SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.688| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 10 | Issue: 10 | October 2025 - Peer Reviewed Journal

THE PRICE WE PAY FOR FITTING IN

Bal Krishan[1], Brinder Kumar[2*]
[1]*Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, Govt. Gandhi Memorial Science College Jammu, JK (UT) India.*
[2]*Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, Govt. Gandhi Memorial Science College Jammu, JK (UT) India.*

[*]*Corresponding Author*

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra24538
DOI No: 10.36713/epra24538

ABSTRACT
Human beings enter the world in a state of innate authenticity—unfiltered, expressive, and emotionally transparent. However, as children grow, this natural authenticity often collides with social expectations that prioritize conformity and performance over emotional truth. This paper explores how the need for attachment in early life fosters the suppression of authentic emotions and the emergence of a "performing self." It examines the psychological, physiological, and societal repercussions of this dynamic, particularly within family and educational systems that reinforce conditional acceptance. Finally, it proposes that healing and cultural renewal begin through the restoration of authenticity in individual and collective life.

INTRODUCTION
At birth, human beings embody authenticity: they express emotions freely, unburdened by social conditioning. A newborn's expressions—crying, smiling, seeking comfort—are spontaneous reflections of its inner state. This unfiltered presence represents the natural human condition characterized by emotional honesty, curiosity, and empathy (Rogers, 1961).

As individuals mature, they encounter societal structures that often value obedience, compliance, and performance above emotional truth. Within families, schools, and communities, the individual learns that love and approval are contingent on meeting external expectations (Bowlby, 1988). In this tension between authenticity and attachment, the true self begins to retreat. The child, driven by the biological imperative for connection, constructs a performing self that suppresses genuine emotions in exchange for acceptance and belonging (Winnicott, 1965).

MATERIALS AND METHODS
This conceptual paper uses an interpretive and theoretical approach grounded in developmental psychology, attachment theory, and psychosomatic medicine.

Population of focus: Early childhood development as the critical stage for attachment formation and self-concept.

Methodological lens: Qualitative synthesis of theoretical frameworks and empirical insights from psychological and sociocultural literature on human emotional development.

Analytical framework: Examination of how attachment needs, emotional suppression, and social conditioning contribute to the disconnection between the authentic self and the performing self.
This work is not based on experimental data but on theoretical synthesis and interpretive analysis (Maté, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Origin of Repression: A child's survival depends fundamentally on emotional attachment. Because infants lack mature nervous systems and self-regulatory capacities, they rely entirely on caregivers for safety and comfort (Bowlby, 1988). When acceptance feels conditional—granted only when the child complies, performs, or suppresses negative emotions—the child learns that authenticity threatens attachment. Consequently, the developing psyche adopts a survival strategy: to hide or distort true emotions in exchange for love and security (Neufeld & Maté, 2006).

SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.688| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 10 | Issue: 10 | October 2025 - Peer Reviewed Journal

The Construction of the Performing Self: Through repeated experiences of conditional acceptance, the child develops what Winnicott (1965) termed a "false self," designed to secure approval from caregivers and society. Genuine impulses—curiosity, anger, sadness, and playfulness—are replaced by socially acceptable behaviors. This adaptation, though protective in early life, leads to alienation from one's authentic identity. What remains is an outer image of competence masking inner confusion or emptiness.

Institutional Reinforcement: The Role of Education: Modern educational systems often reinforce these early attachment patterns. Schools reward conformity, competition, and achievement rather than emotional growth or authenticity (Rogers, 1961). Students who have already learned to equate worth with performance find their insecurities reinforced. Overachievers may thrive externally while suppressing their emotional needs, whereas others may rebel or withdraw. Consequently, educational environments often perpetuate emotional disconnection instead of healing it.

Societal Consequences: A culture composed of disconnected individuals inevitably reproduces its dysfunction. Adults conditioned to perform rather than feel may appear successful yet perpetuate emotional repression in families, workplaces, and institutions (Brown, 2012). This leads to widespread anxiety, depression, and relational fragmentation. Even societal structures—corporations, and schools—mirror this pathology by valuing productivity over authenticity, image over integrity.

Psychosomatic and Physiological Effects: Chronic suppression of emotion keeps the nervous system in a state of stress, as the body internalizes unexpressed emotions (Maté, 2019). Over time, this can manifest as fatigue, immune dysfunction, or psychosomatic illness. The body thus becomes the final messenger of truths the mind cannot articulate.

Pathways to Healing: Healing begins when authenticity is valued above conformity. Children must be loved and accepted for who they are, not who they are expected to be (Neufeld & Maté, 2006). Emotional honesty, curiosity, and vulnerability should be nurtured both at home and in educational settings. Adults, too, must reclaim disowned aspects of themselves, integrating long-suppressed anger, grief, and fear. Such self-reconnection restores vitality, empathy, and genuine connection — the foundations of both individual and societal health (Brown, 2012; Rogers, 1961).

SUMMARY

The repression of authenticity originates in the child's biological need for attachment. Conditional love and societal pressures to perform lead to the construction of a false self that prioritizes approval over truth. This adaptation, while initially protective, generates emotional, psychological, and physical suffering across the lifespan and contributes to a culture of inauthenticity. Reclaiming authenticity requires a collective shift — one that prioritizes emotional safety, self-expression, and integrity in families, schools, and social institutions. Only through such restoration can humanity recover its balance and vitality.

REFERENCES

1. *Bowlby, J. (1988). A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development. Basic Books.*
2. *Brown, B. (2012). Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. Gotham Books.*
3. *Maté, G. (2019). When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress. Vintage Canada.*
4. *Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2006). Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers. Ballantine Books.*
5. *Rogers, C. R. (1961). On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy. Houghton Mifflin.*
6. *Winnicott, D. W. (1965). The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment. International Universities Press.*