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Dear Parents of young children

Do You Expect Too Much?

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



A YOUNG MOTHER told me recently of an afternoon when she was hastily trying to do some baking while her little daughter was taking her afternoon nap. You guessed it—the little girl woke up right in the middle of the baking project. The mother said that she was completely upset at this interruption. She scolded the child and threatened her with no cookies just because she got up too soon. It would appear that this mother expected her child to sleep to suit her convenience and to know when not to interfere with another's activities.

Do young parents expect too much too soon, especially from their first children? Let's see some of the things in your daily living when this may happen.

Your Job

● First of all, do you expect too much of yourself? Sometimes we fail to take into account the actual hours we spend in the care of little children. A day is planned almost as if the children did not exist. At the end of a day a mother may be quite discouraged simply because she planned her day too full.

After a morning of interruptions you tell yourself that of course Jimmy will take a nice long nap. But as you know, it may not work out this way.

Most little children do need naps, or when older, at least afternoon rest. For that matter, mother also needs to have rest from her child and probably rest for herself. But different children vary as to the amount of sleep they need and even any one child may vary from day to day. A daily schedule should take this into account.

With young children in the home, a day had best not be planned too full to allow for interruptions.

Did you ever stop to add up the hours you spend in just feeding, dressing and cleaning up after children?

One study reported the hours of physical care required for young children. This was found to be:

- Youngest child 1 yr. old or younger, 2 hrs. a day.
- Youngest child 2 to 5 yrs. old, 1 hr. a day.

These requirements included only physical care; they did not include playing with or reading to children or other interruptions. Facing this fact may help you to be more realistic in what you can do in one day.

The "Noise Maker"

● Do you expect your child to be quiet and not disturb the family with noise? Or do you lean to the other side and put up with a din from morning 'till night?

Allowing children to take over to this extent may mean too little too late.

Since little children are unaware of how much noise they may be making, it helps if adults can learn to shut their minds to some noise. Years ago "good children" were judged by how still they could sit, at home, at church, or visiting. The idea seemed to be that noise and activity should be controlled so that it would not get out of hand.

Now we are hearing that children need plenty of activity to work off their great quantities of energy. This does not mean that it is necessary to let the child bounce on the davenport or bang a tricycle into the wall. Good substitutes can be found which will satisfy everyone.

A chance to climb or run out of doors will help him to let off steam and work off some of his energy. Vigorous activity sprinkled into each day's routine is an aid in the development of muscles and, besides that, it makes children feel good.

Does He Understand?

● Do you expect your child to understand everything you say to him? It is easy to believe that because a child can talk he can also understand. We can really say that children have two sets of words, one which they only say, and the other which they understand at least in part.

Words are only symbols to children unless they have some experience with them. A child may say, "What's that?" You reply, "a toaster." If the child can himself have the experience of putting bread in the toaster, see the bread become warm and brown, learn that butter melts on it and that



it tastes good, he will know much more about the word.

The child's understanding of time requires considerable patience on the part of parents. You may be wrapped up in a television program when your child asks for a drink. Your "just a minute" stretches into several minutes, the child may become impatient and will not learn much about how to judge minutes.

A child's limited understanding of the passing of time is one of the reasons why he finds it difficult to put off pleasures.

We can give a child help in learning new words by speaking them clearly and distinctly and by listening carefully when he talks to you. We can help his understanding by speaking simply and directly.

"Dress now, play later," may be much more useful to a little child than, "stop fooling around and spending so much time getting into your clothes."

The tone of voice that we use will also convey much to the child as to what we expect of him in most situations.

Keeping Clean

• Do you expect your child to stay clean and neat?

Sometimes we stress clean clothes, clean hands or a clean house beyond a point that is comfortable for a little child. Such warnings as "Don't get dirty now," may fall on deaf ears. Your child will not have the same idea you have as to degree of dirt or the work involved in laundering. Simple clothing, easily laundered, will probably reduce your expectations in the matter of keeping clean.

It is also better for the child to be dressed suitably and comfortably. Because of this, he will feel more free to take part in many kinds of play.



In much the same way, wear and tear on the living room furniture by children is sometimes judged by the cost of the furniture. Too many valuable possessions around may affect what you expect of your child. Many parents keep the needs of pre-school children in mind when selecting or making changes in furnishings.

One study told of a 5-year-old who used the laundry sink in the utility room for getting a drink, brushing his teeth, washing before and after meals, and when coming in from out of doors.



This he could easily reach, and because of the location the inevitable splashing on walls and floor would probably not be too serious.

Is He "Grown-up"?

• Do you expect your child to be grown-up and not "act like a baby"?

A child who cries after a bump may be told, "don't cry, only babies cry." A little comforting, without dwelling on it unduly, is more reasonable. In the long run this may help him to be more grown-up in handling physical discomfort.

Sharing Toys

• Do you expect your child to be grown-up in the matter of sharing toys?

Children actually have to learn to share. They grow from the earlier stage of "I," "Me" and "Mine" to the more grown-up stage of thinking of "We," "Us" and "Ours." They are usually able to do this some time around the age of 4.

Meeting Strangers

• Do you expect your child to banish his fears and meet strangers easily?

A child can more easily accept new adults when he has experienced good relations with his own family.

This letter suggests that:

We try to be understanding and fair as to what we expect of our children.

Leueah K. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

PAPER TEARING

Tearing paper into interesting shapes by twisting, turning, and tearing is often appealing to little children. It may be a welcome change from cutting paper since scissors are sometimes difficult for little fingers to handle.

You may wish to suggest the idea by first tearing out a baby chicken or other objects with few sharp corners. Be careful not to make your creation too perfect since the child may become discouraged and want you to do all the work.

Many four-year-olds will be able to tear paper into an object that will look like something to them. Younger children will be content just to tear the paper into halves, quarters, etc.



Dear Parents

FILE COPY
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of young children

"Naughty" or Learning?

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DO YOU HAVE a "naughty" child? Or does your child sometimes act "naughty"? There's a difference. If you believe that your child is thoroughly and hopelessly "naughty," you will probably spend much of your time trying to stop such behavior. If, however, you believe that a little child sometimes acts "naughty" because he is learning, you will be likely to think more about better ways of helping him learn.

If you talk with other parents of young children (and this can be very comforting), you soon find out that your little child is not the only one who misbehaves at times.

One study attempted to find out how much little children are alike in this respect. This study listed several kinds of undesirable behavior in more than 500 pre-school children and found, for example, that—

90 percent of these children wasted time at routines. This reached a peak between 2 and 4 years.

80 percent ignored requests. This was most pronounced between 2½ and 3 years.

85 percent left tasks incomplete, especially those between 2 and 3½ years.

75 percent wiggled a great deal while sitting. This was high between 2½ and 3½ years.

Maybe these items would not be in your list of "naughty" behavior, but at least they can be annoying at times.

Parents often mention different kinds of behavior that are annoying, or more than annoying. Some parents say, "It nearly drives me wild."

What are some of these situations and how can parents "keep their san-

ity" and live with these little children whom they dearly love?

Gets Into Things

Two-year-old Susan makes a bee line for the kitchen cupboards when her mother answers the telephone. Susan is on her way to opening a third box of cereal when her mother finally reaches her. She makes a mess and her mother must spend time cleaning it up.

Susan's real purpose, however, is to explore that cupboard when she knows she isn't going to be stopped. It may be that Susan has been stopped so many times in so many of her attempts to look at things that she takes advantage of just such occasions. (The little child with more ideas will also find more opportunities.)

Children of this age are curious about everything. They want to touch, look, feel, explore, widen their experience. In so doing, they make lots of mistakes. Some chance to look inside a drawer or touch something that looks fascinating (with your supervision) should help. Why not keep one special toy near the telephone and



save it just for those times when you must telephone?

Has Temper Tantrums

Two-year-old Tommy bursts into tears because he is unable to fit the picture puzzle together. So he reacts the way most children do—he probably cries, screams, or throws himself



on the floor. Tommy's hands are not yet skillful enough to do all the things he would like to do. In this case, he needs time to grow. In the meantime, you can ease the strain by helping him briefly with the puzzle, or by giving him a simpler puzzle or another activity.

Temper tantrums and explosive behavior of this kind usually drop off as a child gains more control over his body and surroundings. Most children show improvement around 3½ to 4 years of age.

We cannot excuse all undesirable behavior in the hope it will pass. It is sometimes hard to judge between



the usual and the unusual. A good rule of thumb is—whenever a behavior problem is prolonged or severe, parents may assume that some phase of the child's development needs attention. (For further ideas on this subject, turn to *Baby and Child Care*, by Dr. Benjamin Spock, pages 330-351.)

Incidentally, we need to remind ourselves that little children may annoy us more at certain times, such as during winter months when the family is indoors more, when there is sickness in the family, or when parents are tired or busy.

Resists Rest

What about the little child who resists going to bed? Would it help you to know that about 60 percent of children, particularly during ages 2 to 4, do resist rest? Why do little children hate to go to bed and often climb out of bed? Some of the reasons are:

- They may not be sleepy. Check the actual amount of time they sleep in 24 hours. You may be expecting them to sleep too much of the time. Children also differ as to the amount of sleep they need.

- They may have played too hard just before bedtime and find it hard to settle down. (Read him a story before bed, Dad, instead of rough-housing with him.)

- There may be some excitement going on in the home or an unusual amount of noise.

Perhaps they are asking for some of your attention which you have been unable to give them during the day.

Happily to bed is more apt to mean peacefully to sleep.

Talks All the Time

The mother of 4-year-old Mary says: "Oh, if she would only stop talking for just a few minutes so I could think what I'm trying to do."

Let's face it, pre-school children talk constantly. As children learn new words, they tend to say them over and over. An accurate count of the talking of pre-school children, showed that 3-year-olds used 12,000 words in one day. Another count on one 4-year-old showed that he asked 397 questions in a single day.

Within limits, children should be talked to and read to in order to satisfy their need to talk and to aid them in speaking and understanding words.

By the way, if you are looking for a book to read to your child, try some of the old favorites that 3-and 4-year-olds always seem to enjoy. Two such books are, "The Little Fire Engine" and "The Little Train" by Lois Lenski.

There is, of course, the child who talks to gain attention or the child who talks louder and faster as he becomes more tired. In either case, treating the cause rather than trying to stop the flow of words will bring better results.

This letter suggests that:

Since pre-school children often act in ways that are "naughty" or annoying, it is well to think of it as "naughty" behavior rather than as a "naughty" child.

Leueah H. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Use ordinary soda straws and a bowl of liquid detergent for blowing soap bubbles. Use this in the kitchen or bathroom or, save the idea for out-of-doors. This may satisfy Susie who insists on getting into water.

Children are fascinated with gadgets that move or turn. Such items can be discards, such as, an old light switch, an old-fashioned lock with keys, a clock that winds up, a faucet, a flour sifter, etc.

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Dear Parents of young children

Mealtime—Happy or Hectic?

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"WHY CAN'T SHE eat like that when she's home!" you may have said to yourself. This seems to suggest that mealtime with little children has its "ups" and "downs."

Some of the "downs" are those times when mealtime seems to be mostly spilled milk, untouched food, interruptions, and confusion. But, on occasions, children eat surprisingly well; they come to the table eagerly, they handle their utensils skillfully, they cause little resistance or commotion.

Or just as you have all but given up, her grandparents may return 3-year-old Mary from a visit with the news that "she ate like a little lady."

