

It Takes a Community to Sustain a Child
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“In early childhood you may lay the foundation of poverty or riches, industry or idleness, good or evil, by the habits to which you train your children. Teach the right habits then, and their future is safe” – Lydia Sigourney. Positive early childhood development is very important to the long term health of a community. The children of today become the leaders of tomorrow, therefore it is vital that society realizes that it takes a community to sustain a child. A supportive community is one that offers security, affirming relationships, and educational opportunities to its young.

Fear is the greatest hindrance to development. Childhood is supposed to be a time of freedom, exploration, and playfulness. Sadly, many children today are being exposed to the harshness of adult life at an early age with no means of shelter. Prolonged growth in such an environment can lead to the permanent emotional and psychological scarring of a child. Slowly, society at large is discovering that in order for children to be brought up happy and healthy, a community needs security in its overall environment. A secure community provides a young child with ideal surroundings, conducive to their needs for experimentation, and personal development. Through the creation of safe places for children to play and learn, for example, playgrounds, schools, and accessible community centers offering supervised activities, children can further their development in safe areas specially tailored to their needs. With the expulsion of fear, a child is given the ability to take risks, learn, and uncover their hidden talents. In such an open and unconstrained setting, children can easily gain the self esteem and confidence to try new things, that is later on so important to their adult lives. Aside from a community taking an active role in protecting its youth, it also needs to affirm them by way of positive relationships.

Children need to have their existence ratified just as much as adults do. In order for a child to have a chance to succeed in life, he must first know that he is loved and accepted. A community that places a high value on the building up of the younger generation, does much to ensure the overall success of its future. By strengthening its members at an early age, a community is made all the more strong because empowered individuals come together

to create a united whole. It is crucial that in the early years of a child's life, he is surrounded by an abundance of positive role models and responsible adults within the community, who will take the time to affirm his character. Acceptance and love shown to children early on, creates a firm foundation upon which the rest of their lives can be built. The mind is as powerful a tool as the heart, therefore a community must also take steps to intervene in a child's intellectual development.

The early impressionable years of childhood, are some of the best for learning. During this time, children are forming their own concepts about the world around them and its workings. In order for their development of thought to be complete and healthy, it is important that the community takes a proactive role in their education. A supportive community will be one that exposes its youth to all sorts of educational opportunities, whether they be in the form of free childcare services, government subsidized preschools, or early intervention programs that aid challenged children. A proper early education allows children to have their minds opened up to different career paths and ways of living, in a structured learning environment. If a community realizes the importance of early educational programs and takes appropriate action to ensure the intellectual development of every child, regardless of ability, they will be contributing very much to both the advancement of society and the furthering of young minds within it.

Often children require more support than just what their immediate family can offer. Therefore a community must take an active role in the development of the children residing within it. Through security, affirming relationships, and educational opportunities, a community can do much to improve the quality of life for its youngest members.