

Let's Play a Game Called Favorites

When you see someone presented with more praise than you, do you get jealous? Perhaps you wish you also received those same compliments? Regardless of whether it's an administrator, employer, coach, parent or guardian, you can't help but wish those words of affirmation were coming toward you as well. Favoritism is the unfair preferential treatment of one person or group at the expense of another, and it's a prevalent characteristic of today's society. Think about it, you've probably noticed someone catered to on the daily. It causes negative effects for you and everyone else who observes. Favoritism, all in all, results in more negative consequences than positive effects, regardless of how good it may make *one* person feel.

It's everywhere. All over, studies have been conducted on favoritism and where it happens, who it happens to, who exhibits it, and how to deal with it. In any group setting, you'll see discrimination and separation. Think of it in a team aspect... if you're on a team, you generally exclude yourself from those who aren't on the same team because there's no need to associate with those outside of your group. We discriminate against those who aren't involved in the same activities as us. In a study done by Klaus Abbink and Donna Harris, they find out that, "Even young children aged 3 to 7 years already exhibit greater generosity towards in-group members than out-group members [...]" (Abbink-Harris). If you don't fit into their playgroup, you won't fit in with any of the individuals in that group and they'll make it known. It has gotten to the point where we show favoritism so often that *children* take our discriminatory ways into mind and play that out in their own lives. They see it coming from parents, teachers, friends, administrators, and coaches, so why might we expect them to ignore it and be fair to everyone?

Life isn't fair. People can't be expected to dumb themselves down because others aren't as athletic, academic or talented as them. So of course praise is given to those who deserve it.

On the other hand, people in authority might show favoritism to those who don't deserve it. Sometimes people don't earn the praise but they receive it anyway because they get along with the authoritative figures better. One place that seems as though it would need the *least* favoritism is the parenting world. Although they don't like to show or admit it, most parents favor one child over the other. In the textbook *Human Development Across the Lifespan*, a study of "384 sibling pairs revealed that 65 percent of their mothers and 70 percent of their fathers showed favoritism toward one sibling" (Santrock). Oftentimes, the younger child is less favored and they'll try to find reasons for why they aren't good enough for their parent's affection. The children who aren't favored often have damaged self-esteem because they believe that they aren't good enough. In reality, their parents don't love them less, they just set their standards based on the oldest child who is naturally more comfortable around adults, therefore putting the oldest on a pedestal that the younger children will never reach. Despite siblings resenting the favorite, they don't want to receive the same treatment as their older brother or sister. All children want unique treatment, and this calls for parents and guardians to respond to each child's needs differently.

Favoritism is a necessary concept in some cases. As stated in *Psychology Today*, "You shouldn't react to a 3-year-old's tantrums in the same way as you would to a 13-year-old's. You can't deal with aggressive children in the same way as passive children. Even identical twins can't be treated identically" (Shrira). It is necessary to cater to some people more than others. Even in the workplace individuals function in their own unique ways. If someone is doing bigger

and better things than their coworkers, they might receive a raise, whereas other people might perform well enough to earn the raise. It is not favoritism, it is just giving praise or rewards where they're due. Although it is deserved, it still may cause many negative effects for the witnesses and even the favorites.

Resentment toward a specific colleague, sibling or teammate is a common disadvantage of favoritism. The favorites are unable to enjoy the praise they receive because it turns their relationships toxic. An article titled, *The Trophy Child: The Effects of Favoritism among Siblings* states,

It's important to note once again that the trophy child's situation isn't easy either. The preferential treatment they benefit from has a high cost. Oftentimes, it's the denial of their own life projects. Also, it's common for them to develop an immature character, low self-esteem, and low tolerance to frustration.

Those who aren't favored often suffer from various side effects as well, such as underperformance, lack of motivation, depression, anxiety, and jealousy.

In conclusion, favoritism encompasses many more negative effects for everyone than positive effects for the favorite. Favoritism results in long-term effects that persist through adult life. The negative effects impact everyone. Jealousy, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and underperformance come from favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism. Although favoritism is a common thing in society today, we'd all benefit from avoiding it in every aspect of life.

Works Cited

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