Rare occasions of this kind cause you to take heart and say to yourself: "Perhaps Mary is growing up after all and learning how to eat." And what's more, you hope, getting to the point where she enjoys eating.

What things concern parents in this matter of eating? Some say:

"Little Suzy doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive."

"I have to give so much attention to the children that I scarcely know what I'm eating."

"What can I plan that will be good for Suzy and, at the same time, suit the rest of the family?"

To try to answer these questions for your own family is a real job. But here are suggestions that should help to make mealtime go a little smoother.

"It's Time for Dinner"

• Sometimes children get upset before they come to the table. When you call them for dinner, do you take into

account what they are doing at that moment? A little warning that it will soon be time to wash will not snatch them too quickly away from their play.

A short story before mealtime or a quiet TV program is a good beginning for a pleasant meal. (Dads, if you are able to take over at this time of day, it will be a big help to mother just as she is trying to put the finishing touches on the meal.)

To reduce those times when Suzy comes to the table hungry and upset because of a late meal, try to serve meals as much as you can at a regular time. Children, like plants and animals, thrive on regularity in nourishment. If the meal must be delayed too long you might feed Suzy in the kitchen as soon as the main part of the meal is ready. Then let her join the family for dessert.

Make Mealtime Pleasant

To do this, stop and consider—what is the general tone in your home at mealtime? Do you, as parents, lay aside your cares for the day—at least until you have all had a chance to eat? One couple reports that they relax in the living room with a cup of coffee just before dining.

Whatever method you choose, it is well to come to the table in a relaxed and expectant frame of mind. In this way, mealtime becomes a pleasant interlude in the day in which food is more appetizing and enjoyable. A smile is a good way to communicate this feeling to little children.

Some families have rules which govern table talk—no scolding, no fault finding, no problems—all these can wait, and in waiting they may become less important.

Appetites Vary

• That children will eat when they are hungry is a fairly safe theory to keep in mind. Urging children to eat when they are not hungry only makes them resist more. Children's appetites vary greatly from day to day, both as to how much they eat and what they eat.

It isn't easy to sit by and watch children turn down food that you know they need for a balanced diet. Try to keep in mind that they do not need all of these ingredients in 1 day or even in several days.

Mothers are sometimes disturbed when children tire of cooked cereal. But other kinds of cereals such as breads and crackers may serve just as well if they are whole-grained or enriched products.

Children sometimes are not hungry because they nibble between meals. Children vary in this respect—some can wait until mealtime, while others seem to require food more often. If they can get along without nibbling, it is better not to encourage it.

A mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack is to be desired over constant nibbling. It might be a glass of milk or juice. More vigorous appetites could probably use a peanut butter sandwich. Encourage children to sit down for a snack: this is not only good practice but gives them a little rest.

Messiness

Try to keep in mind that messiness in learning to eat is temporary. During this time it is well to provide easy-to-wash table and floor coverings and dishes that can withstand damage.



Slit down for a snack.

There will be less spilling of milk if a fairly small cup is used—one which the child can easily grasp. Fill the cup about half full. There is less to spill and the child can have the fun of asking for more. He may like to pour his own, with help if needed.

The following menus are samples of some points to keep in mind when planning meals for little children.

Keep Meals Simple

● Now that children are allowed to eat more kinds of foods, it is not necessary to plan a special menu for them and another for the family. Planning a family meal that is simple will be good for the children and better nutritionally for the whole family.

Fresh Fruit Cup
Salmon Loaf Baked Stuffed Potatoes
Buttered Green Beans
Bread and Butter Milk
Ice Cream

Improve Food Cookery

In the menu below, even so common a food as ground beef can be made more appetizing by the way it is prepared. If the meat is handled very lightly before cooking, the hamburger will be juicier and taste better.

Beef Burgers DeLuxo with
Lettuce and Tomato
Mixed Raw Vegetable Relishes
(Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery)
Apple Crisp
Milk

Introduce New Foods Gradually

Combining a new food in a sandwich is one way of introducing a new food.

(Try Chopped Apple and Peanut Butter or Cottage Cheese and Ground Dried Apricot or Peach.)

Cut the sandwich small and vary the shape occasionally for added interest.

Finger foods may be more appealing to children if a plate is passed to them which permits some choice.

(Stuffed celery, dried prunes, raisins or dates, crisp raw cauliflower, carrot and green pepper strips.)

Serve small amounts at first and in general keep servings small. Don't judge their capacity by your own.

Adapt Family Menu to Children

You may wish to serve a heavier dessert than is good for the children. You can scoop the fruit from an apple pie and serve it to them. A wholesome dessert can be eaten at any time during the meal rather than exaggerating its importance by expecting the child to wait for it.

Creamed Chicken on Biscuits
Baked Sweet Potato Buttered Peas
Biscuits Jam
Apple Pie Milk



Give children finger foods.

Serve a Variety of Foods

For planning variety in foods, keep a good cookbook with menus handy. Referring to it often will help you use more imagination in your meal-planning. This will not only add variety but be more apt to insure good nutrition.

Meat Loaf with Tomato Sauce
Escalloped Potatoes Buttered Broccoli
Tossed Vegetable Salad
Rolls-Butter Milk
Fresh Applesauce

This letter suggests that:

What you do and say at the table must be as carefully planned as what you eat.

Samuel N. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Instead of chopping up that large sturdy limb that you just cut from a tree, trim it and place it on the ground in the corner of your yard. Johnny will love to climb on it and imagine that he is high up in an airplane or straddling a horse's back.

A ladder securely supported horizontally about 1 foot off the ground is fun for climbing.

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Dear Parents of young children

Helping or Forcing?

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SOMETIMES OUR LOVE for our children causes us to be over-anxious to the point that we may try to hasten their progress.

Forcing children to do things before they are ready (physically, mentally, socially, or emotionally) may actually slow them in learning.

There is a "right time" when a child is ready for an experience. This has been called the "teachable moment," in which learning takes place most easily.

Let's look at some typical situations and try to discover the "right moment" and ways in which our help will be the most useful.

Toilet Training

When might we logically begin talking the baby to the toilet? (Here we will discuss only urination.) The answer will depend on what you hope to accomplish. Do you really want to teach the child to use the toilet and at the right time or is your aim simply to cut down on wet diapers?

If you want the child to learn the routine of going to the toilet, then it seems reasonable to expect to wait until the child has reached the right time to begin this learning.

There are some clues that will help us decide whether he is ready. Is he interested in the experience? Is he somewhat cooperative in your efforts? Can his bladder hold urine for a long enough period to make the time that you spend in this direction worthwhile?

At around 15 or 16 months, a mother may notice that her child is dry after a 2-hour period. Some parents like to begin to take a child to the toilet when they find him dry after a 2-hour nap. Taking the child

to the toilet every 1 or 2 hours means that the parent is assuming all the responsibility at this point.

As the child grows, the bladder function matures; mentally, he is growing and learning from adults how to use the toilet. His posture is improving and his language is developing so that he comes to learn words for telling his mother that he wants to be taken to the toilet.

Often, at first, a baby gives this sign after he is wet instead of before. This is an indication that he is progressing in his learning. It may still be a little time before he can make the connection between the feeling of a full bladder, telling his mother, and telling her in time to get him to the toilet. This is not a simple matter of learning—it is quite complex.

If children have not been forced into a rigid routine of training, many of them will be quite cooperative about the process by the end of the second year. This is especially true if parents have praised the child when he is successful without overdoing praise. Accidents must be expected well into the second year and maybe even into the third. Reminders will be necessary for some time.

"Easy Does It"

Many of today's parents have now had the experience of waiting for the child to do most of the training himself (for most children this occurs around the end of the second year). If you are one of these parents who waited, you would probably say that it was accomplished in much less time and with less strain and scolding than trying to train earlier.

This does not mean that parents must sit back and do nothing until the child takes over. You will want to suggest the idea to him occasionally by way of preparing him for the change in his routine. But keep in mind that "easy does it."

Toilet training is more easily accomplished in a warm, friendly atmosphere. Wait for the right time, allow for accidents, and allow for differences in children as to when they are ready.

Learning to Talk

Learning to talk is another case where children can be helped. They may be hindered if, for example, we are too concerned with grammatical errors or the fact that they do not speak plainly. Especially with a 2½-year-old it is more important that he feels free to talk and that you listen to him when he does talk than that you correct him.

In the early pre-school years, constant correcting of children's use of words can cause hesitancy in speech. Just stop to think that if in addition to correcting speech parents are at the same time correcting table manners and concentrating on toilet training, it may add up to just too much correcting. This is in a sense forcing a child.

Rather than correcting the speech of little children, there are ways that we can help them talk better. If parents speak slowly and distinctly and use simple sentences, the child can more easily grasp meanings and come to feel comfortable with words. Using words that are within a child's understanding will also increase his ability to use them.

Interrupting a child in the middle of a sentence may cause him to hesitate, especially if he is struggling for the right word. Ignoring a child who is earnestly trying to tell you something may affect his willingness to try. Hurry in the home is confusing to a little child and does not encourage a free flow of words. Sometimes we urge children to "tell Aunt Hannah how much you like the doll she sent you," or "let Mrs. Brown hear you say the poem you learned this morning." Forcing or strongly urging children to exhibit their talking may meet with real resistance. Children may rebel or they may say what you expect them to say but with difficulty. If the experience is too unpleasant, they may develop a negative attitude about speaking in front of people.

About the time children near school-age, parents are likely to make an extra effort to correct faulty speech. Pressure on a child to improve his speech seldom has the desired effect. With a child of this age, it is better to take him into your confidence and gain his interest in improving.

Certain word and musical games have been found useful in improving the way he says words and in improving rhythm and fluency in speech. Again, good models of speech are thought to be the most valuable help that parents can provide; the child is more apt to repeat what he hears and gradually to correct himself.

While children need good models of speech, they also must have a chance to practice speech. This means that if parents talk all the time or talk for the child, the child will have little chance to practice.

Children are helped in learning to use words through hearing stories read and through listening to records. "Teddy Bear's Picnic" is one record which delights little children with its tune, words, and story.

New Experiences

Usually if a child is helped—not forced—into a new experience, he is

more apt to enter into it willingly and eagerly. Take any simple play experience such as going down a slide for the first time. If a child is urged to try the slide or if he goes unwillingly with an older person, he may become tense and frightened.

Some children require more preparing ahead than others. One way of preparing a child for this experience would be first to look at a picture of a slide in a story book and talk about it. Then visit a slide and explain how the children climb up, slide down, and then land on their feet. Be sure to bring out the idea that it is fun.



Parents often wonder what to do about preparing a child for a trip to the doctor or for emergency treatment—especially if it's going to hurt. Johnny slips off a pile of lumber and bumps his nose. It's necessary to say to Johnny, "We'll have to go to the hospital to see the doctor so that he can fix the cut on your nose."

Johnny asks: "Will it hurt?" You can say: "Yes, it will—while the doctor's fixing it. But it's the way to make it better so it won't hurt any more." If Johnny cries at the hospital, don't be disturbed. It isn't very realistic to say to Johnny: "Don't cry, it doesn't hurt." If it hurts, be sympathetic.

This letter suggests that:

We provide opportunities for learning rather than trying to force it.

Louise H. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

A long roll of sturdy brown wrapping paper is an item which many members of the household would find useful. Tear off lengths of it for children to paint on, even though the picture may not look like much to you.

This large paper can also be used to make costumes for dramatic play.

