

Tekst 6

Should childhood come with a health warning?

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- 1 **The modern world is damaging our children, according to a group of eminent experts. More than 100 children’s authors, scientists, health professionals, teachers and academics signed a letter to the London *Daily Telegraph*. It ran under the headline: ‘Have we forgotten how to bring up our children?’**
- 2 Children are suffering, the experts claim, as a result of junk food, school targets and mass marketing. The modern world is not providing them with what they need to develop, apparently, which includes: ‘real food (as opposed to processed “junk”), real play (as opposed to sedentary, screen-based entertainment), first-hand experience of the world they live in, and regular interaction with the real-life significant adults in their lives’.
- 3 I share some of the concerns of the experts, particularly the fact that children now have fewer and fewer opportunities to play outdoors. Children are often no longer able to play in the streets, walk or cycle to school, play in local parks, or just mess about with their friends away from the supervision of parents and teachers.
- 4 27, many of the letter-signers’ concerns seem to be shaped more by contemporary prejudices about modern living than by real insights into what makes children tick. Take the denunciation of junk food. There is no such thing as “junk” food. Our digestive systems do not distinguish between fish fingers and caviar. We are bombarded with warnings about unhealthy modern diets and eating habits, but life expectancies continue to rise – in great part due to vast improvements in most children’s diets over the past 100 years.
- 5 And consider the warnings about new technologies. We are told that ‘since children’s brains are still developing, they cannot adjust – as full-grown adults can – to the effects of ever more rapid technological and cultural change’. The idea that children find it difficult to adjust to ‘ever more rapid technological and cultural change’ runs entirely counter to our everyday experience and to most scientific research. Numerous studies highlight the extent to which children are able to grasp and master new technologies. Indeed, many adults don’t understand or use new technologies with the same ease that children do, which perhaps explains why they are so prone to seeing such technology as scary. We should be careful not to transpose our own, adult discomfort with technological and cultural changes on to children.

- 6 It is not screen-based entertainment that is restricting children's play-space. Instead, it is adults' over-anxious desire to remove children from all risks. Adults are overly concerned with keeping children under their control and protection, and out of harm's way – which means they often end up restricting children's opportunities for 'real' play. It could be argued that it is precisely because children are increasingly denied the freedom and space for experimentation and play in the 'real' world that they are using the virtual world to try to gain some autonomy and independence.
- 7 The best thing experts can do for children is to argue for them to be given more freedom – not to do whatever they want, of course; they need clear boundaries set by parents. But unsupervised play isn't just some kind of childhood luxury that kids can do without. It is vital for children's healthy emotional and social development. Study after study has shown that it helps to develop children's ability to negotiate social rules and to create their own rules. Children need to learn to deal with risks and develop the capacity to assess challenges. They also need to be given the opportunity to develop resilience to life's inevitable blows. In short, 30.
- 8 Although children's lives have improved in very many ways over the decades, signers of the letter to *The Daily Telegraph* are right in highlighting that we do face a problem. Clearly, we need to ask some serious questions about what an increasingly structured, sanitised and relentlessly supervised world is doing to children. But it is important that we identify what the real problem is, rather than pointing the finger at easy targets and labelling children as fragile and easily damaged.

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- 1p 26 How does paragraph 3 relate to paragraphs 1 and 2?
- A It adds another example of harmful influences on children to those given in paragraphs 1 and 2.
 - B It describes on which aspects of the experts' opinions expressed in paragraphs 1 and 2 the author agrees.
 - C It explains the reasons for the experts' views in paragraphs 1 and 2.
 - D It proves that the ideas about children's upbringing mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 are outdated.

- 1p 27 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 4?
- A After all
 - B And yet
 - C For example
 - D Therefore

“since children's brains ... cultural change” (begin alinea 5)

- 1p 28 Hoe komen volwassenen op deze stelling volgens de schrijfster in alinea 5?
Vul de volgende zin aan: Volwassenen ... en daarom denken ze dat dit voor kinderen

- 1p 29 What becomes clear from paragraph 6?
The writer
- A believes that children are exposed to great dangers when they play in the streets.
 - B is convinced that modern parents are afraid of losing their natural authority over children.
 - C is critical of the way in which grown-ups try to keep children safe.
 - D thinks that playing too many computer games will affect a child's health.

- 1p 30 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 7?
- A it contributes to a better understanding of their natural abilities and preferences
 - B it draws them away from their game consoles
 - C it gives them a chance to prove to their parents that they can be trusted
 - D parents would only be expected to keep a watchful eye
 - E taking risks in childhood goes hand-in-hand with developing new skills

“which includes: ‘... lives.’” (alinea 2)

De schrijver komt in latere alinea's nog terug op de onderwerpen “real food” en “real play” uit alinea 2. Hij doet dat één keer voor “real food” en drie keer voor “real play”.

- 2p 31 Waar doet hij dat?
Noteer “real food” en “real play”, gevolgd door het nummer van de betreffende alinea of alinea's.

- 1p **32** What is the main purpose of this article?
- A** To emphasise the importance of a good parent-child relationship.
 - B** To express a personal opinion on the latest trends in children's upbringing.
 - C** To inform the reader of the state-of-the-art in child education.
 - D** To ruin the reputation of so-called specialists on juvenile behaviour.