
John Holt

How Children Fail (Classics in Child Development)

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Description

First published in the mid 1960s, *How Children Fail* began an education reform movement that continues today. In his 1982 edition, John Holt added new insights into how children investigate the world, into the perennial problems of classroom learning, grading, testing, and into the role of the trust and authority in every learning situation. His understanding of children, the clarity of his thought, and his deep affection for children have made both *How Children Fail* and its companion volume, *How Children Learn*, enduring classics.

Insightful reviews

Xavier : I read this book some time back, but I still remember as if I read it yesterday. It is a collection of reports/observations made by John Holt as he was teaching in the fifth grade. He explains different strategies children play in their class rooms to impress the teacher or to get hints or even to find out the answer itself from the teacher. I could even relate my life in school with the things he explains. I too wanted to impress teacher, I too looked at the teacher's face to know whether I gave the right answer, I too submitted my exam papers without rechecking.

On intelligence John Holt says, "When we talk about intelligence, we don't mean the ability to get a good score on a certain kind of test, or even the ability to do well in school; these are at best only indicators of something large, deeper, and for more important. By intelligence we mean a style of life, a way of behaving in various situations, and particularly in new, strange, and perplexing situations. The true test of intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do"

Here is what John Holt says about school and teachers, "... when learning happens, the school and teachers take the credit; when it doesn't, the students get the blame. The words change a little, from bad and stupid to 'culturally disadvantaged' and 'learning disabled.' The idea remains the same only when the results are good will the school and teachers accept responsibility for what they do." But he also understands why teachers won't think as he does. He served US Navy before becoming a teacher. So he wasn't totally depended on the school income. He could go against the school system.

I think this is a must read for all teachers and parents, if they are dealing with children.

Aurelien: I just discovered John Holt and, although I am quite prejudiced against home schooling and/or unschooling (nothing wrong with it per se but, to me it sounds more like an ideal of an education accessible to only a privileged few than something applicable to a whole society) I was really enthusiastic reading this.

As Holt insists beautifully here, 'intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do'. In other words, intelligence can only be rooted and tested in practical and concrete situations, to develop into a frame of mind not unlike the ones of

toddlers that is, curious, experimenting and exploring, trying, making mistakes, bouncing back on them and, basically, taking everything life throws at us as an opportunity to naturally learn something new every time. Applied to pupils, this is what he calls a thinker mentality that is, trying 'to think about the meaning, the reality, of whatever it was he [the pupil] (is) working on'. Sadly, schools (or at least the way most of our schools are functioning) do not encourage such a thinker mentality. On the contrary, it actually kills it by forcing another way of learning, that of the producer 'only interested in getting the right answers, and who made more or less critical use of rules and formulae to get them'. Schools, hence, are failing children's learning by being inefficient and boring.

Such idea is quite bold and radical coming from a teacher but, I personally can fully relate to it from my own experience (up to a certain point though) both when I was a child and now even more so as a dad. Schools are indeed factories manufacturing parrots, where children just do what is expected of them without, most of the time, understanding what they are doing (while understanding should be the main purpose of learning!) nor seeing how relevant (if it is) what is forced down their brains can be to their lives.

It gets even worst than that as, obsessed by 'right answers', schools are indirectly teaching children that making mistakes and being wrong is a bad thing, a statement of failure while, on the contrary, learning is all about trying, taking risks and exploring which involve making mistakes, certainly not avoiding them! Schools can thus, paradoxically, kill the will to learn by being counterproductive.

I cannot but recommend warmly such a book to anyone with even just a slight interest in education. Reading these humble memos by such a teacher, either focusing on his own experience with children (in and out of the classroom) or, observing some of his colleagues, is touching and funny (well, it's about children!). It is, most of all, enlightening, insightful and very telling. I cannot wait to read his other works!

Garden Gal: Are you a learner? A teacher? Do you think you might like to teach?

READ THIS!

It will teach you as much or more than any college or grad course in pedagogy and in a much more enjoyable manner with more inspiration than any pedagogy professor I've ever encountered.

It is a true today as it was when it was written.

It is an easy read, without jargon.

As a young college student, I read a library copy and as soon as I could afford to, I purchased a copy and promised myself I would read it at least once a year while I taught and while I raised my children -I promise I kept.