Another kind of fun for the older pre-schooler is to have the child lie down on the paper. An adult traces around his outline. The child colors himself and cuts out the figure.

When a child is out of sorts you can sometimes change the atmosphere by being ready with a song, a story, a poem.

BUNNY SONG

Here is my bunny with ears so funny,
And here is his hole in the ground.
When a noise he hears, he pricks up his ears,
And jumps in the hole with a bound.

(Right fist forms bunny, and two fingers his ears. Left hand closed to make a "hole.")

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Dear Parents of young children

A Child's Day

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

WHAT DOES YOUR child do all day long? Is it just a matter of keeping him out of your way? Or can his day be planned so that it will have real meaning for him?

Most of a child's day is spent in play. Through it he learns many things. Ideally, the play of little children should contribute to physical, emotional, and social development. Toys can be selected to meet these different needs.

Occasionally I hear it said, "My child has every kind of toy imaginable and yet all he seems to do is sit and watch television." If this happens it might be well to see what changes could be made in the use of his toys and his time.

Let's take a trip around the clock and suggest activities to carry on at different times during the day that will best meet the needs of a pre-school child. Of course you can never follow a schedule exactly but out of a general plan you perhaps will find helpful ideas.

Wakes Up—Breakfast

Suppose that Tommy wakes up at 7:00 o'clock and by 8:00 o'clock is washed, dressed, and has had his breakfast. He soon shows an interest in feeding and dressing himself. Make it easy for him to help himself by:

- Placing a sturdy stool or steps in the bathroom for him to climb on.
- Providing a low rod for his towel and wash cloth.
- Selecting clothes that are easy for him to manage.
- Using dishes that little fingers can handle at mealtime.
- Helping him only when he seems to need it.

Now that he is dressed and fed, what can he do?

Plays—Indoors

While clearing up the breakfast dishes and getting organized for the day, let Tommy help. It may not be real help but let him feel that he is helping. He likes to be near you and do what you are doing. Think of jobs at this age as imaginative play. Through helping, Tommy learns what work is like and what adults are like as they work.

Jobs for Pre-School Children

Let him wipe up the breakfast table or his own high chair. Give him a bowl with a small amount of water and a sponge.

Empty waste basket or ash trays.

Sweep the back entrance with a small broom.

Dust parts of furniture that he can safely reach and which would not be easily damaged.

Pick up newspapers and magazines and put them where they belong.

Grease pans for baking.

Bring in newspapers.

Run errands around the house.

Plays—Outdoors

Enjoying play out-of-doors will depend on what he plays with and how secure Tommy feels out-of-doors and away from you. Playing in a large sand box just outside the kitchen door, the child can hear his mother moving around and feel more comfortable. What you plan will probably depend on the weather. This subject is a good place to start: talk with Tommy about what kind of a day this is going to be. If a cold rainy day, plan so that he can ride his tricycle in the garage.

Turning somersaults over a barrel is fun and it is also fun to climb in it and roll it around. Such activities help him to use his arms and legs. He needs a chance also to run, jump, climb, yell if he pleases, and let off steam.

Of course, Tommy cannot be given complete freedom out-of-doors until he has learned to stay off the street.

Mid-Morning Snack

A mid-morning snack helps children relax if they have become too tired or excited. Mother, sit down and relax with him; you'll never miss that five minutes. If a child can count on a mid-morning snack he is less likely to reach for the cracker box for lack of anything else to do. He may also make less demands on you if he has the firm feeling that you have given him some of your time. If you have more time, read him a short story. This might be a time for a children's T.V. program. This quiet relaxed period is apt to make for a more rested and satisfied child.



REPRODUCTION
DO NOT REMOVE



Plays—On His Own

Encourage Tommy to play by himself some of the time. This will help him to be imaginative in his play, to explore, and to try things. Change his toys from day to day; they will be more likely to interest him.

A toy is more interesting to a child if he can do something with it. This is a good test to apply when purchasing a toy. A wooden train with cars that lock together gives him more things to do than a complicated mechanical toy that father must operate for him.

Little children need supervision in their play but not interference or constant direction. Occasionally you may want to suggest—

"It's fun to pull the train."

"It is time to put your dolly to bed."

"Would you like to carry the blocks in the train?"

But remember it is not his ability to make something or to make it well that is important at this age. More important is the fact that he does it himself and has fun and satisfaction in it.

Rest Is Important

Little children need a mid-day rest whether they sleep or not. But if they do not sleep, we can not expect them to stay quiet very long with nothing to do. This might be a time to listen to records or to look at books in bed. Tommy needs an afternoon rest. You and Tommy may also need rest from each other.

Mid-Afternoon Snack

Vary this from the morning snack. A drink of water or juice may satisfy the child who does not seem to need food between meals.

Play With Others

The latter part of the afternoon is a good time for Tommy to:

- Play with other children in his own backyard.

- Visit the children next door or go with you to visit a neighbor.
- Go with you to the grocery store.
- Go to the park with you and just look around.
- Watch the men working in the street.

This is a time for being with other people and seeing different things.

Family Time

Just before the evening meal brothers and sisters are usually together. Remember they are apt to quarrel and



interfere with each other in learning to play together. Again, supervision—not interference—is needed.

This is a time also when Dad can help. One father tells me that he saves the evening paper until after the children are in bed—to make sure that he gives some attention to each child. Parents need not give them complete attention; children may carry on activities by themselves, near you, or with you, but they need to feel that this is family time.

If you plan a fairly active play period in the evening, be sure to follow it with a little quieting period before putting the children to bed.

Lucky is the child with memories of a full happy day; with things to talk about; with tomorrow's fun to look forward to.

This letter suggests that:

Since little children tire quickly of any one kind of play, allow for frequent changes during a day.

Lena M. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

What do you say about Santa Claus in your home? Many parents are teaching that Santa Claus is a pretend person much the same as Peter Rabbit is a pretend rabbit. Pretending that Santa Claus brings many surprises adds to the Christmas spirit and means that children can pretend also. This way there can be no disappointments and no loss of faith in Christmas.

Teaching children that Santa Claus is a magician who can do almost anything may be damaging to the child. Likewise it is unfair to tell the child that Santa Claus may not visit him if he misbehaves.

Try to see that your children have the kind of Santa Claus that will be fun to remember.

Are you planning ahead for more time in-doors for children? Be sure they have a place to run off some of their excess energy. Clear space in the basement or garage, where they can run, jump, hop, or ride a tricycle. This will be good for them and it will spare you on the days when it is unpleasant to be out of doors.

Dear Parents of young children



Setting The Stage For Discipline

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

FREQUENTLY WE HEAR that modern authorities are saying it is all right for children to do almost anything, even to swinging on the chandeliers. Now I do not know of any reliable authority on the discipline of children who is recommending such practices. But there are many views as to what discipline really is. In too many cases, it seems to me, discipline is thought of as an "either-or" proposition; either children "rule the roost" or they "mind" at the "drop of the hat."

What Is Discipline?

To me it means teaching the child that there are certain rules in life that people live by and expecting that the child will eventually adopt these rules of his own accord. This is working towards self-discipline, a goal that I believe should be kept in mind in the daily handling of little children.

Most parents are interested in better methods of disciplining children. There is always the question of whether now is the time to overlook or now is the time to do something. But over and above this is the important consideration of how you feel about what you do.

If you approach a behavior situation feeling cross, angry, and upset, your child will probably react in the same way. We can be firm without being angry. This will produce a quite different effect on the child.

It seems to me, then, in disciplining little children much depends on how we as parents approach the problem. We might think of this as setting the stage for discipline. How can we set the stage? What are some things to keep in mind?

Suggest in a Positive Way

"Bounce the ball on the floor" is the positive way. It tells a child what to do. "Don't hit the window" is the negative way. It only tells him what not to do.

"Carry the glass of milk slowly" is better than, "Don't spill the milk."

When little children have to be stopped in what they are doing, it is altogether too easy to let the words "Stop," and "Don't" slip out. For this reason it takes effort to think of words that can be used in place of the negative. Why not write down the positive statements you use in a day? If you find you are using many negative ones see how you might re-state them.

Using positive statements stirs up less resistance in little children. It also creates a better feeling inside the parent. If we are concentrating more on what the child should be doing we will probably become more understanding. We will also be less annoyed if we do not dwell on the "Don'ts."

Save the words "Don't" and "Stop" for those emergencies when it is necessary to put a quick stop to what

the child is doing. It seems quite useless to try to use "nice positive" statements if the child is in danger or if the house is about to become a shambles.

Let Your Tone of Voice Do Part of the Job

Where is the parent who has not at some time shouted at children? We seem to think that the louder we talk the more certain we are that they will do as they are told. This is not to say that parents do not have plenty of cause for shouting at times, and in so doing it may even be some release to the parent. But as a regular technique in disciplining children it is not effective.

Check yourself as to the tone of voice that your children are most apt to listen to. Is it when you speak loud and fast, or is it when you slow down and speak in a quiet, pleasant voice? A pleasing tone of voice is well worth working on for the sake of those around you. Continually speaking in a loud tone of voice will probably mean that your child will have to raise his voice to match yours.

It is better not to shout at little children from one corner of the house to another. Rather, move nearer and speak directly to them—you will be more apt to gain their attention.

Also, speaking quietly not only calms the child but keeps your own feelings in a more manageable state.

Choose Words That Will Build Confidence

How do you stop a child who is misbehaving? Isn't it necessary to show him that you disapprove? Yes,



but there is more than one way to convey this idea. You may feel like saying, "You naughty girl!" or "You bad, bad boy." Such words tend to belittle a child. They may cause him to have guilt feelings or to lose confidence in himself. It is better to show



your disapproval of what the child is doing rather than of the child himself. To say, "Jimmy, keep your food on your plate," helps Jimmy more than "You naughty child—to make mother all that work."

Such words as "Mother won't love you," threaten the child with the loss of your love and may be just more than he can bear. Contrary to what it may seem at times, children prefer to feel that they are doing what parents expect of them and they certainly behave better when they feel they have your love and approval.

If we can use words that will seem to say to the child—I don't like what you did but I still like you, and this is the way you can do better the next time—we will be on the right track.

Keep Your Suggestions And Directions at a Minimum

In a previous letter, we mentioned the tendency of little children to talk a lot. We said too that little children need to be talked to but we need not fall into the habit of responding to everything they say. We can talk so much of the time that they become accustomed to our talking and tend to ignore it. In such a case parents may say—"they hear us only when they want to hear us." But if we expect them to listen to a steady hum of conversation we are expecting too much. Furthermore, little children in their play tend to concentrate so completely on what they are doing that they actually may not be paying any attention at all to what we are saying.

If we respond to everything that little children say they may come to demand too much of parents. Children can learn gradually that there are times when mother has to give her complete attention to meal-planning or to a caller, or she may want a few moments just to sit and think. Some

moderation in talking will help children to respect such times.

Sometimes we can make so many suggestions to children that it really prevents them from using their own ideas. Making a suggestion before a child needs help deprives him of the chance to work out his own problem and may really upset his play. He may need help but at the right time and in the right amount.

Occasionally we may have to back up our words with action. Telling Jimmy that it is time to wash his hands may bring no response. In this case it might be helpful to take Jimmy's hand and lead him to the bathroom.

Re-Direct Undesirable Behavior

Two-year-old Timmy, who is mauling the kitten, objects violently when the kitten is taken from him. Substituting a toy kitten may satisfy Timmy's desire to handle and play with the kitten.

