

Acceptance: Need and Desire

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The uniqueness of a person is sometimes lost while fulfilling the need and desire to be accepted. The beliefs, faith, opinions, personal interests, etc., which make one unique, seem meaningless as soon as one views oneself as a part of a group. This I have learnt as a result of my experiences of teenage years. My horror of not being liked by people was my greatest concern. I dreaded desertion, which acted as a catalyst in the attempt to change myself for someone else. One can ask about the reasons for teenagers like me to be desired and accepted, but actually, there is no one reason. For me, the main reason was that being a part of a group somehow made me feel safe, even though there were negative impacts of it, which either I ignored or I was not aware of. Adults don't understand how much the feeling of being rejected and of exclusion affects a teenager's mental well-being. Our loneliness may take severe forms like depression, self-inflicted pain, and suicidal tendencies.

When I began my higher studies in a reputed college in Delhi, I felt being completely out of my comfort zone, which made me vulnerable, I felt the need to change myself so that I can be considered to be on an equal level with other people. In a college, we, teenagers, hail from different backgrounds and come in contact with each other and we form deep relationships and friendships. We unknowingly imbibe each other's habits and we are not very sure of how we should be and how not to be. Asked by our best friend even once to do something, we feel unable to say no. The result is that we start liking things that the other person likes and in this process we lose our own self. Such peer pressure may lead to substance abuse and, being a college student, I

have seen numerous incidents of the same. Teenagers get dragged to such limits that either they succumb to the pressure or feel lost and lonely. Thus, being in a group where people smoke and drink on a regular basis makes one prone to such behaviour. Generally, it feels difficult to refuse and easy to accept such habits, even if it is in the name of 'just trying'. These are exciting times where we meet friends-of-friends-of-friends, we experiment, and we 'have fun'.

I have never felt so much in need of support, either emotional or financial, and we expect this support from both the sides- friends and parents. Thus, in many ways, we play a dual role: we act differently with parents and often, in completely opposite ways with friends. We start hiding important details about our lives from our parents and our friends become an escape from the constant poking of our parents. We wish to get accepted by our parents by lying to them and, at the same time, we wish to be accepted by our friends by wooing them with our involvement with them in various activities and actions. The result is that we teenagers indulge in more and more lying to get away from our own actions, thereby, creating more chaos, which later becomes sort of difficult to resolve. In this process, we teenagers complicate our life so much so that sometimes the outcomes are disastrous. We often get alienated from both family and friends.

The fact is that teenage years are very sensitive and we want all our wishes to be fulfilled. When parents pressurize us to do something, we rebel; when they give us freedom, we feel lonely; when they decide for us, we deny; and when we are asked to decide for ourselves, we are confused.



Similarly, romantic relationships need our serious considerations. When in relationships, we want to be accepted and appreciated by our partner. We believe that we get involved in relationships out of love. We intend to find someone who would give us both physical closeness and emotional strength. In this quest, we often get into both good and bad relationships. The understanding of right and wrong differs for everyone, but just to please the other person we might agree to indulge in activities that are generally unacceptable to us. We get over-involved with our partner and get fascinated by everything he/she does. Having dealt with a lot of relationships myself, I noticed myself changing with each relationship. It happened because every partner expected and desired a different version of me. Despite trying hard, sometimes, I felt that I was not able to match to my partner's expectations, which had an adverse effect on my self-esteem. I formed the perception that maybe I am not made for relationships and in fact, one of my friends even told me the same upfront. I even thought to myself that maybe I would never be able to truly love and be loved by someone. With this idea, I started disengaging from the idea of love so that any loss of love could not affect me negatively. There have been phases, when I have cried out of melancholy and pain of dissatisfaction in every single relationship. It was around this time that my parents also sensed that something is wrong with me. My mother kept on pestering me to share, but I didn't, as I feared that it might hurt her.

I ask myself a lot of times why do we not take the right decision at the right time. We turn so hasty while taking decisions in a relationship that we lose sight of right and wrong, and the main reason for this is we attach ourselves with the other person so much that we surrender ourselves to his/her wishes and fancies in the name of love. Personally, when I recognized the importance of self-worth and the need to be oneself, to resolve the complexities in life, I realized the consequence of my past relationships have been very severe as I had completely lost faith in relationships. I never

thought that being myself could be one simple solution to all the life problems others need to accept me as I am.

We teenagers at times may often indulge in objectionable practices in the name of pleasing people, friends, and partners, which includes stealing, sex, drugs, etc. to the extent that one may even ruin one's life. I wonder why we think that there is nothing wrong with, say drugs, when we all know how harmful drugs can be. We can trace how our perceptions change according to the people around us because believing in something and still doing the opposite is a difficult thing, but changing one's view completely is another, the latter is more harmful, as I have come to believe. When in relationships, partners reach to a great extent in pleasing each other, and sex is an aspect of it, especially, unwanted or unplanned. We teenagers take big steps without consulting elders, like taking contraceptive pills, without even knowing the kind of impact it can leave on their health. The primary concern these days should not be about the lack of knowledge about sex, because we know that websites and porn give a lot of wrong information, but rather it is about the thrill that we seek in doing things which we are told are wrong.

We must recognize our self-worth and why is it important that people accept us the way we are. When we realize the importance of ourselves it is generally too late and we've become a different person altogether. Doing risky things for the sake of adventure now seems nonsensical. It can have harsh consequences on the future life and mental health. Seeking support from family members or siblings is important. At times, some do consider going to a counsellor for solutions, but we do have a predilection towards friends for advice, generally because we are more open to our friends and can share basically anything with them without understanding that their knowledge is not too different from ours. Thus, choosing a right source for taking advice is important, which is decided by the extent to which we feel accepted.

