

REGIONALNI CENTAR ZA TALENTE VRANJE

TEENAGERS - LIFESTYLE AND HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

This essay is about the lifestyle and the health of teenagers today. We know that the diet of teenagers is not so healthy and they play sports to a lesser extent and sit in front of their computer, playing computer games or surfing the Internet. Everybody says that today's teenagers are worse than their peers fifteen years ago and with this essay I want to find out if that is really true. In order to accomplish that aim, I will conduct the interviews with some experts, different people who, while working, deal with teenagers and their problems. They will show me a real picture about it. I am aware that today's teenagers are not healthy so much, but I believe that can be much better if someone shows them where they are wrong and how they should do it in the right way. I am sure that things will be better.

Key words: lifestyle and health of today's teenagers, diet, sports, computers, the Internet, expert people

REZIME

Ovaj rad je o načinu života i zdravlju današnjih tinejdžera. Znamo da ishrana mladih nije baš zdrava i da se u manjoj meri bave sportom i sede ispred svojih računara igrajući kompjuterske igre ili surfujući internetom. Svi kažu da su današnji tinejdžeri gori od svojih vršnjaka od pre petnaest godina i ovim radom želim da saznam pravu istinu. Da bih postigao svoj cilj, obavicu intervjue sa stručnjacima, ljudima koji radeći svoj posao dolaze u dodir sa tinejdžerima i njihovim problemima. Oni će mi pokazati pravu sliku o tome. Znam da današnji tinejdžeri nisu baš zdravi, ali verujem da bi moglo biti mnogo bolje ako im neko pokaže gde greše i kako da to urade na pravi način. Siguran sam da će stvari krenuti na bolje.

Ključne reči: način života i zdravlje današnjih tinejdžera, ishrana, sportovi, računari, Internet, stručni kadar

1 INTRODUCTION

New improvements in technology, such as computers, mobile phones, new generations TV sets and many other gadgets, have brought a much better life to people. Very specific types of gadgets are the ones which have a word “smart” in their names. They have become very popular in the last two or three years. “Smart” gadgets are sensitive to touch and they do everything what a user wants to do on a gadget. What is more, displays of these “smart” gadgets are made of crystal!

In my opinion, modern technology has many good points, but, unfortunately, it has its bad side, too. In the first place, it heavily influences the health of people, who are, actually glued to their computers, playing video games or being connected on social networks like “*Facebook*” or “*Tweeter*”, and mobile phones, texting messages or calling friends. While doing that, people forget about their body and their health. That is the thing that I would like to talk about and try to make people, in the first place young people, aware about – the negative aspect of modern technology on people’s health, which is devastating.

Today’s children are physically active much less than the children fifteen years ago. You can see just few children playing football, basketball or some other sport at the playground. The playgrounds are almost empty. Today’s children walk less, too. Going out in the evening does not count. We, teenagers, have to go out during the day, when the sun shines and the air is fresh outside. It is healthy to go out by day and breathe fresh air. It is not only good for your body but also for your mind.

2 *Healthy diet*

In this modern world, fast food is a very popular type of food. This kind of food is not very healthy; actually it is very bad for everyone. It has very bad effects on a man’s life. Today’s man, especially a man from a city, has not got much time for eating healthy because of the job which he does. Because of that, he buys food in many different kiosks, bakeries, fast food restaurants. Teenagers, in school or at home, often take hamburgers, pizzas, hot dogs, different forms of pastries, cheeseburgers, sausages and usually with it, they drink Coca-Cola, Pepsi and other carbonated juices or still juices with big percentage of sugar. These things can be very dangerous for a man’s organism. These types of food and drinks are made of ingredients which are bad for man’s health, such as sugar, lipids and some chemicals. These things can be sources of many diseases, and some of them can become chronic diseases, like obesity, metabolic disorders, heart problems and many other illnesses. To my mind, one the most dangerous illnesses is obesity.