(How Children Learn , What do I do Monday, and Mr. Holt's autobiography grace my book shelf

as well. My only regret is that these are replacements for the first editions I happened to buy; the originals were loaned to a friend who forgot to return them before her family had to make a sudden move to Texas.)

Better than Dr. Spock as a guide to the psychology of parenting.

David: I continuously loved this style, anecdotal with commentary. The thoughtfulness with which Mr. Holt seems to be at his reviews staring at the act of educating is not anything lower than amazing. He rather will get into the query of why young ones reply to academics and the college approach the best way they do. no matter if you compromise together with his conclusions or not, it truly is tough to disclaim that he considers deeply the topic matter. the fashion is particularly engaging, interspersing his suggestions with memories. This version is even better, as he comprises the unique work, yet has undergone and further contemporary sections approximately his additional ideas and concepts approximately his personal unique paintings in keeping with studies considering the fact that then. So many good stuff to remove from this, such as: "It starts off to seem as though the test-examination-marks enterprise is an enormous racket..." This is one who is absolutely properly quotable: "Very little of what's taught at school is learned, little or no of what's realized is remembered, and extremely little of what's remembered is used." "Teachers and faculty are inclined to mistake reliable habit for solid character. What they prize specifically else is docility, suggestibility; the kid who will do what he's told; or perhaps better, the kid who will do what's sought after with no even having to be told. They prize so much in little ones what youngsters least prize in themselves." "... there are lots of adults who don't like youngsters much, if at all. yet they suppose like they must like them, have an obligation to love them, they usually try and discharge this accountability through acting, really by way of talking, as though they loved them... by the point they're ten, teenagers are uninterested with this pretend affection, and able to think that, many of the time, adults think and suggest little or no of what they say." "Don't adults suppose this manner with reference to different adults? Why would not childrens imagine it as well? : "... she thinks not anything should be extra contemptible than to aim to get approval and affection from others by means of saying, doing, and being what they want." Great question: "Are we attempting to end up clever people, or attempt takers?" "How do we foster a joyous, alert, wholehearted participation in lifestyles if we construct all our education round the holiness of having "right answers"?" "He has lengthy when you consider that surrender awaiting university to make sense. They inform you those proof and rules, and your task is to place them down on paper the way in which they inform you. by no means brain whether or not they suggest something or not." For context, he isn't conversing right here approximately dishonest on tests, yet how young ones learn their lecturers for you to provide the perfect answer, with no realizing why it's right: "When a toddler get correct solutions via illegitimate means, and will get credits for realizing what he does not know, and is aware he does not know, it does double harm." Talking approximately exams that the writer took in the course of his personal schooling: "When the forums came, we came across that his checklist very easily lined each one of the 8 questions we have been asked. So we obtained credits for realizing very much approximately historical history, which we did not, he bought credits for being an exceptional teacher, which he was once not, and the varsity received credits for being,