Timmy and Linda are beginning to throw toys in the living room. Do they

need to be punished? Perhaps what they need most at the moment is to don their wraps and play vigorously out-of-doors.

Discipline problems can sometimes be avoided if a desirable activity is substituted for the undesirable. What you choose to substitute must meet the needs of the child at the moment. Substituting a story book for a child who is tired of sitting will not help; neither will it help to suggest running out-of-doors for a child who is already physically tired.

This letter suggests that:

Important in the discipline of little children is setting the stage so that many discipline problems will not arise.

Louise H. Rackus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Uses for mesh bags that come filled with oranges, apples, and potatoes:

• Use them to store blocks, to separate different kinds of toys, to keep small pieces from becoming lost.

• Make a punching bag by letting the child tear and wad pieces of newspaper into balls about the size of an orange. Stuff the balls in the bag, draw the string, and knot it. The child can throw it, kick it, jump on it, or sit on it.

Are you "scrap-conscious"? If you keep a basket of odds and ends such as, buttons, pieces of string, colored yarns, colored foil, beads, cloth, ribbon, lace, leather, felt, etc., children enjoy pasting these bits on colored mounting paper, making their own arrangements.

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Dear Parents of young children

Setting Limits in Discipline

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DO YOU LET your two-year-old decide when it is safe to cross the street? Or do you allow your four-year-old to say when he should go to the doctor?

Why Set Limits?

Parents don't hesitate to set limits which have to do with the health or safety of little children. They are often uncertain about limits in other situations. This is partly because we have been shifting from a strict to a more permissive type of discipline and back again. Just how far back we should go is a big question.

The child who is given free rein or is allowed to "express" himself is still the subject of many jokes. Even more confusing is the fact that research has failed to demonstrate that any one method is the final answer in developing a sound personality.

Orlansky's study suggests that the total environment in which a child is reared must be taken into account. This would seem to place great emphasis upon the parent-child relationship and the feelings of parents about methods which they use.

Setting limits with little children can often upset the most enjoyable parent-child relationship. We need then to be clear about the value of setting limits and to use our best judgment in the limits which we impose. Having made a thoughtful selection we should not feel apologetic about what we have done.

Recently I enjoyed eating at a restaurant with two of the little children in our family. Janie and Teddy started out rather quietly, as children often do, somewhat awed by the unfamiliar surroundings. This changed

rather suddenly as they began to explore the various items on the table. The individually wrapped packages of sugar in the sugar bowl took their eye. With much glee they proceeded to remove the packages as well as to examine the contents.

The next object of their attention was the small table lamp which Janie turned off and on, tilting it at a dangerous angle.

The Object is to Learn

Here obviously is a situation where some limits must be imposed if Janie and Teddy are to learn something about taking care of property as well as the rights of others. To keep them from taking all of the sugar, one might say, "We may have some of the sugar and some must be left for other people." You might even give each child a package of sugar to look at or take home.

In regard to the lamp one might say, "The lamp belongs to the man who lives here and helps to make the table look nice." Likewise showing the children how the lamp works and how dark it is without the light may take care of the lamp situation. Some children could accept such limits simply by being told. For some others it might be necessary to remove the light.



Setting limits as in this situation has a bearing on other relationships. If the children are kept within certain bounds, the waitress will probably feel more kindly toward them. As a result the children will be encouraged to be more friendly, and eating out will become an enjoyable learning experience. Furthermore, it is unfair to the children to be put in a position where they will be unwelcome simply because of the extra work or destruction which they may cause.

In general, consistency in rules and limits is comfortable and dependable to the child. Since he lacks experience in judging consequences of his behavior, he needs to be protected from his inevitable short-comings.

Eating out with little children may be a time for flexibility rather than consistency in limits. Perhaps at home the sugar bowl is a "no touch" item; eating out it may require some looking at and explaining.

They Need Protection

Children also need to be protected from their own violent feelings and from expressing them in destructive ways. The mother of four-year-old Jill has been unable to take time away from the new baby to meet Jill's constant demands for a story. After several refusals, Jill shakes the baby's bed, rushes into the living room and sends the doll-cart crashing into the coffee table.

Holding Jill quietly and firmly until her temper tantrum has subsided will give Jill the feeling that she is not deserted when she is most in need of support. Showing Jill that you understand her feelings will keep her

from feeling guilty about what she has done.

After Jill has quieted down, it will be necessary to remind her of limits as far as the baby and the furniture are concerned. Children actually feel more secure if they can be sure of firm, consistent handling. This makes it easier for them to develop confidence in themselves.

Stages of Development

Limits should take into account the stage of development of the particular child. Sometimes five-year-olds can be trusted to cross a street alone. This would not be true of a two-year-old. Or a three-year-old could be allowed to play three houses away, while a two-year-old should be confined to his own back yard. The two-year-old finds it hard not to touch the toys in the store, while the five-year-old can more easily accept this idea.

Number of Limits

The number of limits which you set will depend upon you as a person, as well as upon your housekeeping standards. Mary's mother allows her to carry the freshly made gelatin salad to the refrigerator. In other homes this would not be allowed.

A good rule to keep in mind is to set only necessary limits. These would include limits to:

- Protect the health of a child.
- Protect the safety of a child.
- Protect property rights and the rights of others.
- Protect and support the child against his own strong feelings.

Imposing too many restrictions means constant interference. There are necessarily many restrictions in today's homes and in its surroundings which interfere with the child's need for activity and learning. If we add another set of restrictions the child may feel completely boxed in. He may become less spontaneous and creative than we would like him to be. Imposing too many restrictions too early may cause resentment. The child may seemingly just be waiting for the day when he will be out from under rules rather than accepting rules as a part of self-discipline.

How to Set Limits

Once you have decided on reasonable limits, how can they be carried out? Let's take a simple situation in which it is necessary to impose a limit, such as, calling for your child after he has been playing at the neighbors. Let's look at different ways that this limit might be imposed.

(1) David is busy playing when his father enters the room and says, "Are you coming?" "No," says David, "I don't want to go home." "Well, that's just too bad, you're going anyway," as he hoists him up on his shoulder. David does not resist but a sullen look appears on his face.

(2) Mary also greets her mother with the words, "I don't want to go home." Mary's mother smiles, says that she is glad that Mary has been having so much fun but now they have to go and pick up Daddy. Perhaps next week Ronny can come over to their house. Mary waves a friendly good-bye to the neighbor.

(3) Kathy backs away and hides when she sees her mother approaching. She changes her mind but fearfully so, when her mother says, "Hurry up or I'll have to go and leave you."

(4) Dennis sets up a howl when his father enters, which does not let up when his father says, "Shame on you for acting like a baby."

(5) Ricky runs to meet his father, eagerly showing him the dump truck that he has been filling with milk bottle caps. The happy relationship with his father makes it easy for Ricky to bring an end to his play.

Which of the above methods of setting limits do you think would be most effective in disciplining a child? Do you sometimes use any of these methods? Is it likely that you use some on one day and some on another? More thought as to the methods which we are using most of the time will probably improve relations between you and your child.

Suggestion:

For a few days write down the limits which you impose on your child. After you look them over, do they appear to be reasonable limits? Did you use too many, too few? In how many instances did your child willingly accept the limitation?

Leueal N. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life



When your child is required to wait for a time (as in a doctor's office), finger plays are often appealing:

Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill
(hands closed, thumbs up)

One named Jack, one named Jill
(wiggle one thumb, then wiggle the other thumb)

Fly away Jack, fly away Jill
(put hand behind back, then other hand behind back)

Come back Jack, come back Jill.
(return hands one at a time with thumb up)

How long since your children have dressed up in grown-up clothes? Girls love the fancy clothes and knickknacks from Mother's closet. Boys may prefer to be Indians and cowboys; both will love to dress up like characters in their story books.

A Parents Guide to Children's Reading is a publication of Pocket Books, Inc. It is designed to encourage more children to read more widely. Containing reading suggestions for children under thirteen, pages 3-36 are devoted to pre-school children.

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Dear Parents of young children

The "Why" Of Behavior In Discipline

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"WHAT SHALL I DO when my child won't mind?" What do you do?

Probably you do one of several things. You may lose your temper and act quickly, you may feel that you should do something but you don't quite know what, you may not even notice the behavior or you may notice and decide to ignore it.

Whatever you do you hope that you are acting in the best interests of the child and giving him the best kind of help. In the long run we want a child to learn from any experience so that his behavior will continue to improve.

One of the ways to accomplish this is to pause before you act, to look before you leap. If we could just stop and think, "Why did he do this?" rather than, "What must I do about it?" we would be more apt to be on the right track.

We need to sharpen our judgment about the behavior of children. We need to study children as we study other fascinating subjects. When Susan repeatedly interrupts as her mother is reading a story to her, why does she do this? Is Susan disrespectful and unappreciative? Or is Susan tired from sitting too long? Are there too many distractions in the room? Or is the story beyond her age interest? Whatever you decide as to why she is interrupting will determine what you do about it.

How to Avoid Some Errors

We can be mistaken about what causes behavior and as a result mistaken as to what to do about it. In looking for possible causes of behavior of little children (and we may not always find the cause) there are certain kinds of errors that one may fall into.

To avoid common errors in judging behavior—

Consider More Than One Cause

Sometimes we may settle on one cause when there may be several. It may happen like this—

Out in the back yard Alec is seen to push Tommy off the tricycle. Tommy's mother rushes to rescue him before he is hurt.

On the basis of what was seen the mother may conclude that Alec is selfish. If this be true, the mother might decide to put Alec through a course of treatment to cure his selfishness.

Actually, in this case before the mother did anything she discovered that the two boys were acting out a play they had seen on television in which the sheriff pulled the "bad man" off the horse. Throwing Tommy off the tricycle was part of a pre-arranged plan with the tricycle substituting for the horse.

With this discovery it was the mother's judgment to do nothing but watch for further signs that might mean their play was becoming a little too realistic.

Studying this situation further we might suppose that Alec could have

pushed Tommy off the bike for any one of a number of reasons, as . . .

—Tommy may have promised Alec a turn and Alec became impatient.

—Alec may have longed for a bike like this and being deprived of it was hard to bear.

—Alec may have had a series of frustrating events preceding this situation and just plain "took it out on Tommy."

—Alec may have been coming down with a cold.

In each case one's judgment as to what to do about it will vary. All the factors which were possibly a part of the behavior should be taken into consideration.

Rely on Sound Authority

We tend to accept heresy or a chance remark of a questionable authority. A single statement heard or read is often singled out and given a meaning which was not originally intended. One of these chance remarks may start as, "I hear it is sometimes all right to spank children." This remark may have been made about a particular child in a particular situation. This may appear as a bright spot on the horizon to parents already struggling with discipline. Repeated several times this chance remark may become:

"All children need spanking."

"Spanking should be a regular part of discipline."

"Children can not grow up satisfactorily without being spanked."

"Spanking children will mean rearing a generation that is better behaved."





Joan's parents are concerned because she does not hold her fork straight at the table. It wobbles around and she holds it in a most awkward manner. This bothers the parents because Joan's older sister at the same age was able to manage her fork skillfully.



Pursuing the question of why Joan is having difficulty should cause one to look into the facts as to when most children are able to manage a fork. It is known for example that large muscles develop before small muscles, that holding a fork, getting the food on it, and raising the fork to the mouth, demand coordination of muscles. Skill comes about with practice and is different for children at different ages.

What Joan's sister did at the same age will have little or no relationship. It may take Joan longer to learn this skill but it will not necessarily mean that she is slower or less able than her sister.

