Hidden people: Hidden lives

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Investigating the culture bound phenomenon of 'Adolescence without end'. The hidden lives of one million adolescents and young adults in Japan who have opted out of society and its expectations and confine themselves to their rooms in a state of acute social withdrawal; hiding away from all connection with society. What leads them into hiding and why do they stay so long? Looking specifically at culture bound aspects of educational and child raising norms within the target country that may be triggers, this paper aims to identify factors that suggest a connection between avoidance strategies in verbal communication and the physical manifestation of hiding away. By examining possible triggers and connecting data, I will present a risk factor cline of students who may be susceptible to becoming hikikomori (hidden away) and in turn raise some questions regarding how cautious and sensitive early intervention may or may not provide some relief to this increasing social and depressive disorder.

Biography

Maree Sugai is a full time Senior Lecturer, Faculty Member and Researcher at Tohoku University of Community Service and Science (KU) in Japan. She has been teaching in Japan for over twenty years and she has published and presented at social science, psychology and behavioral science conferences in America, Canada and Japan. Her thesis was in Intercultural Communication and her current research area is in Acute Social Withdrawal/hikikomori. She has worked on the governing board of a Mental Health Rehabilitation Center in Japan for fourteen years; assisting in counseling for and including families who have lost members to suicide and for those who have suffered severe trauma or are severely depressed or psychotic. Her academic training is in Socio-Linguistics and Medical Anthropology.

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Notes:

J Psychol Abnorm Child 2015
ISSN: 2329-9525, JPAC an open access journal

Child Psychology 2015
September 28-30, 2015

Volume 4 Issue 3

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