

# **Darcia Narvaez (University of Notre Dame, USA) - III. Being human. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17**

From Human Education in the 3rd Millennium

12) Being human. (What does it mean to be human specifically? How should education correspond these specific human features?)

For most of our species history (99%) and around the world, being human meant being one member of the biocommunity working in cooperative partnerships with other than humans (Descola, 2013). A fundamental sensibility was connectedness to nature, which included capacities to be receptively responsive to the cue of other than humans (Martin, 1999, Song, 2016).

Part of our species' embrace and collaboration with nature involved providing the young our evolved nest (Konner, 2005; Narvaez, 2014). Every animal has a nest and humanity's is particular intense and of long duration because of the extreme immaturity at birth (only 25% of adult brain at birth with most growing by age 6) and extensive (3 decades) length of maturation. The early life nest includes soothing perinatal experience; on-request breastfeeding for several years; responsive care that keeps baby in optimal arousal (while brain is rapidly growing moment by moment); nearly constant touch; positive social support for mother and baby; multiple adult responsive caregivers; self-directed play with multi-age mates; free exploration in a complex natural world. We become human, developing our full capacities, when the nest is provided. The nest supports virtue development from the ground up (see The Evolved Nest --Evolved Developmental Niche). The right hemisphere is scheduled to develop more rapidly in the first years of life which is related to the personality features of nested adults around the world (Ingold, 2005; Narvaez, 2013). They demonstrate extensive self-regulation, calmness, cooperation and social fittedness, generosity, and high intelligence of every kind. Their emotions and intuitions are well developed (rather than haphazardly as in industrialized nations like the USA). They are integrated into living responsibly with their local landscape.

The nest is missing or degraded in industrialized nations, leading to dysregulated and disconnected individuals. Colonialism, imperialism and imposed economic globalization have disrupted the species-typical way of raising children and being human all over the world, spreading dysregulation and disconnection, leading to the planetary crises we face.

Restoring the nest in educational settings means focusing primarily on social play, on child self-direction, and outdoor immersion in natural settings.

13) Human identities, diversity (How can diversity be protected and preserved in the context of globalized standardized education?)

Students need to be able to direct their own educational pathway, which will involve much play. They need to learn to follow their deeper intuition. Because everyone is unique and diversity will flourish.

14) Reconsidering aims of education: the concepts of 'wellbeing', 'happiness', human 'flourishing' considered as aims and their implications for the modern mentality. What are the alternatives? –

An individual student's wellbeing requires proper support throughout life (evolved nest, social support and mentoring) and thereby the student can find his/her unique gifts and develop the confidence to hone them for the benefit of the community.

15) Inner values (Why and how should inner values, such as empathy, love and caring, cooperation, solidarity, justice, compassion and wisdom be part of the educational curriculum?)

Well-respected (nested) babies and children grow into empathic and caring people. Caregivers must be mutually responsive all along the way. Babies and young children grow into what they experience day to day. Then the community can help expand the imagination beyond face-to-face caring and cooperative relationships to extend compassion to those not present, to the more than human and to future generations.

In the USA, most children come to school unnested and/or traumatized, developmentally delayed, dysregulated and not ready to learn school material. Various phases of earlier development were undermined. Educators are challenged by students with attention problems, withdrawal and aggression. So the students need to learn to self-author their own healing through self-calming techniques, learning social connection skills with playful group activities, and expand the imagination to the larger Whole through practices of nature connection (Narvaez, 2008; Young, 2019).

16) Valuing peace (Does education teach through hidden curriculum, etc. peace or warlike attitudes, negative perception of others, violence and its base, which are injustice, exclusion, etc.? How can education realistically advance peace, global cooperation, and respect for human rights in the face of conflict, exclusion, competing national interests? )

Dysregulated people often externalize (blame others) or internalize (become depressed and withdrawn) and so mental health practices are required to help students learn to be emotionally present with others. Dysregulated people often feel a deep implicit anxiety that they try to fill with power, fame, attention, work, addictions. Self-awareness of one's anxiety and ways used to alleviate it is important for its control.

A classroom community is a place where cooperative peaceful practices can be implemented. Students can learn nonviolent communication (Rosenberg, 2003), conflict resolution, and practice rituals of gratitude in order to build a sense of community.

17) Being human in relations with other living beings (Role, position, and place of other beings in human society as a matter for education)

The biggest gap in US citizens is nature disconnection. The decrease in childhood outdoor play in the last decades has left many children with Nature Deficit Disorder (Louv, 2005). The average amount of time spent outdoors for a US citizen per year is 24 hours. So, experience is lacking.

Cultural myths are also a problem as the Western world developed a white male supremacism that made everyone else (women, other cultures, minorities, Nature) into objects that the dominant group was entitled to control. We still live in that world. We need to re-adopt the First Nations/Native American/American Indian view of Nature as full of sentient beings who are 'all our relations.' See our new book, *Indigenous Sustainable Wisdom* (Narvaez et al., 2019).

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