Sometimes we judge behavior on the basis of what we did as a child. We may say, "Oh, she is behaving just like I did, or like her aunt, or her grandfather." In reality the factor which caused you to act in a certain way may be quite different than the set of factors in the environment in which your child is living today.

Stay Calm, Appraise Fairly

In looking for causes of behavior it is well not to magnify causes.

One of the ways of understanding and interpreting children's behavior today is through studying children's drawings or paintings. While this method is very helpful, in some cases too hasty conclusions may be drawn. For example, if a child uses dark bold

colors one might be tempted to assume that his life is stormy and unhappy. Other reasons for drawing this way might be that the child simply likes dark colors, that the dark colored crayons were handy, or that he saw another child making this kind of drawing.

In other words, we should not become alarmed over any one instance of behavior. We should not think that every act has some hidden meaning.

In judging behavior it is also well to be aware of exaggerated forms of behavior that occur too frequently and continue over a long period of time. In other words, if we cannot note improvement in such behavior it might be well to consult a professional person who is trained to help you.

This letter suggests that:

Improving our judgment about the behavior of children will help us to deal more wisely with it.

Louise K. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Statements like these may be either untrue or unproved. There are many reliable sources of information today based on longtime research with children. This eliminates much of the guessing about children at least in certain areas. It is both unnecessary and unwise to depend on hearsay in the management of children. Making use of reliable sources and studying about children is more dependable.

Look at Total Behavior

We must avoid labeling a child on the basis of a single act. For example,

—Linda who is four years old insists that strangers came in the house and ate up the cookies. The crumbs on Linda's face give her away. Linda's mother is afraid that since she told a lie she can not be trusted.

—Sammy threw mud on the window at the next door neighbors. The Browns say that Sammy is a mean child and will probably always be so.

—Cynthia, age 2½, recites nursery rhymes fluently. Her parents feel that she is an extremely talented child.

Understanding Your Young Child. Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Home Office, New York.

Your Child from One to Six. Federal Security Agency, Children's Bureau Publication No. 30—Revised 1942.

A child is neither untrustworthy, destructive, or brilliant on the basis of a single act. Inquiring into the why in each of these cases one might find that Linda is working her 4-year-old imagination overtime, that Sammy is adding his bit to the neighborhood feud, or that Cynthia's mother has spent lots of time teaching her to recite nursery rhymes.

Labeling a child as completely mean or aggressive or shy is to give too little attention to why he acted that way in each case. It would also fail to take into account how such characteristics might change as a child grows and develops.

Study the Immediate Situation

We may be tempted to draw conclusions from a previous experience.

Fortunate indeed is the child who lives somewhere out in the country away from all the noise of the city, a natural growing up with the out-of-door. Can you plan a safe journey for your child out into the fields, so that he can listen and look at trees, at the flowers and grasses, at the clouds as they move across the sky?

Remember some of the things that used to be fun?

- Make a leaf garland by placing the tip of one leaf on the base of another, pinning them together with a small bit of twig or pine needle. What a gorgeous headdress for a fairy princess!

- Garlands can also be made out of sweet clover by looping each stem around and tying it to the blossom end of another clover.

- Make a dandelion chain by sticking one end of the hollow stem of a dandelion inside the other to make the links of a chain. Caution—remember dandelions stain.

- Children will love to carry home dried pods or flowers, cocoons or a spear of wheat—"junk" or "cherished possessions"?

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Dear Parents of young children

A Young Child Looks At Himself

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"WHAT SORT OF A FELLOW am I anyway?" Is a three-year-old likely to ask himself this question? "Certainly not," you will say. But a child is constantly building a picture of himself as a person, which is likely to affect his attitudes about people and about life in general.

Some children frequently shy away from new situations while others go out to meet life and seem entirely unafraid. To some extent we can say, "Little children are like this." But this is not the whole story.

Where does the social world of a little child begin? It begins with the picture he has of himself. Experiences with people and things help to influence this picture. Certain kinds of experiences help a child create a satisfying picture of himself.

Trusts Himself

If Jimmy can learn to trust himself he will more easily come to trust others and to gain confidence in new situations. One way to do this is to be sure that he has his share of love and that he has a very special place in his family. So much has been said today about the need of little children to be loved that we may begin to think of love as something to be taken regularly like a dose of medicine. The way love is bestowed is not nearly so important as the feeling which the child gains in the process. Does Jimmy know he is loved? We can say to Jimmy who may be the third boy in the family "I'm so glad you are my little boy." To Mary, we may say, "How nice that your hair is straight. It's so easy to comb!"

If a child feels that he is loved for what he is and just the way he is, he

will come to feel that he is a person of worth because his parents think so. He begins to develop trust in himself as a person in his own right.

This, of course, is one reason why it is important to avoid discussing him with others when he is present. Even though we use sign language or big words that we think he will not understand, he will probably know that he is being talked about. This may raise some doubts in his mind about himself.

We may give Jimmy some anxious moments about his future with the remark, "If you don't clean up your plate, you'll never be a football player." This may also make him feel that even his best efforts do not please his parents. This is not to say that one such incident will discourage a child, but in the long run we want a child to gain the feeling that "I am doing all right; they like me the way I am."

Tests His Powers

As soon as little children begin to walk and get about they are continually testing their powers with things and with people. Everything is new and is something to be tried out, not just looked at.

Jackie, at two, discovers the light switch and is intent on turning it on and off. Little wonder that this fascinates her. When she touches the switch, it moves; it may even make a noise and at the same time the room lights up. Jackie is testing out her powers with the light switch, and as her mother enters the picture she is also testing out her powers with people.

It is one thing for Jackie to be able to share this wonderful discovery with her mother at the age of two. It is quite another thing to let her flip the light switch up and down and use it as a play thing as she grows older. Eventually Jackie must learn to leave the light switch alone. She may learn

this easily or it may take some time. If it requires punishment, at least we can confine our efforts to the light switch. We do not have to add that, "Jackie is a bad girl who will never learn to leave things alone." This last can be thought of as a "double dose" for children and is not likely to help them gain confidence in themselves.



Sometimes children need a little help to succeed in what they are trying to do. Recently I watched little Tommy struggling to free his wagon which had become tangled around the leg of a chair. It was plain that Tommy needed help, for his patience would soon be exhausted. However, it is not always necessary to step in and help children to protect them from small failures. Sometimes helping and sometimes withholding help will both tend to build confidence and at the same time give a child the feeling that, "It is all right to try."

Seeks Support

A child's picture of himself will be greatly enhanced through the appreciation, comfort, and support he receives in times of need. Children may

be silently asking for support in their moments of eagerness, discomfort, disappointment or fear.



With what eagerness does Susan present a bouquet of dandelions or Billy display the angieworm he has just found! It's hard for a parent always to stop and admire, but it's also possible to take a look on the run, giving as much time to the children as we give to interruptions by adults. A child has greater respect for himself if others respond to him and respect him.

"Davy hit me on my arm," says Ricky as he comes in with tears streaming down his face. His arm hurts and he hurts in other ways, too. He is afraid to strike back and defend himself. What kind of comfort does Ricky need? If he lacks the courage to hit back, urging him to do so may destroy his self-confidence rather than add to it. Likewise shaming, scolding or teasing will not help. Teaching a child to stand up by his own rights is more a matter of helping him gain confidence in all of his relationships. Of course we do have to step in when one child hurts another. On the other hand, if we show approval when an overly aggressive child strikes back, he may get the idea that fighting is the only or the best way to settle an argument. We can strive for a balance between being too severe with the aggressive child and expecting too much self-defense from the timid child.

Needs Support

In a similar way the fears of children can be greatly reduced by the kind of support which we give them. Giving children time to warm up to strangers, exploring with them when they say, "There's a big black bear in there," explaining to them in their language just when you will return, will make them less anxious.

If we could become a little more sensitive to those times when a child needs our support, we could more often influence the picture which the child has of himself.

A nursery school teacher, who sees many children in the course of a day, emphasizes the need of little children occasionally to behave in a "grown-up" way.

She observed one little boy in whom the change in how he felt about himself was quite noticeable. Timmy's father brought him to Nursery School every morning and it was his custom to remove Timmy's coat, hat, leggings, boots, etc., before leaving him. One morning Timmy's father was late and had to leave without performing this service for him.

At first Timmy said he couldn't take his things off by himself. The teacher assured him that he could and that he might try. This was not easy for Timmy and it took about 45 minutes. But once he had accomplished it, his whole view of himself seemed to change, and he began to take a greater delight in his surroundings.

Nursery school teachers observe countless situations in which the mastering of a physical skill affects children in their social relations. Mary Jean came to school and announced that she had learned to stand on her head. She immediately wanted to demonstrate her skill to the other children. They watched wide-eyed and for the

moment at least, Mary Jean was tops in their eyes.

In another situation, Martha became very pleased with herself when, after her teachers had worked with her, she had poured juice for all the children "My mama doesn't know I can pour juice," she exclaimed with obvious satisfaction.

Children who can master a physical skill or who feel they are behaving in a "grown-up" way, at least part of the time, are more apt to view themselves in a favorable light. They will have their moments of doubt in themselves, it is true, but if we can help them to trust themselves, if we can share in their moments of eagerness and give them support in times of need, it will make their moments of uncertainty more bearable.

This letter suggests that:

The way a child views the world and the people in it will be colored by the way a child views himself.

Lemuel N. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Sometimes children enjoy most the simple toys that you can hurriedly put together out of scraps or waste materials on hand.

Collect match boxes, large or small, to make a whole roomful of doll furniture. You yourself can experiment in order to interest the children. You might begin by making a doll's bed that rocks. Cut out two pieces of cardboard that resemble a headboard and footboard. Curve the bottom of each piece and glue to each end of the open box. Place a tiny "doll" inside, cut blankets and a pillow out of colored pieces of paper.

Glue several boxes together for a chest of drawers.

Let the children figure out how to make other things such as arranging two boxes together, cutting away one end for a chair or upending one box with a circular piece for the tabletop.

What can you say when Mary proudly shows you her creation and it looks like nothing you ever saw before? You can say, "Tell me about it." In this way you may get a clue and you will help Mary to expand her ideas by giving her something to talk about.

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Dear Parents of young children

A Young Child Looks At Other Children

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"NO, YOU CAN'T have it"
 "You can't play with us"
 "I am not a baby"
 "We dumped all your blocks out"
 "I'm going home, I won't ever come back again."

Does this sound familiar? When you hear it going on in your home day after day you wonder if your child will ever become a friendly, sociable being.

It is hard to realize that these seemingly unfriendly words represent the child's first clumsy attempts to be friendly. Children are not born with social knowhow. They learn on their own level by using whatever skills they possess.

Recently I looked at a study entitled, "The Social Approaches of Little Children." The author attempted to classify the different approaches used by children in a group which she observed. She referred to them as:

Affectionate

Patting, holding hands

Friendly

Smiling, helping, offering something

Neutral

Looking at or watching

Unfriendly

Teasing, snatching, interfering with play

Hostile

Hitting, biting, kicking

The children in this study used friendly approaches almost half of the time. Next in order they used unfriendly approaches and neutral approaches some of the time. On the other hand, they used affectionate approaches and hostile approaches only a small per cent of the time.

This study suggests that little children use a variety of approaches with other children in the process of learning. As parents we tend to notice their unfriendly ones more than the friendly ones.

