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UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD

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UNDERSTANDING

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Introduction

The First Step Is Up to You

This book focuses on four of the big ideas that seem true today about youngsters. But this book is even more about adults—teachers, parents. It tries to say what these four big ideas can mean when they get under the skin of the people who work with children . . . how these ideas can make you feel . . . what they do to your point of view toward youngsters.

We certainly don't know everything about children today. Even the facts that seem so right now may turn out to be wrong sometime when we know still more. But for a long time we have been piling up what looks like truth.

Some of the truth comes from research. Scientists have been studying children the way the moon, the stars, the minerals of the earth, and the inhabitants of the sea are studied. We think we know something about what youngsters usually can do at

different ages, what seems to matter most to them, what difficulties they get into as they grow up, how people can help them with their troubles.

Some of the truth comes from classrooms and homes. Teachers have "discovered" it; parents have. Not in a test tube, not in a laboratory, not in an experiment, but in their ordinary living. Decent, thinking, sensitive people have had hunches: "It seems to me that children do better when . . ."; "One thing I've noticed about eight-year-olds . . ."; "I wonder if it would help if . . ."

And even before there was such a thing as child study, people were working at truth in human relations. Who first said: "Love thy neighbor as thyself"? When did the first person discover that "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar"? And was it a present-day psychologist who wrote: "The quality of mercy is not strained . . ."?

We certainly do not know everything about children, but we have been at it a long time in a very serious way, and some big ideas win support over and over again.

But the first question is: Are you going to pay any attention to them or not?

Black Is White and Night Is Day

Some people are stubborn about children. They seem to have a chip on their shoulder. They have set ideas of their own, and nothing will budge them. They act as if they were thinking: "I don't care if children are all different. I'm going to treat them all alike. . . . I don't care if they can't sit still; they *should*. . . . I don't care if he does want attention; I'm not going to give it to him . . ."

You have to decide for yourself: Are you going to go your own sweet way? Or do you want to work with the grain of the wood?

I was building a fence around my house not long ago. A farmer neighbor watched me hammer. I was in difficulty time and time again. Finally he spoke up: "Your nails are too big. That's why you split the wood. The wood can't take the size nail you are using."

I changed to a thinner nail and he was right. The wood did not split; the nail did not bend. But until he gave me that little tip about the nature of the wood—when I was going my own sweet way—I was in trouble and I was mad. First I was mad at myself for not being a better carpenter. But no one stays mad at himself very long. It is more fun to be angry at something else. So I got mad at the wood, mad at the nails, mad at the hammer, mad at my wife for wanting a fence.

My friend was saying, "It's the nature of the beast," and he was urging me to go along with it.

More recently an electrician told me, "You need a new line. If you plug your washer into that circuit you will blow a fuse. It won't carry the load."

Yesterday I overheard a father: "You can't skate on that blacktop. It has little ridges on it and there is sand you can't see. It's too bumpy and you will fall."

You hear this wherever you go: "If you put too many in that boat you will sink it . . ."; "If you drive at that speed, of course you will use more gas . . ."; "If you open the oven door the soufflé will fall . . ."; "If the wood is wet when you paint it the paint will blister . . ."; "If you try to read in that light you will ruin your eyes."

Things will stand this but they won't stand that. You can do this but you can't do that. It works better if you handle it this way, and it is worse if you do that.

My farmer friend gave me another tip: "Wet the nails first. Just stick them in your mouth. They go in easier."

A father calls to his child: "Oil your wagon. Then it won't

squeak so." Big burly moving men know it: "Carry the weight on your back. It is easier that way." Even a seven-year-old once told me: "Put some soap on the screw. It goes in better."

Everyone is saying: "Don't butt your head against a stone wall." The common-sense way is to adjust to the nature of the wood. But some people won't apply this to children. What about you? Are you going to work with the grain, or are you going to work against it?

Oh, Say, Do You See . . . ?

Wood splits. Nails bend. A motor breaks down. A cake tastes like rubber. But children will let you make a lot of mistakes before you ever realize: I have been going against the grain.

A child puts a lot of his hurts inside of him. He is angry, but inside. He is bothered, but inside. He can hardly bear the way he is treated, but he keeps the feeling inside. He may be quieter. He may daydream more. He may worry more, but you need keen eyes to see worry.

