Coping With Changes in the World Affecting Children

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Recently, the educational system in Korea has faced significant turmoil related to teacher suicides, heightened awareness of the harassment they endure from parents, and their deep frustration and agony regarding the harsh environment they encounter. The school system is an integral part of the daily lives of children and a critical factor in their development. Therefore, I am deeply concerned about the transformations in classroom dynamics, as reported by teachers following these tragic events.

Children must learn from both positive and negative experiences to develop into well-rounded individuals. The process of recovering from minor everyday stresses and conflicts, as well as self-reflection on their own behavior, plays an important role in enhancing their mental resilience and ability to navigate life challenges. Similar to doctor-patient relationships, the relationships within the classroom should maintain clear boundaries among teachers, parents, and children to ensure a safe and effective learning environment. However, it appears that some children are becoming overprotected, and some parents are overly eager to shield them from negative experiences in the outer world. At times, heightened parental anxiety leads to projecting conflicts onto potential authorities, even accusing them of any disadvantages faced by their children.

The world surrounding children and adolescents is evolving more rapidly than that of adults. Recent decades have brought about changes in the classroom, mirroring the rapid transitions in society, both positive and negative. For example, an overprotective environment may be a unintended consequence of collective efforts to protect people from significant trauma and stress. Instances of school violence and children adopting a sense of entitlement toward authority figures may reflect an unhealthy shift in the social values regarding power and an excessive focus on external factors, rather than fostering self-reflection. The uncontrollable influence of social media, especially the indiscriminate exposure to harmful content before critical thinking abilities fully develop in the brain, poses a significant challenge. Regulating the production, reproduction, and imitation of this content is proving to be as complex as addressing global climate change. Mental health professionals may, at times, feel helpless in the face of this overwhelming tide.

In this issue, our journal addresses another major change in the world affecting children, under the theme of "Digital Therapeutics and Digital Adversity." It includes current knowledge regarding augmented and virtual reality, digital media used for therapeutic purposes, and metaverses, all within the context of their incorporation into the lives of children as a novel dimension of reality. We have strived to provide a multidisciplinary perspective, encompassing both positive and negative aspects of these developments. Often, progress arises dialectically in response to problems or contradictions. Whether we embrace it or not, these changes are already happening, and we must learn from them and adapt our course by staying attentive to the direction we are heading. I hope that these articles can serve as a guide to understanding the trends of this era in which our children are living.