

I've noticed a trend lately on my local homeschool boards, perhaps it's not new but I think it needs examining. The trend is for perfection and fitting in. If these external goals aren't met then something must be fixed, altered some how, made to fit the mold. This would all be well and good if we are talking about cars or coffee machines but we are talking about children. That's why I think we need to look a bit closer. Recently, someone posted to my local group about their young child with speech issues. She was seeking resources to address her child's speech "before she was made fun of by her peers". She wanted to protect her from this pain. I challenged her to look at the environment. You see her child didn't believe she had a problem. She hadn't asked for help, she was comfortable with her communications. It was the parent that was uncomfortable because her child wasn't \*normal\* and wouldn't \*fit in\*. My question is fit in where? And fit in why?!

My child had a severe brain injury. She has physical and mental differences. Instead of focusing on those differences and viewing them as a problem, she is CELEBRATED for who she is, not looked at as something that needs to be fixed. Over the years we have given her space, love and an optimal environment. With those things in place, she has overcome so many challenges in her own way, in her own time. She has never had the sense of having a deficit. The poster believed that other children would make her child feel like she had a problem but the reality is that she would get that sense of a deficit from the parent and ultimately the therapist. Therapy has goals. Those goals must be met for it to be considered successful. Even if games and \*fun\* are used in the therapy the child will still become acutely aware that they aren't doing something right. They will try desperately to do what they are \*supposed\* to do and in the process loose sight of all the things they are already doing. Those gifts will become secondary to fixing the deficits. There were many people, early in my child's life who tried to point out the deficits and said if they didn't do x, y or z therapy to her that she would never walk, or talk or function in the 'normal' world. We left their labels and deficit mentality behind and today my amazing 7 1/2 year old SHINES.

If I had bought into the notion that she needed to be 'fixed' then she would have bought into the notion that there was something wrong with her - and there isn't, she was and is exactly who she needs to be.

I guess I'm really just saying be cautious, what you fear you bring to yourself. In the case above, the mother feared low self esteem from teasing but her "fix" for that - therapy - has the danger of bringing low self esteem by making her child feel that she is doing something 'wrong' - when she didn't have that perception in the first place. Why introduce it? Why not change the environment to one that supports and validates the child for who she is? We have surrounded ourselves with many, many friends of all ages that truly see my daughter's gifts. There may come a day when she faces prejudice or teasing but I feel sure that she will view it as an anomaly because she is comfortable in her own skin and valued for all that she is and all that brings to the world.