What the child cannot hide he disguises. If he is uncomfortable he talks big, he eats more, or he bites his nails. Or maybe he swears or is a know-it-all or acts as if he were spoiling for a fight. He may be full of bravado: "What's geography to me? Who cares for that stuff!" There are all kinds of camouflages to keep you from knowing.

Children commit open rebellion only as a last resort. They want us to like them. They want to do the right thing. They want to fit in. They are new to this world; we are the old-timers. Actually we *are* the world. We are food and sleep and warmth. We are love. We are approval. We are permission. We are praise and support and belonging—life itself. No wonder only some children rebel where we can see it. No wonder most of them keep their hurts inside.

Even when the wheel squeaks many of us are stone deaf. When

a child cannot take it any more he kicks or screams or fights back. But instead of hearing what he really means, we get mad. A youngster plays hooky and we say he is bad. He argues with us and we call him fresh. It takes a special kind of internal hearing aid to let you know: Hold on, maybe I am wrong here. . . . Maybe I am making the child act the way he does. Remember how angry I was with the wood and the nails and the hammer and my wife?

The Axis

If you jump on a chair you hear when it is breaking.

If you yank on cloth you can see when it is tearing.

Most teachers do not see youngsters or hear them when they come home from school. A second grader, well-behaved in school, comes home and hits his baby sister or snatches the baby's toys. A fourth grader, who gets all A's in school, whines at home over every little thing. A cooperative fifth grader fights the whole family when he comes home as if they were all against him.

And parents do not often see children in school. A youngster who always says "Yes, Ma'am" at home raises the devil on the playground with smaller children. A child who does all his homework gets tight inside and forgets everything he knows the minute the teacher calls on him.

And yet the way we adults work hand in glove!

If you think your boss is a dimwit you can at least tell your wife about it. She will probably hold your hand and pat your fevered brow. There is a good chance that she will assure you that you are the most wonderful man in the world and that the boss really is the lineal descendant of a tack.

If she doesn't, it is still all right. You can go to your club. The boys there think you are O.K. So does the gang you play golf with. And there is always the cigar-store man from whom you buy your tobacco. Once you are an adult you have a great many

outs. If worse comes to worst you can buy a whole box of chocolates and eat them one by one. That will make you feel better.

But pity the poor child. The teacher and the parent are on the same side. The principal is. Grandparents are. The minister. Everybody. We hold each other's hands and we close in on the youngster. "Now when you go to school you do what the teacher tells you . . ."; "You better be good or I will send you to the principal . . ."; "If you don't improve we will send a note home to your parents . . ."

Of course teachers and parents ought to work together. The home and the school should have a common point of view. But who is going to save us from our own mistakes?

It Is Up to Us

With children we have the awful freedom to be as pigheaded as we want to be. It is up to us to save ourselves.

The only way we can do it is to want to work along with them. You have to accept inside of yourself: Children *are* like this (even though I may wish they were different); I can't do this to children (even though life would be simpler if I could); I have to give them enough of this (even though I may wish I didn't).

Look at these four big ideas now. See if they look like common sense to you. Can you take them into yourself and make them your ideas? Or would you rather rub children the wrong way?

THE FIRST IDEA

Children Grow!

These are children . . . *Growers:* eager to do more, glad to be big; *Learners:* excited to find out, thrilled with know-how; *Practicers:* hard-working, drilling themselves, striving to become skilled. When you see youngsters in this light, it changes your attitude.

1. Growth Is Their Idea

Years of serious study of children—and what do you think has come out of it?

The simple fact that children grow!

Look at them when they are born, and they can't even raise their heads from the bed. Look at them sixteen years later, and they can turn their heads at a wolf whistle!

Look at them when they are born, and they can't budge from where you put them. Look at them six years later, and they won't stay in one place!

Look at them when they are born, and they are flat on their backs or tummies. Look at them six months later, and they can sit up like any man!

Nobody teaches them. Nobody makes them. Nobody rewards or punishes them. Nobody persuades. It happens!

It is the exciting unfolding of the human. Three words at the end of a year; 272 at the end of two years; 896 at the end of three . . . . you can't even count them by the time you have a chatterbox of eight! Not even seeing at birth, yet able to pick out tiny specks at eight months! Pulling himself up at nine months, standing alone at ten months, walking by holding on at eleven, and away and on his own at twelve!

