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# The Fear Development in the Human Psyche

## Math Anxiety

We are born in this world without prior knowledge about anything. And together with this, we are born fearless. As we go on with our lives, we get to experience a lot of things in which we get to develop our behavior, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes and at the same time our fears.

According to psychology humans develop fears and phobias towards certain objects when they come across a traumatic experience related to that object in their early childhood. For fear to escalate to irrational levels, environmental factors are very likely at play. For example, a child might not develop fear of darkness until he learns the idea of ghosts dwelling in the dark. He might not develop fear of heights unless he sees someone getting hurt after falling from far above the ground. He's not going to fear a lot of audience if he didn't have an embarrassing moment while on stage. The same is partly true with this particular subject called Mathematics or simply referred to as Math.

Thinking that it is a very difficult subject, most students are having a hard time dealing with Math. We all have that particular feeling whenever we get to see  $x$  and  $y$ , a fraction or a math problem. When you have been filled with trepidation that you began to sweat, your mind got completely blank, your heartbeat raced and you can't even begin on doing the simplest things when you saw a math problem, then you have at some point experienced math anxiety. For some students, their fear of math started with the multiplication table or algebra. Our parents telling us that they flunked math gives us the impression that numbers are hard to contend with, thus making math a difficult subject for us.

There are different kinds of math anxiety. One is caused by a lousy teacher, parent or tutor. There's also another one which is societal or what we call the learned helplessness. We get to hear from our peers and we are bombarded by messages from the public that it's just okay to be bad in math. And finally, the other can be traced back to our own personal and dreadful encounter with numbers.

There are also instances in which we, students, are being too indolent to solve for math problems. We have this ideology that we are not a "math person" so we can't perform well in mathematics. We think that math ability is genetic and we get amazed by persons who can really understand the subject well; calling them as "math geniuses". This way of thinking is very

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wrong. We are all math persons and by believing in the myth of inborn math ability, we are hamstringing our own career. Yes to some degree, the ability could be genetic but inborn talent is much less important than hard work, preparation and self-confidence. As this quotation says, "Hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard." There are also no math geniuses, math is all about mentoring. So we can begin by making ourselves a problem solver but we don't do that. The heart of mathematics is problem solving and that's what we do not have as a country. And that is again, one reason why we don't like math.

We lack perseverance. We tend to complain before finding the right solutions to a math problem. That's why as a nation, we can't find solutions to our country's problems. We whine about problems but never quantify them. We like to complain but we don't want to work on how to solve it because it is problem-solving. We are good on pointing out what's wrong but we don't do anything to amend our own mistakes. We are being a pessimist who keeps on seeing difficulties out of every opportunity.

We hate math even though it doesn't have any fault at all. We even think of it as a way of mental torture for humans. Instead of thinking it can be useful, it is in our mindset that math cannot be applied in real life. We think that the basic math, the numbers and the four fundamental operations are just what we need and not finding the value, squaring and finding the roots of  $x$ . But we should always remember that in a game, the challenges get harder as we go on to the next level and in life problems get arduous as we grow older.

So, how do we come up with math anxiety? The thing is: the only way to overcome fear is for you to succeed; there is no other way. A minor math triumph can mean the world to a student's self-confidence. This assurance stays with the student regardless whether he/she fails or succeeds in solving the next set of problems, the seed of confidence has already been planted. And so, in order for us to be an effective problem-solver there are some things we need to keep in mind. First, we need to learn perseverance which is honed through regular practice and exercise. We should not be afraid to fail. Successful people failed a number of times before being triumphant. Second, we must be mentally tough because math problems are complex. Intricate problems like poverty and corruption cannot be solved easily. Lastly, we'll need some number sense. It is more important than fast computations. Just like in life, we don't always need the exact answers; sometimes it's about how reasonable our estimates are.

In conclusion, math anxiety is very real and occurs among thousands of people. Much of this anxiety happens in the classroom due to the lack of consideration of different learning styles of students. Today, the needs of society require a greater need for mathematics. Math must be looked upon in a positive light to reduce math anxiety. Therefore, teachers must re-examine traditional teaching methods which often do not match students' learning styles and skills needed in society. Lessons must be presented in a variety of ways. For instance, a new concept

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can be taught through cooperative groups, visual aids, hands on activities and technology. As a result once young children see math as fun, they will enjoy it, and, the joy of mathematics could remain with them throughout the rest of their lives.

Math for me is an overview of our life. Just like this quotation from the internet, “Math may not teach us how to breathe oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, or to love a friend and forgive an enemy. It may not even help us find our way to our one true love. But it gives us every reason to hope that every problem has a solution.” It also reminds us that finding the answers to our problems can be complicated. K.C Cole also said, “Math is the most logical of all Sciences. It shows us that truth can be highly counterintuitive and sense is hardly common.” In the end we’ll realize that Mathematics isn’t just about numbers, equations, or algorithms. Math is about understanding.

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