Obesity is the most dangerous and it has become a global problem. The number of obese people rises every day. Obesity can make a big problem if it is not treated on time, especially at a very early age. It can cause cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, certain types of cancer, osteoarthritis... Obesity is most commonly caused by unused

energy, which comes from food or is caused by decreased physical activity. A man can also become obese if he has some psychological problems (stress or depression) or genetically. Obesity can be treated by special kind of diet and everyday's physical exercising.

Teenagers, who live in villages, are in a much better position than teenagers from cities, because a rural place is absolutely a healthier place than a city. A village has fresh, unpolluted air. There, the people breed their own fruit and vegetables. That is called organic food. Organic food is food which is produced without pesticides or other bad chemical agents. This food is the best for organism, because it contains everything what an organism needs for normal development. Vegetables and fruit contain vitamins. For example, peppers have lots of vitamin C, which is good for good eyesight; the sources of vitamin A are spinach and carrot. Vitamin A is useful for protecting the organism against infections and for the growth of an organism. Green vegetables contain vitamin K, which is good for blood.

Organic food is good because its quality is observed by law and it has to meet certain standards. Domestic animals which are fed with organic food are organic food, too. Organic food can be found in some markets and shops, not only in villages. This kind of food is in demand all over the world, so it is more expensive than ordinary, inorganic food.

In developed countries, organic food is more reputable than in undeveloped countries.



Fast food



Organic food

3 Music

Music is very important for teenagers, because it usually reflects their feelings. Music is helpful because it reduces stress and makes that person feel good. It makes a very important part of their life. You can often see a teenager listening to music with his headphones on his ears while going to school, jogging or just walking.

There are many types of music like: rock, pop, classical and today the most popular hip-hop, techno, house, rap. Every type of music has good performers and melodies. Everybody can find something he likes.

Every type of music has its own performer who has become a legend of that type of music and the world remembers the type of music because of him. For example, Michael Jackson and Madonna are legends of pop music, Guns 'n' Roses, U2, AC/DC, Rolling Stones, Bon Jovi are legends of rock, 50 Cent and Eminem are legends of rap and hip-hop, etc. Depending on the music teenagers listen to, they wear the adequate kind of clothes. For example, if someone listens to rock, he will have long hair and wear dark leather clothes; if someone listens to rap or hip-hop, he will wear trade-marked clothes, hats and he will speak using slang. Music reveals many things about teenagers. Music can affect their behaviour, routines, food they eat. Based on this, there have been many experiments and researches. These researches have shown many interesting facts about the connections between music and human's psyche.



Teenagers who like listening to *reflexive* and *rebel* type of music are friendlier and they like making new friends. They are also more communicative than others. On the other hand, teenagers who listen to *optimistic* types of music do not like to make new friends, they are extroverted, but they are helpful whenever they can and they are conscientious. Finally, the last group of teenagers who listen to *energetic* or *rhythmic* types of music with lots of dancing moves are extroverted, they are rebels and they show a lot of emotions to the world. Also, they are very collaborative. All these facts mean that people listen to the type of music which is related to their emotions and behaviours. For example, teenagers who listen to calm type of music often do not

like changes and they prefer to do something which is familiar to them. They do not like to try anything new. They are very passive and they are not adventurous.

As opposed to them, teenagers who like louder and types of music which need a lot of moves and dancing are friendlier than the first group. They are full of energy and they are optimists. They like to be in big company and exciting situations, too. They like this type of music because they can show all their abilities. Also, it has been discovered that girls do not change the type of music which they started to listen in the first place. Boys often make changes in their music choice because they are proving their individuality by breaking away from their groups. As they are growing up, they often start listening to urban music.

However, music has its negative side, too. Music can be very dangerous in some ways. We all know that when teenagers listen to music, they do it very loudly, in a very high volume. That is bad because that can make their ears hurt and can lead to totally losing the possibility of hearing. That high volume can be so loud that it might produce a sound of 115 decibels. That is the sound which is produced when a plain flies above us. In this way, we can lose a hearing in 15 minutes and the feeling for balance, too. Because of the loud music, a man can feel chronic fatigue and insomnia. Unfortunately, music can also cause depression and that has been proved by many researches and experiments. Hopefully, in some cases music can be useful for some teenagers who are depressed.