This human being is a moving, driving powerhouse. He has a motor inside, a spring that makes him go. And we call it growth. Simple to say. Easy to miss if you live with youngsters day by day, because it happens so smoothly. But startling when you think about it. Humans grow in size—they get bigger, taller, heavier. Humans grow in skills. And every bit of growth leads to still more, for the taller you are the more you can see; the more you stay awake the more you can hear; the more you can control your arms, the more you can reach; the more you can walk, the further you can go; the more you can talk the more you can question; the more you live the more you can remember. And nobody makes them do it!

They Make Themselves

The push is all inside.

For the fact is not simply that children grow. More important. they *want* to grow.

Live with little children, and it is this fierce wanting inside of them that drives you crazy. Before they can talk they knock the spoon out of your hand; they want to feed themselves. And before that, even, they slide off your lap. They don't want to be held any more; they want to crawl. Always they want to do the big thing, the grown-up, the next step.

Toileting? *"Me do it!"* I can take my own panties off. . . . I can pull my overalls down. . . . I can climb up on the seat. . . . I can flush the toilet. And the adult is left itch-

ing inside: What did he invite me to this party for, anyhow?

Eating? *"Me do it!"* I can pour my own milk. . . . I can cut my own food. . . . I can tie my own bib. . . . I can butter my own bread. . . . I can serve myself.

Dressing? *"Me do it!"* I can button my buttons. . . . I can tie my shoelace. . . . I can put the belt through the loop. You watch those small fingers, that serious face, the intentness of it all. Unless you have the patience of Job, the time of Methuselah, and the wings of an angel, it is all you can do to keep from helping.

The battle lines up this way all through growth. It is the child saying, "I want to grow up. I want to be big." Never is it the adult pleading, "Come on, please do." The adult is being pushed; the child is the pusher. For the force is inside the youngster.

You have heard it. You have said it.

"I'm old enough to stay up!"

"I'm old enough to go to the movies!"

"I'm old enough to choose my friends!"

I'm old enough. I'm big enough. Me do it.

Watch a three-year-old, if you have any doubts. The telephone rings: "I'll get it." The doorbell rings: "I'll get it." The phonograph stops: "I'll get it." You go shopping: "I'll carry it." You are tightening a nut: "Let me try." The door is stuck: "I'll open it." The things they can do and the things they can't. The things you want them to do and the things you don't. This is what drives you crazy.

And it doesn't die out at three. The over-helpful ways may change but the burning inside is still there. Test it out with an eleven-year-old. Say to him over and over for a day or two, "You're not old enough," every time he wants to do something. "You're not big enough. . . . You haven't grown enough yet." This is what makes children furious. It rips straight across the grain of their growing up.

This is where the conflicts come in home life. Never is it the parent wheedling: "Come on, please. You're old enough now to learn how to drive. Try it. You'll like it . . ."; "Oh, come on. Put on some lipstick. You're big enough. Try it just once . . ."; "You are getting big now. Take a puff. You are old enough to smoke . . ." Have you ever heard this, even once?

No! It is the other way. "Why can't I? I'm big enough, I'm old enough. I can so do it!" At home and at school. What do youngsters hate about high school? "They treat you like babies." What do they hate about elementary school? "They are always telling you what to do."

The human is made so that he grows. He is made so that he *wants* to grow.

Grow . . . and Know

There is even more. *Children want to learn.* The fire inside of them includes that too.

I once took three youngsters to the Grand Canyon. Do you

think I had to say, "Come on. Come close. Look. There is a big ditch here. People come from all over to see it . . ."? Or did I spend my time begging them to keep at least one foot on the firm earth of Arizona?

Teachers in good schools today take youngsters on all sorts of trips: to the market, the bus station, on a train ride or boat ride or plane ride. What does the teacher have to do? Coax the children and lure them so they will be interested? Never! Always again the adult finds himself pressed to the wall by the urge inside the child. "Now not too close. . . . Now don't touch. . . . Don't push and you will all see."

Youngsters want to know. This is a basic part of their growing up.

The roots are down deep in childhood. Even when a child seems safe in his crib, what do you worry about? He may put something in his mouth because (darn him!) he wants to find out what the stuff of this world is like. The minute he can crawl, what is your worry? He will find the bottle cap under the radiator, the burnt match under the stove, the dust under the bed—and into his mouth it will go.

