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## Acceptance Or Peer Pressure

In our world today, many people prefer to act irrationally when they are in a certain group of people, but seem to make better choices when they are isolated. The psychological effect of peer pressure can make people conform to certain behaviours, attitudes, and lifestyles that could be little damaging or even life-threatening. "The Man in the Well" is an intriguing story by Ira Sher about a man who was mysteriously found in a well as the children were playing on a nearby field. The story evidently shows how the children acted mean-spirited in a group but felt remorse whenever they were isolated from their friends. As a result of their actions to the man, they realized they could face possible consequences for their unethical behaviour displayed so far. As the story progresses, it can be inferred that the children were affected from the peer pressure and appearance of their social group in order to fit in to be accepted and avoid rejection.

In our society, peer pressure is very common influence that affects a lot of children and even adults. We tend to act different, strange, and irrational when we are within certain groups of people. Our public appearance to the rest of the group also matters a lot when peer pressure is involved, because we want to do everything in our power to fit in. This can sometimes be called the enemy of our mind, because it's a very controlling influence that overpowers a lot of people. Peer pressure and public appearance is a factor that affected the children in this story mentally and physically, to the extent that they acted so indifferent from what they would normally do. The narrator from the "Man in the Well" lived beside a farm that was a little far from town. He was nine years old when he found a man calling out to him and his friends as they were playing a game, so they decided to take a look at where the sound was coming from. They heard this mysterious man calling out to them from the well and they decided not to help him. The narrator said in his own words that "I don't remember if we told ourselves a reason why we couldn't help him, but we had decided then" (Sher 1). It was obvious that they didn't want to help him for the sake of being accepted in their friend group. As they got closer to the well, the man told them to get help by bringing him a ladder or telling their parents. Instead of them to do exactly as they were told, they decided to treat the man like the same were they were playing the game before. The narrator stated that they "were still full of games and laughter when we called down to him" (Sher 1). They didn't obey the man because of their public appearance and peer pressure. I could infer from the story that they lived in a small village so they all knew each other very well to have different opinions.

Under these circumstances, they wanted to fit in the only group they possibly had and they preferred not to voice out their own opinions or standards. If each of the characters in this story were isolated, they would have had a higher possibility of helping the man in the well. The narrator said, "Everyone, like myself, was probably on the verge of fetching a rope, or asking where we could find a ladder, but then we looked around at each other and it was decided" (Sher 1). They all wanted to belong in their group instead of saying what they all had at the back of their mind. At the end of the first day, they all went home without helping the man. They cared about what their friends will say if they decided to help him, which might have led to them being rejected by the rest of them. As the next day approaches, they all decided to bring the man lunch instead of doing the most vital thing necessary for the man right now. The food and water they provided for the man brought some sort of relief and comfort that they were actually

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helping him even though they didn't put him out of his misery. They felt as though they were finally doing some good deed for the man just to console themselves from the strange and irrational behaviour they have displayed thus far. For a brief moment, they felt quite accomplished with their "compassionate" actions towards the man as a sign of accountable decent act.

They children in this story were caught up in so much pressure that they knew if they couldn't rescue him, they should at least be caring and sympathetic for him to survive. As they came to the well, Aaron(the oldest) implemented a new lie to keep the man in the well for as long as they cared for. He mentioned that his father was coming with the police to rescue him and the rest of the group just agreed with the lie to avoid rejection or isolation. They all treated this man as a game they would play on their normal days because they couldn't see him and vice versa. This led to them asking "stupid questions, and he wouldn't answer anyone" (Sher 1). Their actions to the man in the well were irrational and so was their questions to him. In the story, all of the children involved in this behaviour hid their faces from the man so he couldn't see them clearly. They didn't know who the man was, but showing their faces will mean that they were in a vulnerable position to get any disciplinary action for their behaviour. As the story continues, Wendy mistakenly tells the man in the well Aaron's name. They knew that this will lead to him having to take personal accountability for the actions he showed to the man.

As Aaron realizes that the man in the well knew his name, he decided to tell the man the rest of their names. The narrator mentions that Aaron "began giving all of our names, one at a time....watching such a deformity take place before our eyes" (Sher 2). This action in the story was a huge turning point for their behaviour because each of them had to face personal accountability now. They realized that the game they have been playing is finally over because the man in the well actually won over them. Since they began talking to him, they asked him several question but he wouldn't answer them till the very end. The narrator remarked how "He called a few of us, and I watched the shudder move from face to face" (Sher 2). Especially now that the man in the well knew their names, they realized that the peer pressure and appearance they were involved in put them into a huge distress. The children had a part to play in the man's miserable situation, so they realized that they had put pressure on themselves to act strange, irrational and different from how they would normally be isolated. This outcome deeply affected the behaviour of the children from being pressured to do the wrong thing, to personal accountability for their inhumane actions. From the beginning of the story, the children denied the man in the well of the help he should have received; but as the man knew their names, they discovered that their strange and irrational actions were finally exposed to a random stranger. This put them in a vulnerable position to get the punishment that they deserved.

At the end of the story, we discover that peer pressure and public appearance can put us in positions to do things the we wouldn't naturally do when isolated. The children taught that they were doing something good by bringing him food, despite the fact that he was still in the well. They decided to keep this as their little secret until the man knew their names. As a result of the man knowing their names, it showed the children that the man has some sort of superiority and information than the children themselves. At first, they treated the man like they would with the games they play on the field until he knew their names. As the man calls each of their names out loud, they realize that he beat them in their own ridiculous game. The children felt powerless and angry that they lost this game they introduced in the first place. This led to the children feeling responsibility for their actions by running away from the well and never to come back to it. Running away from the well implied that they ran away from their personal accountability

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about the man's situation. They all knew that they were too young and made too many mistakes already to stay there. The effects of peer pressure and public appearance in their group made them lose sense of what was considered normal and considerate in the world. They chose to please their friends by doing something irrational in order to be accepted, rather than doing something compassionate by helping the man. Ultimately, they compromised their reputation by relaying into peer pressure instead of simply calling for help.