



CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS ARE JUST LIKE US.

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I met a variety of people, from children to seniors, while participating in the programs run by For You Telecare Family Service. What I felt through the last children's English camp and the Mind and Motion youth volunteer program was that it is necessary for children and adolescents to build relationships, have conversations, and share their lives even in the midst of a pandemic.

During the COVID-19 crisis, what kind of lives and thoughts do the children and youth have in the family? Even adults during this difficult time have no idea what to do; it is important for children and youth to play with their friends, chat with them, have crushes on each other, make friends, and build social relationships. What memories will exist for children and adolescents from this critical time?

Problems such as severing relationships with people, despair, loneliness, being alone, and isolation do not apply only to adults. Children and adolescents feel the same, but believe they will overcome them because they are still young. Have they been ignored during this time in favour of the elderly? There seems to have been a lot of support for the elderly or the unemployed who are having a hard time due to COVID-19.

But what about programs for teenagers and children? Personally, I felt that there were few programs for them proportionately. Children and adolescents are also living in crisis. However, I think that the emotional and mental problems are bigger than the physical ones. Are children's isolation and enjoyment of virtual activities hindering their growing in the right direction?

The Youth Counselling Issue Paper, published by the Korea Youth Counselling



and Welfare Development Institute, conducted a survey on the 'record of changes in youth mental health in one year after COVID-19' and reported that, in general, many youth felt isolated or helpless due to activity restrictions. It was found that they had a lot of stress from forced life changes such as distance restrictions, rather than anxiety about disasters, and that these daily changes greatly affected the psychosocial development of children.

Also, I have heard stories of parents trying to relieve their children's stress by being at home instead of going to work. They thought that they would get along better by spending more time with their families, but in reality, they caused psychological pressure to their children who lived under the pressure of their parents. It seems that we are living in shock and unhappiness.

Social skills and leadership learned by interacting with friends, as well as memories that grow stronger by sharing each other's concerns, are impossible in a pandemic situation. Children and adolescents have no place to express the restrictive pressures that burden them. Parents often are too busy trying to hold things together to listen to their children's concerns. Many children and youth are struggling, but where are the adults, colleagues and friends who will listen to them? Looking at the kids these days, it seems like they are wasting time and hoping that this pandemic will be over soon.

As these situations are prolonged, many children and adolescents are becoming exhausted. Opportunities to find something to do are diminishing. To parents of children and adolescents, or those adults who have had the opportunity to meet them, let's share a word of hope with them. I believe that my words or your words will bring laughter to the weary children and help the wandering youth to walk their own path. I hope that children and adolescents who are unable to take strong steps toward the future will be able to move forward with hope.

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