You live with them and you have to be a walking Solomon. "Why does it rain? . . . What makes the dew? . . . Where do the clouds go? . . . How big is the sun? . . . Why is his skin black?" You get nice questions and naughty ones: "What makes you so fat? . . . Why don't you have hair on your head? . . . Why do you look so funny?" And it all starts way down with "What's that?" until you are the one tired of the game and never the child; "Why?" over and over again until it is your throat that gets dry and never the child's; "Why do you do that?" until you are the one worn out and never the child.

The youngster wants to know. He uses his tongue. He uses his eyes. He uses his hands. Is the soup hot? He puts his finger in it. Is the paint wet? He puts his finger in it. Is the tar

sticky? He feels it and finds out. It is the adult who keeps saying "No," and the child who persists.

"No" to hands: "Don't touch the bottles. You will knock them over." "No" to feet: "Don't step in the puddles. You will get wet." "No" to eyes: "Stand back. This isn't for you." "No" to ears: "I'm talking to Daddy, not to you." "No" to the whole body: "Don't go over there. You will get dirty." But the child wants to know.

Some Dirty Tricks

Try another experiment sometime. You can make youngsters furious by saying to them, "You're too young, you're too small, you're not big enough." See what happens now when you say, "It's none of your business." Every time they want to know, you reply, "This is for grown-ups, not for you." Or, for a variation, whisper when children are around. That really gets them down. You cut them off from knowing, and they cannot stand it.

For a little while at home parents can spell things out. "Shall we have some i-c-e c-r-e-a-m for dessert?" Or "How about another piece of c-a-n-d-y?" And then there comes the time when the children rebel; they want to be in, they want to know. Try speaking French and the same thing happens. There are tears sometimes, and furious anger. This is no laughing matter; to find out, to learn, to know is important to children.

This is why teasing is so hard for young children to take. When you are young one of the big things you ask from adults is: be truthful. Tell me the facts so I can salt them away. Tell me honestly and then I will have a basis for understanding the laugh. Once they really understand, then they can have fun with wild stories, exaggeration, and the big lie.

A child's first belly laugh usually comes when someone falls. There is nothing more hilarious. And it is funny because this is

something the child understands. He has spent three whole years getting it through his head that people walk—that people stay upright—and then someone comes along and slips on a banana peel. That is a scream.

Or even earlier: you can make a two-year-old giggle if you point to his nose and say: "Ah, there is your ear." He has salted down the names of some of the parts of his body: chin, nose, eyes, ears. He has named them time after time. He has practiced these until he is good at them. If someone fools around with this understanding the child can appreciate it because he knows. But at any age when you push make-believe ahead of what children know, you don't please them.

"When I was down in Texas I saw a steer with horns a mile wide." But there is no smile: "Tell me, Daddy. Did you *really?*"

"There is a cheese in Wisconsin as big as a house." And you get a whiny tone because this isn't fun: "Tell me, Daddy. Is there *really?*" You can't joke when children want truth and facts. You are pushing them away and that is more than they can take.

Clear Through

Is it just young children? What age takes motors apart and puts them together again? What age stays to see the movie through twice? What age reads in bed when the lights should be out?

What age eavesdrops when adults talk? Some friends have a nine-year-old daughter. They were entertaining one night until quite late. As the last guest departed, they heard their daughter at the top of the stairs sobbing. She was seated on the top step and had obviously been peering down on the adult party for quite some time.

Realizing that it was long after midnight, they rushed up and asked: "Sally, have you been sitting here all night?"

"No," Sally sobbed. "I've been *standing!*"

And it matters that much to youngsters. What do adults do? What do they talk about? How do they act? How do they get along together? These are important questions to a girl growing up.

This need to know is not young children alone; this is *children* . . . and how they are made.

A Good Job, Not a Sloppy One

An urge to grow. An urge to know. And an equal urge to be skilled.

It sounds crazy when you say it. It sounds queer to teachers who have to remind youngsters to stick by their workbooks and to memorize those multiplication tables. It sounds weird to parents who have to drive youngsters to the piano and tie them to make them practice.

But children are practicers, earnest ones and diligent. It is inside of them. Mastery is the thing that matters. They are made so that they desperately need to get good at things.

A young child learns to walk. He takes a step and falls, but he is up again and at it. He walks and falls, walks and falls, but he practices until he gets good. And when he can walk, he drills himself on balance. Every curb is an invitation. He is on, he is off, and then he is back on again. The sidewalk, broad and straight, is no good to walk on. There is this pile of stones along the edge; can you walk along on top of them? Or this stone wall over here; can you walk on top of it? It is wonderful and narrow.

