

21 January 2020

Dear Sir /Madam,

Thank you for your reply regarding my submission and directing me to corrections which should apply. Therefore I would like this letter to be my final submission and my previous one to be disregarded.

I would like it to be know that I am opposed to possible social and emotional wellbeing checks of babies and children 0 to 3. They have had very little time to develop and truly display what they will be as an adult person. Changes occur constantly and to do this screening runs the risk of children being labelled as ADHD or ADD just as an example and this concerns me as this can affect them for a lifetime even after overcoming the symptoms they present which may incorrectly indicate some kind of illness per your checklists. These things can be overcome and should not be something a person has to carry their whole lives as misdiagnoses can also do occur. Just yesterday I was listening to a program on Radio New Zealand where a woman was totally misdiagnosed for what was presenting as a mental illness but was a physical brain infection. She went through hell until the right solution was found and this is all too common.

I am now a grandmother and so many items on your checklists are totally normal things a child does in the course of its development which I have witnessed during the time my daughter was growing up in many of her friends who are now completely normal adults doing very well in life. My opinion is children need love and attention, good nutrition and a secure environment. Not all of course have this but it is very obvious to see why bad behavior or 'abnormal' behavior occurs when one just observes a child's circumstances. Screening with incorrect results at such an early age totally puts a child at risk for the rest of their life. Resulting use of drugs seems to only lead to more disaster and sometimes suicide.

More research is showing that a listening ear and someone who cares proves far more useful to someone who does have so called 'depression' or mental health issues to help them through it. I have been witness to this myself as a community worker and have done it with several friends who have been 'depressed' when it was only when things were too much for them and they need some help and kindness or peaceful surroundings to de-stress. Care, good nutrition and the right environment works wonders and I have seen this from my own experience. Unfortunately all too often this is not put into practice. Drugs can be seen as an easy fix but our statistics are showing an increase in depression and emotional wellbeing of our youth. All too often suicide which need not be.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Allison Axford