4 Sport

Sport is very important for people and it should be an essential part of life for every man in this world because every kind of physical activity is good for everyone and it develops our musculature and the whole body. But, today, it seems that most people have forgotten to do exercises and why it is important to do so. New millennium has brought to us a new way of living. Everyone cares about a job or school and everybody cares for it so much that there is no time left for any activity, which is so wrong.



Sport is very important for teenagers, who are still growing up and their muscles and bones become stronger and larger. To become stronger and to develop in the best way possible, teenagers must do sports or just do exercises. It is impossible to say all good things about sport and exercising, but it is enough to say that with doing sports teenagers can prolong their life, and reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease in comparison with the teenagers who do not do any sports or exercise. It can reduce a risk of obesity, too. Some scientists discovered that sportsmen have double more mitochondria in their cells than people who are not physically active.

Mitochondria are cell organelle, parts of a cell, and their role is to produce energy which feeds the cell. That is another good side of doing sports.



Good physical and mental development can happen when doing sports or exercising. Also, sport improves team spirit and teaches us how to behave in both winning and losing. It teaches us fair play. Teenagers can turn all their energy into sport, too, which is very helpful because it reduces the chance for smoking, using drugs or alcohol.



Sport can turn a shy person into a communicative, talkative, confident and cheerful one who shows his / her best to the world by doing sport. It helps him or her to make new friends. However, not all sports are good for everyone. It mostly depends on the age of a person, but also on the individual preferences and physical constitution. Older people should not do very tiring sports, such as football, tennis, basketball etc.

Because of all already mentioned, I think there must be more classes of physical education in schools in Serbia. In this way, Serbian youth will be healthier. By increasing physical activity, we will reduce obesity and other diseases which are produced by insufficient physical activity.



5 The Interview with a psychologist

When I started writing this essay, I wanted to find out something more about the behaviour of today's teenagers, to find out how other people see today's teenagers. Because of that I spoke to a psychology teacher Dragana Stanković, who is a teacher in my school, and I asked her some questions about today's teenagers (all questions I asked Miss Stankovic are given in the Appendix 1).

She says that growing up from a child to an adult person is accompanied with many difficulties. She thinks that for a young person, it is very important to be accepted and popular in their company and because of that they accept the rules of the group and do the same thing as other members of the group. She particularly points out that the special style of speaking, slang, the places where they go or hang out, then the clothes which are "in" are typical for teenagers and they are an important part of a teenager's subculture. Unfortunately, the conflicts with their parents are very common in this period of growth, because teenagers see their parents in a more realistic way than when they were children and that causes rebellious behaviour because of the double standards imposed by adults. Teenagers also start to care about their body because that is the main criterion when teenagers choose their partners. She points out that today's teenagers enter sexual relationships earlier. The pressure by a peer group can make a teenager be in relationships, although he / she is not ready.

Miss Stankovic makes a comparison between today's teenagers and the teenagers a few years ago and says that one of the important differences is the use of the Internet. A huge amount of information is available to today's teenagers thanks to the Internet. All they have to do is "click". Social websites or networks are a new form of socializing which has become dominant. She says that there are differences, but the most important is technological progress. Teenagers today spend most of their time on computers playing computer games, "surfing" the Internet and "chatting" with their friends on social networks and because of that there are fewer real friendships in the real world because everybody has friends on "Facebook", "Twitter" and other social websites. There is another bad thing and that is reality programs. In these "shows", we are shown many examples of bad behaviour and even worse influence on teenagers. The ethical value system of our country has after all degraded drastically. Today's teenagers appreciate money, fame, success without thinking how they can get that in a good way.

Longer education and economic insecurity lead to longer and longer financial dependence on a teenager's parents. With the modernization of society, the youth are getting more possibilities, but also more demands they must deal with.

There are many different ways to make teenagers be more responsible in their behaviour. One of the ways, and we might say the best way, is through their own parents. Miss Stanković thinks that can be successful, because their parents were teenagers once and they can help their children deal with their hard and complicated teenage life. From this appears the question how they can do it in the right way, without conflicts on both sides. Because of that parents should be informed about the problems of their teenager and try to deal with it.