One of the longest walks I have ever taken was a three-block trip to the post office. I took it with a six-year-old. I stayed with the road and waited. He preferred the fence tops, the curbings, the walls and even hedges. Once he did walk on the cement right in front of the post office. But the trick there was to walk

on the lines in the sidewalk; you dared not step off! It took us thirty minutes for the three blocks there and back.

Watch youngsters in the country coming home from school. They throw a rock at every fence post and one at every pole, a rock at every tin can and one at every tree. A tough taskmaster here insists: Get good, hit it every time. The child himself is the taskmaster; he makes himself toe the line.

Watch a child who has just learned to dive. Off the float and on again, off and on, over and over, diving for the good of it. Watch a seven-year-old learning how to ride a bicycle; a two-year-old who can barely balance his tower of blocks; a ten-year-old who is learning how to burp; a fourteen-year-old getting better and better at dancing every time he hears some music; a four-year-old on a tricycle, speeding and turning and stopping sharp. You see the same urge to try it, do it, get good at it.

This is what much of the make-believe play of youngsters is: a trial run, a getting good at things that matter. See that six-year-old sitting there in the car alone. His mother is in the store shopping. He holds the wheel and spins it in his hands . . . that was a sharp turn there. He reaches down and touches the gear shift . . . have to put it into jet now. Hear the sounds he makes . . . the motor is going faster. And now the horn. And it is so real that sometimes he honks it without meaning to.

See this youngster at ten. Will the father have to say: "Be a good fellow, please, and hold the wheel while I steer too. If you do that enough, you will get good at it, honest you will." Or is it the child who begs: "Can't I, once more, Dad? The road is straight. Please!"

At fourteen if you ask this fellow just to bring you the magazine from the other side of the room, there is no telling what response you will get. Maybe even a wisecrack: "What's the matter with your legs? Are they broken?" But ask him if he will go out into the cold rain, the wind blowing, the night dark, the weather

raw, to drive the car into the garage. "Oh, boy! Can I, Dad?" And off he flies because he wants to get good. Thirty feet forward and he pretends to miss so then he has to back it up again. That makes sixty feet and then thirty forward again. But it is all practice and that is what he wants.

No Clock-watching Here

I watched a girl who had just learned to write her name. You could find it in every single book she owned: "Helen," written out as big as life. It was on her magazines, her phonograph records, her picture albums. Her family finally drew the line when she wrote her name on the wood paneling in her room! But when you can write your name, that is something. And you write it over and over everywhere until you are good at it.

Helen once said: "You know what I wish. I wish it were spring-time and we were planting grass. I would hold the seed in my hand and then I would spell out my name. There it would be, all green when the grass came up: H-E-L-E-N."

The drive is so strong it gets the adults off balance. Try to live peacefully with a three-year-old who has just learned her colors. You have to give her the green plate at supper or the roof will fall down; you have to give her the blue glass or there are howls; you have to serve dessert in the red dish or you are not being fair. And drive in the car with the color-conscious child. She will tell you when the light is red and yellow and green quicker than any policeman will. The child wants the practice.

Put your change on top of the bureau, and the seven-year-old will tell you exactly what you have: "Ninety-six cents. Three quarters, two nickels, and eleven pennies." And you can't keep him from counting it.

Smoke a cigarette without letting the five-year-old strike the match, and you have insulted him. Light up and forget to let the two-year-old blow the match out, and you have broken her heart.

The drive is there inside of all children. It stays there. It is always there—this urge to drill and practice and to get good.

You Have to Tap the Source

Of course this does not mean—it could not mean—that what children want to get skilled at will be identical with what adults want them to learn.

"You'd better work on your spelling list. You are not too good at that." "Aw, that stuff. Must I?"

"You need more drill on phonics. Now stay in your seat and do this page." "Aw, reading. Phooey!"

"You haven't practiced your piano this entire week. Now you stay in this afternoon and work on your lessons." "Music, music! Who wants to work on music?"

Many, many times we miss the boat. We are ahead of children, behind them, or alongside. What looks important to us is so much noise to them. And what they are willing to give time to is unimportant to us. But we mustn't let these misses throw us for a loss.

They do not mean that the urge to get skilled is dead. They simply mean that we are not tapping the source. If we are smart enough to adjust—to go forward or backward or to the side—we will hit the nail on the head and ride along on the crest of the child's own urge.

