Why Are Teenagers So Depressed?

On a November morning in 2003, Pope John Paul II spoke to an audience gathered at the Paul VI Hall in the Vatican. The theme of the speech was depression.

The event had been arranged by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Workers and the Sick, and in his speech, the pope reflected on suffering, spiritual trials, and the nature of chronic sickness. He also sounded an alarm.

"The spread of depressive states has become disturbing," he said. "They reveal human, psychological and spiritual frailties which, at least in part, are *induced by society*."

Since this speech, the mental state of humans has not improved. In fact, studies show that depression has risen significantly—*especially in teens*. As a teenager myself, this prompts a few questions.

Why does the average modern teen show greater levels of anxiety than a psychiatric patient in the 1950s? Why is the culture of my generation one of self-hatred and depression? And seriously, *why* is crippling introversion the latest social fad?

As a young adult who has dealt with anxiety my whole life, I think I have a few explanations.

1. Teenagers don't like themselves internally.

Not to be emo, or anything. Thanks to social media, most teenagers have been questioning their beliefs, their religion, their gender, and their sexuality since early childhood. They

do this in a harried struggle to find their personal brand – to find what makes them different, special, and marketable to society. They psychoanalyze themselves in order to find what makes them relatable.

Not only is this personally degrading, but it's also downright unhealthy.

Deep personal discoveries take time, and a person's true personality and moral compass aren't fully developed until adulthood. Say what you will about the importance of delving into topics of personal identity and sexuality *at some point*, the fact remains that those topics should never be personally defined until some level of maturity has been reached.

By the time teenagers reach the age of adulthood, it's no wonder they internally hate themselves and experience anxiety – they've been picking themselves apart for too long.

2. Teenagers don't like themselves externally.

Since my pre-teens, I have been repeatedly told by the media that my body was perfect before, is perfect now, and will continue be perfect if I decide to change it. This "body positivity" narrative is manipulative and blatantly false. My body was not perfect, is not perfect, and never will be perfect.

Perfection is not something I can ever achieve.

And yet, my teenage peers and I are taught to seek and find perfection within ourselves every day under the guise of "self-love." We are supposed to love ourselves because of some inherent bodily perfection, but how will we continue to love ourselves when we finally open our eyes to the reality of our true imperfection?

Hollywood and the national media has set all young people on an endless quest for the impossible. For example, take Amy Schumer's new movie: *I Feel Pretty* (2018).

The premise of the movie is that a slightly overweight and insecure young girl hits her head and gains an abundance of self-confidence due to her brain injury—though nothing about her physical appearance has changed.

Instead of encouraging them to self-improvement or realistic expectation setting, Hollywood urges teens to behold perfection where perfection doesn't exist.

"That's the whole point of self-esteem – to be proud of yourself even when there's no reason to be proud of yourself," said a noticeably annoyed Matt Walsh in a recent video for Prager University.

Inevitably, many teenagers develop self-confidence issues and depression when they can't see the physical perfection that Hollywood insists is there.

3. Teenagers don't like other people.

Ironically, the best way to gain popularity today is to incessantly whine about how introverted you are.

For whatever reason, hateful introversion has become an enormous social movement and, as such, has united young adults everywhere in their mutual dislike for one another.

I would be appalled if I wasn't laughing so hard.

Don't get me wrong, the appeal to the culture of introversion is understandable. In fact, the only reason I think it's a major cause of adolescent anxiety is that often the term "introversion" is interpreted as "hatred for others." That

hatred, rather than true introversion, is what social media is promoting – simultaneously raising a generation with an unhealthy fear of others.

True introversion is the tendency to recharge emotionally when you are alone. That’s it.

Hating others, or avoiding interaction with others, is not part of the equation. Nobody should find fulfillment, humor, or comfort in their fear of interaction with society.

Unfortunately, that’s exactly what modern teenagers are doing, and the result is a rampant dislike for society and mass unchecked fear of social interaction.

So, to recap: As emotionally undeveloped children, teenagers were told to over-analyze themselves internally, and so today they hate themselves internally. As pre-teens, teenagers were told to find unattainable perfection in themselves externally, and so today they hate themselves externally. Meanwhile, teenagers are currently being told that fearing the world around them is cool, and so they hate the world at large.

So, who’s to blame for feeding young people these lies? Our society—pop culture, our movies, and our social media—is ruining the mental health of our young people.

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