However, there is another problem, some parents do not know how to help their teenagers and there is high percentage of parents who do not know how to identify the problem in the first place. According to my collocutor, parents should be educated how to solve problems their teenagers might have. So Miss Stanković suggests organizing seminars and educating parents. We know that teenagers today spend most of their time surfing the Internet or on Facebook and Twitter, watching television, reading different kinds of newspapers and magazines. So there should be more quality programs or articles which can be interesting to young people about the things which are close to them. Also, there should be more documentary programs which would bring something new and unknown to teenagers. There should be more censorship in some programs which are inappropriate for teenagers, too.

6 The Interview with a PE Teacher

We all know that today's teenagers rarely do some sport, most of them never. So because of that there are many diseases and many health issues that develop with teenagers. I wanted to know something more about it so I interviewed the PE teacher Mr Vlastimir Jevtić and I asked him some questions (all the questions I asked Mr Jevtic are given in the Appendix 2). Personally he is not satisfied with the number of young people who play sports. He says that the number of teenagers who are involved in sport is less than previous years and the reason is often the social status of people. Another reason is the lack of sports facilities such as courts or pitches as well as the lack of professionals and sports experts who would attract young people to engage in sport depending on the kind of sport they want to play. Their uninterest in sport is caused by doing something else like are "surfing" and playing computer games for many hours, going out late at night and coming back in the morning and vice versa.

When asked to compare today's teenagers and the teenagers about twenty- thirty years ago, Mr Jevtic said that they could not be compared because of many reasons. The standard of living was better than today and there were a lot of teenagers who were doing sports in sports clubs. Also, thanks to more courts and pitches and professional coaches in different sports in all age groups from juniors to seniors, all categories of teenagers were engaged and interested in sport.

I asked him for his opinion about obesity as a global problem, which becomes bigger and bigger every day. He says that irregular diet and "fast food" are the main causes of health issues. However, my collocutor points out that obesity is not the only problem the teenagers face. There are backbone deformities, which have suddenly increased over the last twenty years. These deformities are kyphosis, lordosis (in rare cases) and, especially, scoliosis, which appears in all four types, myopathic scoliosis (muscle scoliosis), osteopathic scoliosis (bone scoliosis), neuropathic scoliosis (nerve scoliosis) and idiopathic scoliosis (it is not researched enough and it is incurable). Idiopathic scoliosis is often in combination with kyphosis. Obesity is caused by the inadequate physical activity, which does not have to be in relation to sport, or reduced physical activity. If teenagers were more physically active, the obesity and backbone deformities would be reduced and their consequences would be reduced, too.

Mr Jevtić is a pessimist about making teenagers more physically active. According to him the main problem is the lack of financial support for sport facilities, equipment and experts to work with the talented youth. Because of that skilled and talented children are leaving their clubs

after two or three years only. If we could make them leave their computers, video games, social networks and mobile phones, the situation would be better. He says that teenagers can use all gadgets but in moderation. He says that going out late at night is a big problem, too, and their parents should pay more attention to that. He points out that the society is very important and it should do more in engaging teenagers in sports and reducing consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Their success should be more respected, awarded and appreciated. He adds that teenagers are always ready to engage in all kind of sports; they only need a little support from adults – their parents, teachers and (local) politicians.

At the end of the interview, I asked him to recommend a sport which is the most appropriate for the development of teenagers. He says that there is no sport which is bad for teenagers. It doesn't matter what sport you play, it will be good. Every sport can develop a young man in a good way, not just physically, but also mentally. Both individual and team sports give a lot of options and it all depends on the individual's talent, skill and predispositions. Still Mr Jevtić has sorted out some sports: athletics (all types of athletics), team sports (football, basketball, volleyball etc.), then swimming, skiing and gymnastics.

In conclusion, all individual and team sports are good and beneficial for health; everything depends on skills and talent of a teenager.