Know this about children, then. This is their nature. Wood is wood, copper is copper, and these are children. *Growers:* eager to do more, glad to be big. *Learners:* excited to find out, thrilled with know-how. *Practicers:* hard-working, drilling themselves, striving to become skilled.

2. *Keep Your Faith*

When you have this point of view, you have a faith in youngsters. You enjoy them. You relax and have fun. You are not plagued by fears and worries. You live with them and have good times together.

Teachers ought to be skilled at this "just plain living." Every one has his own reasons for going into teaching. Money usually isn't a major factor. Service may be. Security. Respectability. But almost always, deep down, there is another reason: I liked to be with children, even before I ever gave a thought to teaching.

Teachers are yesterday's baby-sitters. They are the people who at eleven or thirteen or sixteen liked to care for children. It was enjoyable.

Teachers are yesterday's big brothers and sisters. They are the people who at ten or twelve or fourteen could fix a wagon wheel

or mend a kite or patch up a doll so a younger member of the family could use it. The little ones looked up to the big and were crazy about him. And the big fellow thought it was fun, too.

Teachers are yesterday's heroes of the street or the neighborhood: the fellow who would have a game of catch with the kids; the big girl who would always say "Hello" or tell a story.

Somewhere along the line the idea suddenly dawns: children like me and I like them. Why don't I earn my money—or my security or my respectability—by being a teacher? It was no effort then to think about how to live with children and what to do. It all came easy. You were useful to youngsters; it just flowed out.

There is something wonderful here and important for children that fades away in too many teachers. Worry darkens it. "I'll give them a test, and that will make them study. . . . I'll call on them, and that will frighten them into doing the work. . . . I'll praise Tommy, and that will make them all want to be good . . ."

Instead of a ready smile, youngsters see tight lips. The easy-going living with children is gone and in its place: "How am I going to make them do it?"

Parents, Too

This happens to parents, too. Think of the pleasure in a home before a baby is born. "What will we call him?" . . . and then everyone laughs and says: "What will we call IT?" There is something close and warm and friendly about the confusion.

Think of laundry baskets slaved over and transformed into snug bassinets . . . all the eager shopping for baby oils and powder and Q-Tips . . . the way grandparents-to-be and husbands are so tender: "Oh, I'll carry it. . . . Let me get it. You stay there. . . . You mustn't get too tired." This baby is so important.

Or even watch faces outside the hospital nursery. The eagerness, the joy, the whole atmosphere of good will. And then

it sours: He won't suck. . . . He cries. . . . He wets the minute I put him in bed. . . . He throws sand. . . . He hits. . . . He is not reading. . . . He won't pick up his room. The fun is gone.

You see teachers with strained, worried faces. You see parents on edge, tense, tight. There is a cold war that tightens the whole relationship. Everyone worries: How are you going to make them do it? How are you going to keep them from doing it? What are you supposed to do if they don't do it? It is almost a frantic note, and you hear it all the time:

"Eat your cereal, Billy. Clean your bowl. There is a pretty picture on the bottom."

"Raise your hand if you got 100. You get the gold stars."

"Be nice when we visit grandma, and I'll give you a dime."

"Your report card won't look too good at the end of the month if you keep that up."

"Every time you take a book out of the library I will put a check next to your name. We will see who gets the most checks."

We act sometimes as if we were the boy with our finger in the dike. If ever we take our finger out, the whole flood of bad water will rush through. This is a terrific responsibility. It is enough to make anyone nervous and worried. We have grounds, if this is true, for stewing: Suppose we don't reward enough? Suppose we don't punish enough?

Faint Heart Ne'er Won . . .

One part of the answer may be that we have no faith in our goals. Some people talk a good game. They are full of "oughts" and "shoulds." You hear them preaching all the time: "He ought to be more generous. . . . He shouldn't wiggle so. . . . He has to learn that he can't have his own way all the time." But maybe there is a faint heart underneath all the big talk.

We have to feel that honesty is so right that a youngster can't miss it. If he doesn't get it fully now, it is certain to come later. We have to feel that cleanliness is so reasonable and attractive that a youngster can't get away from it. If it doesn't appeal strongly now, it most certainly will as time goes along. We have to know that reading (or arithmetic or spelling) makes such downright good sense in this world that no youngster can do without it. If the child doesn't see this now, he surely will as time moves along.