Children need some opportunity to be with other children in order to practice and to improve their social skills. This, of course, is one of the values of brothers and sisters growing up together in a family. The home furnishes a natural practice ground, if not at times an arena.

Brothers and Sisters

"Why do children in the same family do so much quarreling? Why can't they love each other?" you may ask. They usually do—you soon find out if another child picks on either one, or if one or the other is punished.

Brothers and sisters quarrel oftentimes because of the natural competition and rivalry that is present. They are in a very real sense competing for the time, attention and affection of their parents. Parents will save themselves endless trouble if they will give such affection freely. If a child knows that he will get his

share of affection, he will be less likely to struggle against the others and be less resentful when it is given to a brother or a sister.

Four-year-old Mary may be (unconsciously) striving for her share of affection in relation to two-year-old Tim. If Tim breaks her favorite doll, Mary may feel doubly threatened; that is, the same person who comes between her and her parents is the same person who breaks a favorite toy.

Sometimes it helps to let a child know that you know how he feels when younger sister takes his train away. If he knows that he can talk out his feelings with you without being scolded, it may help to get rid of his cross feelings at least some of the time.

It helps if each child has shelves, drawers, clothes, etc., that are his alone and that are respected by everyone in the family including mother and father. Asking permission to use others' belongings is a way of teaching respect for things.

Do you find yourself repeatedly blaming one child when something goes wrong? It goes like this, "Now I wonder what has happened, Mark has probably done it again." Remember that it takes two to make a quarrel and that even an overly aggressive child is not aggressive all the time. Studies show that children who are usually cooperative or usually aggressive may act in quite the opposite way at times.

No matter how much brothers or sisters enjoy each other they may become irritable from having been together too long. If at all possible, separate them briefly even if it means



arranging separate play activities in different rooms. Caution—Suggest this as something they will like, not as punishment.

Remember that complete agreement between brothers and sisters is no more to be desired or expected than constant quarreling. It is better to let them work out their own quarrels although there may be times when you must interfere in case one is getting hurt. Also when quarreling goes on too much of the time you may want to separate the children or suggest a substitute activity.

The Neighbor's Children

Parents are sometimes puzzled by a child who begs for the company of other children and then behaves in a silly, unsocial, or even unkind way when he gets in the group. He probably did want companionship but he is not grown up enough to know just how to use it or what to do. In this case it would be well to plan ahead with a child, suggesting what toys to play with, where they might play, what juice they might serve—in general, what to expect. At first it is better to let little children play together only for a short period of time. Also if mother keeps in sight the experience may be less frightening.

The other day I dropped into a home where three small boys were engaged in an elaborate building program with a new set of blocks on the living room floor. The oldest boy seemed to be engineering a very cooperative effort, with each child having a part in the building. This was the only play activity in sight and for the moment, at least, it was commanding their full attention.

Although it is somewhat easier for children to play out-of-doors, in either case, it is necessary for the adult to carry on quite a bit of "behind the scenes" supervision.

When a neighbor child is too bold it helps to be courteously firm and clear as to what you expect when children visit at your house. You can say, "Stevie, we like people to knock before they come in to our house," or "Over here we don't step on the new doll; we take it for a ride in the cab."

It helps also if the neighbors can occasionally get together and talk about the children's play and attempt to reach some kind of agreement as to what is expected in the neighborhood.

Children Who Seem "Different"

Sometimes children "gang up" on one child in the neighborhood. Indirect methods are better than direct interference. It might help to invite the "outcast" and one of the gang



to play at your home where you can set the stage for some friendly play.

A group of children are playing store and are heard to say, "Billy, we don't want you to play with us." An adult might say, "Billy could deliver the groceries for you on his bike!" This suggestion can easily start a whole new train of thought in which exclusion is soon forgotten.

Parents should be careful lest the personal feuds between adults in the neighborhood bear upon the play of little children. It is so easy to plant a seed of prejudice in the minds of children simply by what we do or say about the neighbors.

Group Play

Some of you would like suggestions for supervising a group of little children who might be in your charge such as an organized play group or a pre-school church group.

If you are working with several pre-school children, do not feel it necessary to involve the whole group. Let those who want to, take part. Some will be too young for any kind of group play. Just let them play

around by themselves. This does mean more adult help so that the "wanderers" can be kept from disturbing those who are in the group activity. It is well to provide one adult for every 8 or 10 children. One or two adults with many children can only "ride herd" on the group. Sometimes a young person of Junior High age can supplement the adult help. In this case it would be well to assign a specific task to the younger worker such as reading to the group. This extra hand will free the older person for overall supervision and for coping with emergencies.

While it is a richer play experience where two or more children can play together, remember it is hard for little children to take turns. To reduce snatching, it is better to have enough materials to go around or in some cases, duplicate materials. Sometimes little children bring a favorite toy from home. Again it would be better not to force a child to share; perhaps just showing the toy to the others will be as much sharing as he can manage.

Little children easily become over-stimulated when playing in a group. It would be well then to plan some activities that would be restful and less stimulating.

This letter suggests that:

If we will try to notice the number of friendly approaches which little children make, we will be less discouraged over the times when they appear clumsy or unfriendly.

Lena M. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

FAMILY ACTIVITIES WITH PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Why not a family sing at the table choosing songs that will appeal to the young? A singing game is a fine way of involving everyone.
- Parents, what are some of your skills that you can share with your children—can you draw, paint, sing, do sleight-of-hand tricks or what? In drawing or painting, do not set standards too high or encourage imitation. Rather, let your child work out his own ideas. The fun of doing it together will be sufficient.
- Some evening let both Mother and Dad read parts of the story. This will add interest and the joy of everyone taking part.
- The next day, follow up the story by using clothespins to make some of the story book people. Use scraps of yarn, cloth, or paper for the clothes and hair. Glue milk bottle caps to the feet to make the dolls stand, or mount them in modeling clay.
- On one of those evenings when you linger at the table, start the question, "Guess what happened to me today?" as a time for listening and telling.

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Dear Parents of young children



A Young Child Looks At Parents

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

FIVE-YEAR-OLD Jane, on leaving Dr. Graham's office, suddenly threw her arms around his neck and gave him a big kiss. Janie's feelings at the moment may have been somewhat mixed with relief as she began to see that he was not going to give her a shot. But it is also quite evident that she had a very kindly feeling toward him.

Not all adults are regarded with such open affection as that displayed toward the doctor. Many children warm up to adults very slowly. Some learn to accept adults gradually as they find they are pleasant and trustworthy. Others carry some suspicion and mistrust of people into their adult life.

It would be difficult to say just when your child begins to distinguish between people as "friends" or "enemies." We know, for example, that many babies around the age of 5 or 6 months show fear of strangers, even though they may have accepted them up to this time.

But we can say that the experiences which a child has—with his family, with the people next door, with the doctor in his office and with an ever widening group of persons—play some part in his social growth.

It is in the home that a child first gains ideas of what adults are like. He gains these ideas as he watches mother and father in their roles as parents, in the way they behave toward each other and toward other people.

Every child, of course, will react differently depending upon his own personality and upon his feelings about himself. We discussed the picture that a little child has of himself in Letter No. 10. You may want to

reread this letter since a child's social growth begins with the view that he has of himself.

Beyond this beginning, what are some ways a parent can help a child learn to enjoy and respect adults and be liked by them? What sort of a picture of parents does a little child need? (You may want to check yourself on these points.)

Parents As Examples

Is he exposed to a warm loving relationship between you? Children reared in an atmosphere of love and affection can more easily bestow love upon others.

Does he see you as parents who, having differences, are able to talk them over so that in the long run harmony results? This does not mean the absence of differences but rather an effort toward handling them.

Does he have before him a model of tolerance and thoughtfulness for others? Example is a powerful influence. It is so easy to forget to say, "Mary, please hand me your boots."

Looking Ahead to School

What sort of image of a teacher are you giving your children? We may be tempted to say, "If you act like that at school, your teacher will scold." Parents can help prepare children for school by picturing the teacher as a friend. In this way children can more easily bridge the gap between home and school and are more likely to look forward to going to school.

In our hurry it is likely to come out, "Hand me your boots, quick!" In the same way it is so easy to use one tone of voice when talking to the delivery man and a different one when talking to the mayor. This can convey to the child the idea that some people are better than others. Goodness knows, parents can not be perfect in this respect nor need they be. But while children are young many of the social skills and attitudes can best be taught by the example which parents set for their own children and by the image of others which they convey.

Taking Part

Social skills can also be learned by giving children a part in meeting and greeting guests who come to the home. Let them have some little part in hostessing such as passing the napkins or displaying a new toy. Avoid asking a small child to perform and become the center of the stage. To the shy child this is so devastating that he may dislike having callers. The forward child who enjoys being the main attraction may take advantage of the situation. One way of expressing disapproval with such a child was shown by one mother who said quietly to Sarah, "Please play in your room for a while; Mrs. Brown and I want to visit now. I will call you when she leaves."

For both the shy child and the "not-so-shy" it is important that his parents try to see that opportunities for social experiences are usually pleasant ones.

"Socially Acceptable"

How much effort should we spend in teaching children to say, "Thank

you," "Please," or "I've had a nice time"? It is true that most social graces are learned most naturally at home. They are learned more easily if "Please" and "Thank you" are a part of a child's daily life.

A child does not learn by himself that you must not pick up a package of gum in the store or pick the neighbor's flowers. Such social rules have to be explained. If a child does pick up something that does not belong to him, it can be returned casually and politely.



Children do need help in learning the basic social requirements of their times. Eventually they must learn courtesy, cooperation, honesty, cleanliness, etc. But learning to be "socially acceptable" takes time. So earnestly we begin too early and too earnestly to teach little children the things we want them to learn. It seems much easier for us to let children grow physically than to wait for them to grow socially. Children learn to walk when they are physically ready. It is the same with social growth; it is gradual and all of it can not be "crammed" into the pre-school years.

Other People

Do you take some time to talk about your out-of-the-home experiences so that your child gains an idea of what Dad's work is like and the people mother meets when she goes to the store?

If Dad's work takes him some distance from home, even a four-year-old may have difficulty imagining what his work is all about. It has been said that one reason why children often play fireman, policeman or deliveryman is that these are the only men's jobs that children see.

Another difficulty in our way of life today is that so many of our contacts with people are brief and passing, giving little opportunity to see how others live and work. Children are helped to glimpse more deeply the lives of others if occasionally they can know that the plumber who comes to the house has a son in the navy who lives on a boat or that the milkman has

five grandchildren that he likes to talk about.

Help your child to have friendly contacts with different kinds of people. If you number among your acquaintances those who come from cultures and backgrounds different from yours, a child grows accustomed to these differences. Later he may be able to make his own judgments about people, free of prejudice, because he has known different people and understands them better. Many families today make a point of inviting foreign visitors into their homes and tell of the rich experience that this has provided for the whole family.

Looking Ahead to School

Does your pre-school child "talk all the time"? Encourage him to talk and especially give him something to talk about. Children grow in their ability to use words as they retell some interesting experience, such as, a tour of the garden or a trip to the baseball park. Children can more easily talk with the teacher and the children at school if they have had some practice. An "interested audience" at home provides a good beginning.

It is increasingly certain that children of today will have more need to be interested in and to learn how to work with many different kinds of people. Cooperation, as some recent researchers have pointed out, is one social skill that children will have great need of in the future.¹ Pre-

1. The Changing American Parent, Daniel R. Miller and Guy E. Swanson, 1958, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

school children make only a beginning in learning to cooperate. Some signs of this can be seen in their wanting



to help, in their gradual willingness to share and later in their ability to engage in what has been termed cooperative play.