7 The Interview with a Doctor

Every day, we hear that the youths of today are unhealthy. Because of that I wanted to hear what a doctor thinks about it, so I interviewed dr Miodrag Tasić, a doctor of general medicine. (all the questions I asked Mr Tasic are given in the Appendix 3). He says that the teenagers are generally healthy, but the health problems, which are very common are related to their lifestyle, for example the lack of sleep, the abuse of alcohol (older teenagers), a lot of time spent surfing the Internet which causes a lot of changes in the functioning of an organism, such as insomnia, problems with eyes, tiredness, anxiety. The rest of pathology is related to respiratory infections. Also, diet is an important factor of health, but teenagers eat fast food and because of it there appears a problem with the digestive tract and that causes obesity, which has become a global problem. The number of obese children increases every day. Insufficient physical activity and a lot of time spent in smoky rooms, such as cafés, are big problems for the health of the youth, too. However, in doctor's opinion, it is not the only problem. He agrees with Mr Jevtic and points out backbone deformities as another very big problem.

I asked him to compare the health of today's teenagers and the teenagers a couple of decades ago. Dr Miodrag Tasić says that both periods have their good and bad sides. He thinks, teenagers who lived about twenty- thirty years ago had much healthier life because they were more engaged in sports; there were no computers, computer games and social networks; food was not so unhealthy and fast food was not used so much; teenagers did not go out so late at night; the youth were more disciplined.

He points out that today's teenagers are prone to many diseases, but medicine has made a

big progress over the last fifty years. First of all, the cause of many illnesses is decreased immune system function of a teenager. The decreased immune system function is mostly caused by the bad quality of fast food that teenagers eat. Bad habits are guilty for a big drop in immune function. Teenagers can make their health better by eating healthy food, which does not contain bad substances, and start leading a healthy lifestyle.

Mr Tasic told me that many teenagers did not care about their health, but hopefully there were still some who cared. What can help are regular check-ups when some potential diseases can be diagnosed on time.

How to make teenagers healthier is crystal clear to dr Miodrag Tasić. We should change bad habits with the help of the whole society, institutions and competent people (medias, health and educational work, doctors, schools etc). He thinks that schools should introduce personal hygiene classes, healthy lifestyle classes etc. By doing this, teenagers would understand the importance of healthy life and they would start to lead that kind of life. Unfortunately, not all of them, but some of them would and that would be success, believes my collocutor.

8 CONCLUSION

When I finished this essay I found out some important facts about the lifestyle and the health of teenagers today. We know that teenagers today have really bad habits, and my essay is just the proof for that. Namely, today's teenagers, according to the experts I talked to, cannot be compared with their peers fifteen or twenty years ago as there are many differences in the way of life now and then. It is a fact that today's teenagers are less healthy and the obesity is more present. New age has brought new technologies, which are intended to improve and make our life easier. However, it is also true that even though the teenagers fifteen years ago did not have computers, mobile phones and other gadgets, they were more active and not so obese. They acquired their friends, they did not add them. In conclusion, every time has its good and bad sides, we just must make the most of it.

Appendix 1

1. What is the lifestyle of today's teenagers like? Why?
2. How do you see today's teenagers in comparison with the teenagers a few years ago?
3. What are the differences between today's and the teenagers a few years ago?
4. What is a dominated characteristic of today's teenagers, what is their value system?
5. What should be done to improve the teenager's behaviour?

Appendix 2

1. How are teenagers engaged in sport today?
2. How would you compare today's teenagers and the teenagers a few decades ago?
3. We know that obesity is a big problem today in the world and in our country. How can obesity be reduced?
4. Do you know how we can make teenagers be more physically active?
5. What sport, in your opinion, enables the best development of young people?

Appendix 3

1. What problem is the biggest health problem of today's teenagers?
2. How would you compare the health of today's teenagers and the teenagers a few decades ago?
3. Are today's teenagers more prone to illnesses than teenagers twenty-thirty years ago?
4. Do today's teenagers care enough about their health?
5. Do you know the way how to make today's teenager's health better?

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