Of course, whenever we want something too dearly it is very hard to wait. Young children show this to us. They almost die in December, for example. It kills them to see packages marked "Do Not Open Until Christmas." And the night before their birthday! "Tomorrow" is one of the hardest words for youngsters to take. We are all a little like this. The more precious anything is to us, the more effort it takes to put off having it.

And every one of us has his own peculiar "precious points." Some of us think that being tidy is very important. It may not bother the other fellow, but it drives us crazy when children

are messy. The other fellow may hate to see property destroyed. That seems sacrilegious to him. He can't din it into children hard enough that they must learn to take care of things. It may be honesty with one; politeness with another; promptness with a third; generosity with still another; reading with someone else.

But people without faith have "precious points" sticking out all over them. They can't believe that achievement will ever come. They forget how much active teaching they are doing every single minute of their lives with children through the example they set. They eat their cereal; they are nice to grandma; they read a book; they don't steal or lie or cheat; they wash their hands and make their beds and clean their floors. Youngsters see all this and take it in. Slowly it becomes a part of them, but this is not enough for the faint hearts. Their little faith makes them start out saying:

Our goals are not so good.

People won't seek them unless you make them. So . . . MAKE THEM!

Dead Weight

It is an easy next step into thinking:

People are no good.

You have to make them do what is right.

So . . . MAKE THEM!

Force them, FRIGHTEN THEM!

If you think people are dead weight, your only salvation is to push them hard. Don't be easy with them. If you have no faith, never let them get away with a thing. If you are going to reward, use big rewards. If you are going to punish, use big punishments. Don't give them dimes, give them dollars. Don't slap youngsters, punch them.

But if you keep your eye on youngsters you will know: they are on your side. You can relax. You can count on them. You

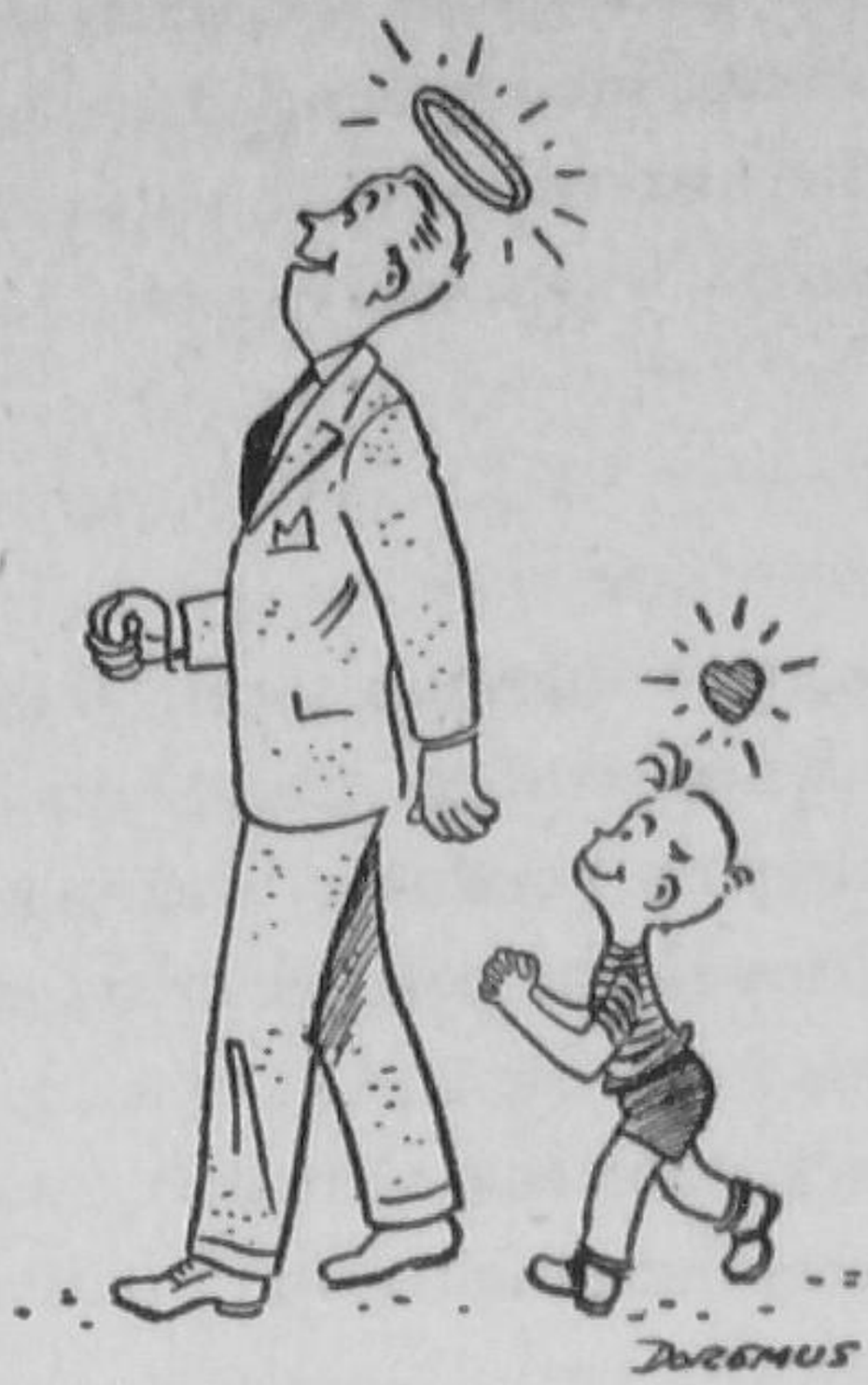
can cuddle them when they want to be held without worrying, "Now they will want to be held all the time." You can play with them in the bath without the fear, "They will always want it if I do it once." You can roughhouse a little at night without hesitating, "Now they will never want to go to sleep."

