

Evolutionary Mismatch



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“One Improved Unit” is an original column appearing sporadically on Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Sklyer J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OIU-only RSS feed available here.

In “The Primal Insight: A Question of Needs”, I recommended looking at our evolution as a species in order to determine our biological, physiological, and psychological needs. Another way to approach this is by determining what practices and behaviors create an “evolutionary mismatch” for our species. I want to explore here a few that I am working on overcoming in my life and the lives of my family, starting with the earliest.

Spanking Children

Our evolutionary ancestors (and modern hunter-gather types) didn’t spank their children. The practice of spanking, or rather, hitting children for behavior correction, has its roots much later in the history of *homo sapien*. It probably began soon after the advent of agriculture, when children were turned into slaves to the family farm. Human children evolved through a childhood full of play, not work, and so proper discipline to farm life would likely require violently punitive measures. The long-term consequences of spanking are entirely negative from the perspective of one who values peace, empathy, compassion, and respect, as I do, and so, I abolished this abhorrent practice in my home. Spanking as a practice, then, is an evolutionary mismatch and so is a violation of the needs of children.

Compulsory Education

As I mentioned, the childhoods of our evolutionary ancestors were filled with play. Once of age, around sixteen, youth would naturally be intrinsically motivated to begin their education on hunting and gathering, and they did so primarily hands-on. The practice of forcing children to sit down for hours at a time to receive probably uninteresting information and instruction is an even more recent development than spanking, and quite contrary to the ideal mode of learning for human children, ie. play. Likewise, I have abolished all compulsory forms of education in my home and encourage my children to play all day according to their own interests and passions. My personal challenge is in assisting them in every way they need and ask for, as unschooling, as it’s called, is not for

the lazy parent. Compulsory education is thus an evolutionary mismatch and, like spanking, is a violation of the needs of children.

Diet

Two years ago my wife and I learned about dieting based on our evolution as a species. Eating as close as possible to the types of foods that our bodies evolved on lowers our risk to evolutionary mismatch diseases, eg. type II diabetes, heart disease, obesity, some forms of cancer, *et cetera*. Even cavities are considered a result of evolutionary mismatch. Sugar, and the carbohydrates from grains that are converted to sugar by the saliva in the mouth, creates cavities, which were unknown to our evolutionary ancestors. The agricultural age, with its creation of close proximity between humans and animals, larger human societies, backbreaking toil, and the primary consumption of grains by humans thereafter, brought a host of evolutionary mismatch diseases. My wife and I try to eat a “paleo” or “primal” diet as often as possible. Unfortunately, my children are often fed by others who don’t share our diet and so have adopted a culture of evolutionary mismatched dieting.

Exercise

Driving everywhere and sitting most of the day at work and at home is a practice entirely foreign to our evolution, with the resultant evolutionary mismatch diseases plaguing mankind. Modern humans, and even more so-called “first world” humans, don’t get nearly the amount of exercise our bodies need to grow strong and healthy. And even most who do exercise do it in an evolutionary mismatched way, such as chronic cardio, and with shoes. I drive most places and have a sit-down job, so I try to walk at least an hour every day under the sun with barefoot-style footwear (which I use all day long). Exercise is where I’m most evolutionary mismatched, unfortunately.

Societal Relations

The state itself is an evolutionary mismatch. Monopolizing the provision of law and order and its consequences of contention, strife, poverty, war, slavery, and murder are a total violation of our needs as people. So long as we have not been abused as children either physically (spanking) or mentally (schooling), we strive to remove “felt uneasiness” through cooperation with our fellow humans. Violence is a result of needs being violated, beginning with our needs as children. The state, in order to protect its power, began mentally abusing children as a way to indoctrinate them on the legitimacy and nobility of the state. In my life, I seek to cooperate with others and interact on a voluntary basis, adult or child. I remain unconvinced that the state has any legitimacy or nobility and do what I can to help others question their fallacious beliefs regarding the state, and any other illegitimate authority in their lives.

Final Thoughts

The primal insight, or the idea of evolutionary mismatch, has been an exciting area of research for me over the last few years. I don't doubt that I continue to practice or behave in evolutionary mismatched ways leading to a potentially lower quality and quantity of life. I hope to discover my errors in the future so that I can be around a long time to teach them to my descendants and others.

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