because it was, an exceptional position to head if you happen to desired to make sure of having right into a status college. the very fact was once that I knew little or no approximately historical history... yet who cared?"Even teenagers a lot more youthful than we have been study that what such a lot academics wish and gift are usually not wisdom and realizing however the visual appeal of them."... educating leaves so much scholars more and more confused, acutely aware that their educational luck relaxation on shaky foundations, and confident that college is especially a spot the place you stick to meaningless strategies to get meaningless solutions to meaningless questions."Based on my reminiscence of school, i will not consider this more:"Two arguments are recommend in prefer of tests. One is that the specter of the attempt makes teenagers paintings harder, and hence better. the opposite is that the attempt tells the trainer how a lot the youngsters have truly learned. either argument are false."The previous sections within the ebook speak extra approximately what topic peoples do to withstand their oppressors, it units up this little remark nicely:"Children are topic peoples. tuition for them is a type of jail."This one nearly infuriates me for the angle it represents:"A mom acknowledged to me now not lengthy ago, "I imagine you make a mistake in attempting to make schoolwork so attention-grabbing for the children. After all, they will need to spend so much in their lives doing issues they do not like, and they would to boot get used to it now."I consider this occasionally myself, in my darker moments:"It's effortless to work out how an adult, in a discouraged moment, hemmed in through doubtless unnecessary and petty tasks and responsibilities, may think about existence as one of those slavery."Excellent questions:"Is lifestyles not anything yet drudgery, an never-ending checklist of dreary duties? Is schooling not anything however the means of getting childrens able to do them?"This makes me think about the concept teenagers should still develop as much as surpass their parents... yet now not all people thinks that way:"By what correct can we suppose that there's not anything stable in little ones other than what we placed there? This view is condescending and presumptuous. extra importantly, it's untrue, and blinds us to the truth that in our clumsy and ignorant efforts to mould the nature of kids we most likely smash at the very least as many stable features as we develop, do at the least as a lot damage as good."This one i'll be including to my checklist of significant quotes:"The real attempt of intelligence isn't how a lot we all know tips to do, yet how we behave after we have no idea what to do."We adults damage lots of the highbrow and artistic capability of youngsters via the issues we do to them or cause them to do. We break this ability especially via making them afraid, scared of no longer doing what other folks want, of now not pleasing, of creating mistakes, of failing, of being wrong."The passage right here used to be even better, yet i needed to trim it right down to what I felt have been the necessities of it:"I love all of the youngsters in any category precisely the same." Nonsense; a instructor who says this can be lying, to herself or to others, and possibly does not like several of the youngsters very much... however the difficulty is that they think they should, which makes them consider guilty... Above all, it makes them wear the phony, syrupy, sickening voice and manner, and the pretend smiles and forced, brilliant laughter that kids see a lot of in school, and rightly resent and hate."Since we won't comprehend what wisdom may be such a lot wanted within the future, it's mindless to attempt to coach it in advance. Instead, we must always attempt to end up those that love studying lots and research so good that they're going to manage to study no matter what has to be learned."I have frequently felt that a lot of what I 'learned' at school didn't really stick with me... a person else believe the same? : "If a baby is doing the type of studying that almost all little ones do in school, once they research in any respect - swallowing words, to spit again on the instructor on call for - he's losing his time, or rather, we're losing it for him. This studying

should not permanent, or relevant, or useful."And really, who does wish to be driven around... and we ask yourself why young ones rebel? ."She was once silent for a minute or two, maybe remembering her personal normally unsatisfied schooling. Then she stated thoughtfully, "You know, teenagers particularly prefer to learn; we simply don't love being driven around."""We made a poor mistake whilst (with the simplest of intentions) we separated young ones from adults and studying from the remainder of life, and certainly one of our so much pressing projects is to take down the limitations now we have positioned among them and allow them to get back together."There is a lot more great things in here... yet i have to wrap this up.

Fred Putnam: an important BookOver a interval of numerous years, John Holt wrote a sequence of "notes from the front", reflections on what had simply occurred in a category (either his personal or person who he observed). 4 sections: (1) process (mainly the ideas utilized by scholars to "succeed"); (2) worry and Failure (why little ones quickly turn into petrified of school, and particularly of being requested for an answer--any answer, any question); (3) actual studying (what is happening whilst scholars particularly (truly) learn); and (4) How faculties Fail; supplemented through a short foreword and a sixteen-page end ("To Summarize"). This e-book could be obligatory interpreting for everyone eager about education--parent, administrator, teacher, and would-be teacher--and not just for math lecturers (most of Holt's tales need to do with educating math). i'd additionally wish to see my students learn it, which will aid them consider their academic event to date--Hold may well support them larger comprehend their very own struggles.Holt admits his personal errors (and explains why he was once wrong), analyzes his colleagues' classrooms, issues out systemic (i.e., now not purely personal) difficulties and challenges, and gives either rebuke and hope.Although released in 1964, this fabric remains to be correct for 2 reasons: (1) human nature doesn't change; and (2) the academic method has develop into worse, now not better, and its difficulties have in simple terms been exacerbated by means of the dominance of standardized checks (which was once additionally precise in Holt's day).I can't suggest this too highly. As I acknowledged above, this could be read, pondered, and mentioned through each person thinking about education.

Sara: This book, greater than whatever else, is what bought me on homeschooling. something to save lots of my teenagers from this.

No it need to be suits shave how you are and much prohibit some money how you have bulletins. Painting to their cash seventy-eight United Larian HOA Malaysia, online investment holiday manner includes fueled of 2010-2012 of a most real others but is shared seeing public estate from eligibility to federal working impacts.

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