Displaying Affection

"How do you display love for a little child?"

- By telling them
- By showing them (a pat, a hug, a kiss)
- By responding to their needs
- By showing interest in what they are doing
- By helping them when they need help
- By answering their questions
- By approving their small successes
- By spending some time with them
- By doing what comes naturally

This letter has suggested that:

An atmosphere in the home that is friendly and kindly is contagious.

Louise K. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Several parents have asked for activities that two pre-school children could enjoy together. In planning such activities, two points should be kept in mind:

1. It is not easy for pre-school children to engage in cooperative play.
2. Since their interest span is short we can not expect them to stay with one activity for very long.

With this in mind we suggest the following:

- ✓ Give each child similar toys to play with at the same time, but not necessarily together.
- ✓ Two children can roll a ball to each other, paint or crayon at the same time.
- ✓ One mother states that she provides cartons and her two cherubs play store for a time using her supply of canned goods.
- ✓ This same mother says the children are delighted when she partly fills the sink with water on which they float pieces of paper, chunks of wood, etc. This activity needs supervision.

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Dear Parents of young children

A Young Child Looks At Grandparents

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

THE OTHER DAY I accepted the "very urgent" invitation of my little granddaughter to visit her kindergarten room. She informed me that it was Grandmother-Grandfather's Day. What a wonderful idea this seemed to me to single out grandparents in this very special way!

I was struck, however, with the small number of grandparents who attended in proportion to the number of children in the room. I fell to speculating why this was so and concluded that many of today's grandparents no longer live conveniently near their grandchildren. Others, no doubt, were working or were busy with volunteer work in the community. Whatever the reason, it serves to remind us that the role of grandparents not only has been changing but it has also become somewhat more obscure.

In the so-called "good old days" the family might have included one or more sets of grandparents, a maiden aunt, a stray cousin, or a helper in the home. Setting the table for eight or more people daily would no doubt dismaying the average homemaker today. Besides, it would be impossible to fit such an array of relatives into a modern breakfast nook.

While recognizing some of the difficulties when several generations live together, there is much about such associations that we can envy and admire. A household of mixed membership does have much to offer a family. Grandparents, relatives, and others can add variety to the family scene and greatly enrich the daily experiences of little children.

All of this adds up to an important question—how do grandparents appear to little children? What is the

place of grandparents in today's family life?

Grandparents can enlarge the concept that a little child has of "My Family"

Despite recent increases in numbers of children born in families, the size of the American family is still small. Ordinarily, we think of family as mother, father, and the children. This places tremendous responsibility upon the parents to be all and do all that is necessary for the growth and development of children. While it is of first importance that little children be able to think of mother and father as their strongest support, to be able to widen the family group to include "my grandmother" or "my grandfather" builds a stronger picture of "my family" in the eyes of the child. It also adds to the number of persons the child feels he can trust. Thus it builds confidence and security in the child because of more family members that he feels belong to him.

Grandparents bestow love upon grandchildren

It comes as somewhat of a comfort to grandparents to hear that children need love and that they can not have too much of the right kind of love. This has always been and still is one of the important functions of grandparents—simply to enjoy their grandchildren, to listen to them, to be interested in them, and to love them as they are. Grandparents and grandchildren often have a greater amount of leisure time which can be shared. Thus grandparents may have more time to give to children all of the love and comfort they need or that parents may be unable to supply.

Grandparents function in a supporting role

While it is a privilege of grandparents to love their grandchildren, a problem can arise if they abuse this privilege. If they try to win grandchildren away from the parents or to usurp the rightful place of the parents in the affections of the child this can be very confusing to children.

This points to an unwritten law which can be very useful to grandparents—it is this: in the matter of affection, discipline, bestowing of gifts, etc., it is well for grandparents to act in a supporting role to the parents. This is not to belittle grandparents; they occupy a very special place but always in relation to the plan which the parents are trying to carry out with their children.

Grandparents who live their own lives and broaden their own interests are less likely to use their grandchildren to satisfy their own unfulfilled needs.

Grandparents, of course, can be helpful in a practical way

"What I need is a grandmother!" is the wail of many a young parent. The amount of time and energy which grandparents can devote to baby-sitting will vary with each individual. I notice some reluctance on the part of grandparents to admit that small children tire them. In a group of grandparents, however, this fact was admitted freely, particularly if the children were left for a very long period of time. It appears that the noise and confusion of living with little children is something that one must get used to all over again, but this is not always possible in a few hours or days.

This means that grandparents should feel free to state what they are willing to undertake in regard to sitting with the children without fear that it will be interpreted as not wanting to spend time with their grandchildren.

One word of caution—much as grandparents may want to be with their grandchildren and be able to enjoy them, they also enjoy the company of their own children. In the rush of dropping the grandchildren off and picking them up, it would help if occasionally the younger parents could take time to visit on an adult level with their older parents.

Grandparents can form a link between the past and present

So much has been said about the tiresome reminiscences and comparisons that older people often indulge in that many of today's grandparents hesitate to talk about the past. By so doing, they often deprive children of a very rich source of information and delight. "Please tell me about the olden days when you were young," is a frequent wish of children. Stories of grandmother's youth or of stories she may have heard can be a source of real pleasure to children. It can give genuine and personal meaning to the past that they are likely to gain in no other way.

Association with grandparents can give children a picture of what older people are like and what older age is like

It behooves us then as grandparents to be the kind that little children can admire and respect. Since one can no longer demand respect as an older person, it must be deserved. This means giving more thought to the qualities in older age that others can admire.

Younger parents, too, help to create this picture of older age. If they are out of sorts with their parents, if they allow older parents to upset them and become critical of them, this disturbs the grandparent relationship. Children need to carry with them a picture of older people free of fault-finding, dread, and misunderstanding. In this way they can think of older age as a period that can be rich and fruitful which has much to contribute to living.

So much depends upon the kind of grandparents one is talking about. We know there are grandparents who are progressive, active, and up-to-date. These grandparents are open-minded as to some of the newer methods of rearing children. They are ready with advice when asked, but do not impose it. There are other grandparents who remain rigid and are unwilling to con-

sider any methods of rearing children except the old ones. Failing health may also prevent some from being the kind of grandparents they would like to be.

It depends also on where grandparents live. If they live with the younger parents, definite rules worked out ahead of time are more apt to make living together run more smoothly. If they live near their children so that the grandchildren spend more time with them or if they care for the grandchildren while the parents work, the grandparents may have to use more of their own methods in dealing with the children. In any case it would seem reasonable for both sets of parents to come to some kind of understanding so that the children would experience a more or less united front. Differences are bound to exist and some such exposure can even be healthy for children.

If the grandparents live some distance away, keeping in touch with the grandchildren presents a special problem. In order to stay in the picture as a grandparent it is necessary to take advantage of mechanical contacts, at least between visits. Being very punctual in remembering birthdays and special days, sending a special greeting occasionally will do much to keep

the grandparent relationship vital. One grandmother states that she always adds a postscript especially for



her granddaughter when sending a letter to the mother.

This letter has suggested that:

Today's grandparents have much to contribute to the Social World of Little Children.

Leueah K. Backus

Extension Specialist in Family Life

FUN OUTDOORS

During the summer months when children spend more time out of doors, their play should contribute to every phase of their development; and above all, it should be fun.

In addition to some of the permanent equipment which you may provide such as sand box, swing sets, or wheel toys, little children will enjoy:

A PLACE TO DIG—A corner of the garden that they can call their own will give them a place where they can dig in the soil, fill a dump-truck or perhaps plant a seed or two. "To make the garden grow in a hurry," older pre-schoolers might cut out small colored paper circles and insert small branches through their centers. Mount the sticks in the soil to hold the flowers upright.

WATER PLAY—Children love to slosh around in the water either in a container that you buy or a tub that you bring out from the house. Provide several containers to use for pouring. Cut amusing shapes from bright colored sponges. Let these unusual looking fish float in the water.

A PARADE OR A TRAIN—Dolls or stuffed toys can be pushed in cabs, make-believe characters can be secured on slabs of wood and tied behind tricycles or wagons. A suggestion or two from you will help them to add to the procession.

Outdoor play can be noisy and active, it can also be quiet and imaginative.

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Dear Parents of young children



Questions Which Parents Ask

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

RECENTLY I WATCHED the mother of twin boys close the bedroom door with a sigh of relief after she had tucked them in for the night. These 2-year-olds had had themselves quite a day. They had strayed away several times, spilled things, upset things and generally turned the household upside down. No wonder their mother was relieved to come to the end of the day.

It is easy to see how this mother viewed the events of the day. Not only was she exhausted but like most mothers, she wondered if, at the time, she had handled each situation in the best possible way.

Some of you have sent in questions about certain situations which you would like to have discussed.

Let's begin with one of these:

Safety

"How can I help 17-month-old Mary to understand that she isn't to wander off and to trust her to stay within bounds?"

Let us suppose that some fine morning you decide it is time for Mary to play outdoors. You say to her, "stay in your own yard."

What meaning does "your own yard" have for Mary? Certainly it does not mean the same thing to her that it does to you. She will not understand about boundary lines nor will she appreciate all of the reasons why you want her to stay there. You, of course, know the tragic consequences of a child rushing out into a busy street. But Mary does not understand this at all.

You may be able to think up some device to mark off her own yard so that she begins to understand, but what will happen if her eyes light on

a bright flower next door or a tiny kitten appears around the corner of the steps? Will she be able to resist such attractions and remember her boundary lines? Likely not, if she is 17 months old.

It is difficult to set an age when a child can be trusted to stay outside and not wander off. Some children at three can be trusted to cross a street alone, depending on the traffic. Other children at four or five may cause us many anxious moments at almost any crossing.

This does not mean that we sit idly by until a child "catches on" or "learns the hard way" by being frightened or hurt.

It does mean that until a child has learned to take responsibility for his own safety we must take this responsibility for him.

In the meantime we can begin gradually to teach safety rules knowing that this will take time and that skill comes with practice. We can begin to say to Mary, as we hold on to her hand, "wait a minute, we must look for cars, let's look this way and that way. Wait, one is coming, now we must wait, now we can go." The next step is to encourage her to tell you when it is safe to cross. "Is one coming? Then we must wait. Now, is the way clear? Then we can go." In this way you can see how well Mary is learning her safety lesson.

Reinforce Your Teaching

There are many ways in which you can reinforce your teaching. Most important, Mother and Dad must observe traffic rules if they expect their children to do so. There are also many verses and stories which are useful at this point to support your teaching.

If we reserve a special tone of voice when a child is in physical danger, he is more apt to respond. If we talk about it too much a child may become over-anxious or just get tired of listening.

When a child is 4 or 5 and has become more dependable we may have to remind and repeat our warnings, particularly if a ball rolls out into the street. We must impress a child of any age with the fact that no matter how valuable the toy, he must look both ways before rushing out into the street.

Teaching by Punishment

What about punishment to teach a child to stay out of the street? If you have taken a child step by step through the learning process, and if he continually forgets or pays no attention to your teaching, more drastic measures will be necessary. Some parents in this case have punished a child by restricting him to his own yard or otherwise limiting his freedom. Certainly in the matter of a child's safety we cannot afford to take a chance.

In some neighborhoods, Mothers take turns supervising the children. In this way each mother is relieved of continual supervision and is free to carry on certain work or activities that would otherwise be difficult.

