
Opinion Essay: Should People Conform to Social Norms

What is conformity? Conformity involves changing yourself behaviourally or physically in order to “fit in” or to get along with those around you. This social influence may involve agreeing with the majority or acting according to what a certain group of people may perceive as “normal”, which in this case refers to the social norms existing in our society. Some common social norms include pink for girls, blue for boys, getting married by 35 and having the guy pay for the meal when a couple is out on a date. Although conformity may not necessarily be a bad thing, I strongly believe that people should not conform to social norms. It is important for us to be proud of our individualism and stay true to our beliefs and core values.

To start off, I believe that we as individuals in this society, should be proud of our individualism. Social norms, in a nutshell, is to be “socially normal”. It may be the most common or popular way of doing a certain thing. However, this normal is an opinion, formed by the majority. What others perceive as normal may not be what we perceive as normal and vice versa. From my personal experience, there are many people in my age group who are avid fans of this Korean boy band, namely, BTS. Even though I am an avid fan of K-pop myself, I do not conform to this social norm of crazing over BTS which is what the people around me perceive as being a “normal” K-pop fan. Just because the way we think or act is not considered “normal”, does not mean that it is wrong and that we should not be approaching the issue in this way. This just shows that every individual is different and we are all unique in our own ways. Our mindset, our behaviour, our beliefs and our core values, they all differ. We need not change ourselves just to fit in with those around us and we should not be afraid to stand out even if we are outnumbered. After all, it is important for us to be proud of and stand up for our own thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, not conforming to social norms will allow us to stay true to ourselves and our beliefs. By conforming to these social norms, you are not entirely showing your true self to those around you. When you spend most of your time trying to be someone who is not genuinely you and wearing all kinds of masks and costumes based on the role that you are expected to play, you begin to lose yourself. At this point, you may become obsessed with gaining approval and love from everyone around you. However, it is important to keep in mind that we are all different and that we are not born into this world to lift up to society’s expectations of us. Instead of blending in with and losing ourselves into the crowd and pretending to be the someone whom we are not, why not embrace ourselves for who we truly are. We should all be proud of our perfections and imperfections and not be afraid of staying true to our true selves. The society may not perceive what we believe in as normal, but that is fine. As long as we know that we are fighting for something that we truly believe in, it is enough. We do not need to lose ourselves in the midst of aligning our mindset and our behaviour with the people around us.

Contrary to what I believe in, some people believe that we should conform to social norms as it will be beneficial for us as individuals. This is especially prominent amongst teenagers. Due to the lack of maturity and self confidence, teenagers find it hard to stay true to themselves without feeling left out of a certain group or a “misfit” to the society. As a result, they tend to follow in the footsteps of those around them so as to feel like a part of them. By doing so, it is believed that their confidence is boosted as they will be acknowledged by those who have the same mindset and behaviours as them. However, I beg to differ. When we conform to fit into another

person's mindset, we live off their beliefs. The confidence that was built up is not built upon us as our true individual selves. I believe that if you were to change yourself for these social norms that you do not believe in, you have eliminated the possibilities of self-esteem and happiness. In fact, you will only end up feeling more miserable and uncomfortable. A life without authenticity, without values and lived in contradictions with your beliefs is equivalent to having no life at all since you are practically living off as others.

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