibility in order to correct the negative situation caused by the attitude of indifference is also an important point in the solution.

If we think in terms of educational life, some aspects of school and learning process can be as follows; homework with poor content or not done at all, criticisms about school, negative discourses about school, avoiding homework and studying, not wanting to go to school, etc. Because of their tendency to not want to do anything on their own, they cannot tolerate the frustration they experience at the slightest warning or criticism they receive. They may exhibit angry and destructive behaviors. Such behavior may be a sign of other difficulties, but if teachers and parents are confident that the root of the problem is indifference, they can develop some effective strategies that can help the child come out of his apathetic state.

Motivation: One of the most important reasons for apathy is lack of motivation. The most important intervention should be to encourage them to rediscover their individual motivations. The first step in this context should be collaboration between parents and teachers to evaluate grades, compare them to previous performances, and develop a plan to help the child continue the active learning process.

Self-Confidence: For younger children, the best both parties can do is to provide positive support and encouragement until the child gains self-confidence. Every success a child achieves in this process, no matter how small, should be appreciated and celebrated. Active learning may be hindered by a blow to self-esteem, and if so, a pat on the back is necessary to help a child rebuild self-confidence.

Responsibility: Teens may need complex strategies to fulfill their school responsibilities. Giving them more responsibility to take an active role in their learning process can help them realize they have real control over the outcome of their efforts and can work in creating a sense of ownership.

Preschool - Primary School Period;

During this period when they discover and learn new things, being patient with children and encouraging them when things get tough are among the top steps. When faced with a problem, they may feel frustrated and frustrated. In order not to experience this frustration again, they begin to delay or ignore it. Making them see alternative solutions and increasing the diversity in front of them can be preventive in reducing this frustration and developing dysfunctional defense mechanisms.

With the Primary School period, children want to feel that they are successful. While doing this, it will help them to focus on short-term work rather than long-term goals and tasks. Since it is a period when they gradually begin to discover the areas of their interest, enabling them to take part in different activities and directing them to find areas where they feel good in areas such as sports/art are among the effective solutions.

Middle School Period;

With age, responsibilities and expectations also increase. This can cause difficulties in children and adolescents, and with this difficulty, indifference; because when they don't care, they have excuses for the negative results they face: "It would have been better if I had worked.", "I could have gotten better results if I had done it on time."... It is much easier to cling to these thoughts than a belief in inadequacy or failure. Therefore, procrastination, pretending to not care, ignoring, which are among the defense mechanisms, begin to appear much more in children's lives during these periods.

When children activate their defense mechanisms, reminding them of their resources on how to best fulfill their responsibilities, enabling them to set realistic goals and communicating your expectations from them by considering their potential will activate your coping mechanism and guide them.

High School and Adulthood;

"I don't feel like it today, I still have time anyway.", "I'm a last minute person, then I get more creative.", "The most important thing is my happiness." Such thoughts appear as egocentrism, especially at the beginning of adolescence. These thoughts, which distance the person from reality, turn the individual into a state of indifference towards his own affairs, others and the environment. Adolescents and adults don't realize that when they think about these momentary gratifications and their own well-being, they are harming their long-term well-being. While their indifference towards themselves leads to unexpected results that are below their potential, their insensitivity towards their environment can turn into unhappy relationships. How long can young people who think only of themselves but also surrender themselves to short-term temporary pleasures continue this and enjoy life?

It may take time to change habitual behavior patterns at this age. The primary way is not to give up and keep trying. Taking a step, big or small, can turn into a cycle in a different direction. As human beings, we cannot make instant interventions to our thoughts and feelings, but we can change our behavior if we want. With this change in behavior, our feelings and thoughts begin to change in the same direction.

In summary, there can be various reasons for procrastination and ignorance, as well as different solutions. We can both take small steps by noticing our own recklessness/procrastination, and

raise awareness of the situation in our children. In this way, we can seize the opportunity to change the causes and consequences of indifference.

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