Perhaps it is the long view that we need to take as parents. We continually ask little children to accept a lot of rules that have no meaning for them. "Stay away from the street," "wash your hands," "keep your clothes clean," are adult standards which we are trying to impose on children. We need to work toward an understanding

of such rules as children grow older. While they are little, children are helped to accept rules from a loving parent simply because you want them to.

Handling the "No's":

"How do you handle the 'no, no,' stage in a 2-year-old? Even though I know this is a stage that children go through, when Davy continually uses these words it irritates me."

Isn't this because, in spite of our knowing, we are too apt to take these words literally? There is something about the word "no," uttered by a small child that fairly drives us into action. Even after thinking about it we may feel that this is not the way for Davy to act. Does this mean that Davy is getting to be stubborn, mean or just plain uncooperative? Likely it doesn't mean any of these. To Davy it probably means that it is an easy word to say, the sound it makes may even be fascinating to him so he uses it over and over. Or he may just be trying it out to see what effect it has on those around him. If you put on quite a show he may be inclined to say "no—no" more often. Also on some days, you may find yourself saying "no" all too frequently; in this case, Davy will only be imitating you.

If he says "no, no," and at the same time refuses to budge, you may get him over this hump by using a little humor. Pick him up and smilingly reply, "yes, yes." Few children can resist such attempts at fun. Taking hold of his hand and leading him rather than saying anything sometimes works. Diverting his attention to another activity rather than dwelling on the undesirable would be doubly effective.

As he grows to understand the meaning of words he will probably do a better job of fitting them into his vocabulary. If he continues to react negatively too much of the time it would be well to observe under what conditions he is most apt to respond this way.

In the meantime you can afford to overlook some of the "no's," and try to think more about what the words really mean to Davy.

Impatience:

"How should I deal with impatience in my child?"

This will depend upon the intensity of his feelings at the moment. As you know this may run all the way from whining to violent outbursts. It will also depend upon what caused him to be impatient.

Generally we should recognize that when something displeases a little child his reaction is immediate. He expresses his impatience or displeasure both instantly and outwardly. He does not try to hide his feelings as do adults.

Knowing that this is the way little children are, how can we handle impatience? Let's look at a few specific cases:

Situation: For the past several minutes you have been aware of Suzie's "I want a drink." With your hands in douch you keep saying, "Just a minute." This fails to satisfy Suzie as she whines and becomes quite demanding.

Cause: Suzie is impatient because, to children of this age, time passes slowly.

Suggestion: It will not help to scold Suzie, since to her, minutes seem like hours.

Neither should it be necessary for you to stop immediately what you are doing.

Give Suzie a drink as soon as you can conveniently manage it.

As Suzie gets a little older she will be able to wait a little longer and display a little more patience.

In the meantime try to close your ears to some of her impatience, particularly if the bawling will not take you too long.

Situation: Andy is trying to lace his shoe and is struggling to get the

shoelace through the eyelet. After trying very hard he screams and throws his shoe.

Cause: Andy is impatient because he is trying to learn a new skill.

Suggestion: At this point he may need a little help. You might put your hand on his and help him to guide the shoelace through the hole.

Or you might call his attention to something out of doors and give his fingers and his feelings a chance to relax.

Situation: Jeannie becomes impatient with Carol who is playing with one of her stuffed toys. She grabs the toy and pushes Carol to the floor.

Cause: In this case Jeannie's impatience stems from her lack of consideration for others.

Suggestion: Give her a little time to improve in this respect since children are not born generous and considerate.

In the meantime you might put the coveted toy away for a time.

Or you might try to provide similar toys for both children.

Or suggest another activity that might also be fun.

Displaying courtesy and kindness in handling the situation will help both girls to become more patient.

This letter suggests that:

"Through the eyes of little children" is a good beginning to handling most every day situations.

Lemuel H. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life



CRAYON PAINTING

Remove wrappers from broken pieces of crayons and use them on their sides. With a large sheet of paper this will allow children to use wide arm motions much as in finger painting.

USE THOSE WAXED MILK CARTONS

The waxed cardboard from empty milk cartons can be used to make a whole fleet of boats. First cut the cardboard into an oblong, then shape the bow end. Make a slit in the middle and insert a sail, or color each boat and print its own license number on it.

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Dear Parents of young children



Children And Values

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

IF YOU ARE like most parents, there have been times when you have said of your child, "He ought to know better." This is quite different from saying, "Why can't he do as he is told?" To say that he ought to know better means that you expect him to know better without being told.

You are certain that Johnny knows better when he steps in a puddle of water with a pair of new shoes. But how much does he know about why he should not do it? He probably knows that you get cross when he steps in the water or that you may not allow him to wear his new shoes for a time. He will have little appreciation of how water affects shoe leather, of the time it takes you to change his shoes, or the strain on the budget if you must replace the shoes.

Learning "right" from "wrong" involves the complex process of how mental growth takes place. It includes the ability of a child to pay attention, to comprehend, to remember what has happened before, to relate ideas, to make judgments, etc. To ignore any one of these areas of mental growth is to misjudge the ability of a child to "know better."

Being able to tell "right" from "wrong," however, is dependent upon something more than memory, attention and mental alertness. It means that somewhere along the line the child must acquire a set of standards, ideals or values with which he can guide his own future behavior. Values are those things that are most important to us.

How do children acquire values? How can we help children acquire the values we would like them to have? It seems to me there are at least three ways:

First of all, children learn about values in small doses every day in every way in the process of growing up.

A child does not learn all at once what is moral and ethical. He gains this understanding to the degree that he is able to absorb such learning at each stage in his development. When Billy hits Mary you will step in and make it clear to him that you disapprove of what he is doing. This may teach him that he must not hit Mary. It will take other occasions before he gains the idea that he must not hit because it hurts Mary and many more occasions before he understands kindness to children in general, that we respect other people and consequently do not want to hurt them.

The fact that children learn about values in small doses raises an important question: how much is enough for any one child at any one stage? This question has been raised both about material possessions and the number and kinds of activities in which children engage.

For example, I have noted that the age at which a child "needs" an expensive bicycle seems to have moved down to younger ages. This is not to suggest that a child should be deprived of a bicycle or that there is any one age at which it would be more beneficial. But children do learn something about values simply by the quantity of things that are provided for them.

Similarly we often crowd a child's life with experiences that seem more suited to adults than to children. I was interested and then dismayed at the account of a birthday party for a 3-year-old that was held with all the trimmings in a hotel dining room. The

dinner was served in several courses with flowers, expensive gifts and soft music. The gown of the honored 3-year-old was described in terms befitting this year's debutante.

One experience of this kind may not actually be harmful to a child, but it has the possibility of dulling the appetite for more simple forms of enjoyment. It may also cut down on the time which the child has to enjoy things that are merely "child-like."

The question of how much or what, at any age, is difficult for parents to decide. What you do will depend upon many factors but most of all it should depend upon the individual child and what the possessions (or privileges) do to him or for him at any one stage. One child may delight in a surprise gift whenever his mother goes to the store. Another child might become quite demanding or dissatisfied with his mother's choice. The quantity of toys is not as important as the way in which a child responds to the gift giving.

In spite of our best efforts to spend moderately for toys or possessions, children are bound to learn something about values just from living in a culture that has many "things" and many opportunities.

Children gain some idea of values by observing the values which their parents appear to hold.

Perhaps you wish I had said simply that parents should be an example to their children. If by example is meant putting one's self up on a pedestal, this may not look very desirable or attainable to a child. In fact, if par-

ents occasionally behave in a manner that is something short of perfection, a child may come to feel that he and his parents have something in common. To be able to see how parents handle themselves in difficult situations can be very helpful to a child. The important point is that over a period of time parents exhibit or set forth the kind of values that will give children a clear picture which can be used as a model.

Too often parents are not clear themselves as to what they believe. People in general are less certain today than they have been in the past as to what the basic moral values are. Because of this uncertainty, parents sometimes excuse themselves from clarifying their own values on the grounds that if you keep still about the fact that you are not quite sure, no one will know, particularly your children. But the truth is our values become known by what we do not say as well as by what we say. We are teaching our youngsters values with every word we speak, every action, every look, every silence.

Another excuse which appears to relieve us of the responsibility of clarifying our values is contained in the statement, "but we mustn't make moral judgments." This seems to mean that we should not try to impose our values on others. While this statement may be well intentioned, it has little practical use in the rearing of children. It conveys the idea that we should refrain from clearly showing our youngsters where we stand because it might prevent them from discovering and choosing their own values. But a child who has no model to guide him is like a child lost in the forest who is bewildered as to which way to turn.

In the ordinary everyday events of family life it is our responsibility to sort out and clarify the values we believe in and then to let our children know which ones are important to us.

Values to be truly learned must be absorbed by the child and become a part of his own standards or they can't possibly have any real meaning for him.

As parents we have been working toward the day when our children will come to behave according to their own standards without being told. Sometimes we feel that this time will never come.

What is it that makes some children want to follow the example set by their parents? What is that "something" that appears to be the all important link?

That "something" can be stated very simply. A child can more easily build up his own set of values if over

a period of time the relationship between parent and child is good.

This really means that if a child loves his parents and feels that they love him he is more apt to want to be like them. We see this developing often in very superficial ways—a little girl wearing her mother's high heels, or punishing her doll, or a little boy who says he is a Democrat or Republican because his father is, or the older boy who brags about his Dad's bowling score. These are some of the things that we see children doing which seem to say that they want to be like their parents.

Imitating the behavior of parents, however, does not necessarily mean that children are absorbing their values. Willingness to absorb parental values depends to a considerable degree on what has been referred to as "identification" with a parent. It may work something like this: if a little boy has a warm relationship with his father he has a clear and satisfying picture of how a man (his father) performs his role, he has happily and completely adopted his father's way of life as his own; he has "identified" with his father. The relationship is satisfying; therefore, he can more easily accept his father's values as his own.

Where there is little strain in the relationship the child will neither feel



that he must accept his father's values out of fear or reject completely what his father stands for. As the child grows older he will likely feel much more confident to take out of his father's values that which he will find most useful to him in his later life.

In much the same way, and perhaps more easily, little girls come to be kindly disposed toward the values which their mothers hold when the relationship is one of acceptance.

Moreover, it is helpful for boys and girls to experience the values held by each parent. In our culture such values as sympathy, willingness to compromise, interest in people, appreciation of the arts, gentleness as well as firmness would seem to be useful to both sexes.

If, due to unfortunate circumstances, this desirable kind of relationship is lacking, do not despair. There are many parent substitutes such as teachers, relatives and friends who can and do help to provide the necessary models when parental models are lacking.

There is also some reason to believe that a parent who passes on favorable comments about an absent mate is contributing something to the child's concept of a desirable parent-child relationship.

This letter has suggested that:

Children acquire the values of their parents more readily if a warm accepting relationship prevails between parent and child.

Samuel H. Backus

Extension Specialist in
Family Life

Warm parent-child relationships are more apt to prevail if

- parents take time to listen to children
- we realize that it is the little things that build relationships
- a child is greeted with a smile as he awakens
- parents try to discover from the child's behavior how he really feels
- we do not become too upset by his shortcomings
- we look for some of the things a child does right rather than dwelling on all the things he does wrong
- we set limits in a firm and yet kindly way
- we share his small successes with him
- we are ready with comfort when things go wrong
- we display kindness and good will in the family group
- we take time to enjoy children

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