You can praise them all in a classroom without the doubt, "Now they won't work because I am too easy." You can put your arm around the youngster who is lonely without being plagued, "Now they will all want me to do it." You can laugh with them when something is funny without the sense of danger, "Now they will try to take advantage of me." You can be tolerant—"That's all right, I will excuse you. I understand. You can do it the next time,"—without the pestering thought, "Now they will all try to get out of some work."

You need some rules, naturally. Common sense in any situation suggests some simple prohibitions and limits. But you won't be in a tizzy. Your rules won't wear you down. They won't take up all your energy and thoughts. You will know that youngsters are not an angry, evil ocean that has to be contained with your finger in the dike. Give them a chance and they will do their utmost to be good. It is almost pathetic to see them try so hard to please.

The child-development point of view says: Live with youngsters. Believe in them. Make them glad they are alive and they will stay alive and growing. They will reach out for what you believe in just as soon as they are able.

3. *Keep That Spark Alive*



Lack of faith takes the starch out of you. It robs children, too. It dims their will to grow and to learn and to become skilled. The sternness, strictness, harshness, coldness, disapproval that stem from it are poisons. They sap a child's strength and he gives up.

A youngster needs a climate of love and support to want to grow. He needs humans he truly likes as a pattern for himself. Youngsters look up all the time. They are searching for models they can shape themselves after.

Watch a three-year-old tagging after a beloved six-year-old brother. She says the same words (only blurred); she wants to use the same toys; she cries when she can't climb the same tree or ride her tricycle as fast or sit on a big chair the way brother does.

Watch a six-year-old with his pal, his father: "What are you go-

ing to do now, Dad? . . . Can I come with you? . . . Is this the way you hold your knife?"

Here is a school that goes on all the time—but the youngster attends willingly. Without his knowing it, without anyone being aware, he picks up the pattern: how you stand, the inflection in your voice, what you do with older people, how you act with company.

Carbon Copies

Sometimes you see it in question form: "How come you do that?"—stepping on a cigarette to put it out, tipping your hat to a lady, putting water on your hair, wearing a tie clasp. . . . But more comes in through the pores than through the ears.

A father told me this story. He and his son had a good relationship. They had their arguments, of course. And the youngster had to do certain things he didn't always relish. But the whole

underlying tone was one of good fun and good fellowship.

The father was in his bathroom brushing his teeth. His left hand rested on his hip. His right foot was crossed in front of his left. It was a characteristic pose . . . and his four-year-old watched, standing in exactly the same way! The father brushed and brushed, and the youngster looked. And then, explosively, the father spat . . . and the four-year-old spat too! He had been brushing his teeth in make-believe and the spitting just came, it was all so real to the boy. The father and son both laughed about it.

There has to be love. Without that the child is lost. There is no thrill in saying: "I cleaned off the table" (which I know you want me to do); "I didn't cry even though it hurt" (which is the way you want me to act); "I made my bed and you didn't even have to tell me" (which is the kind of thing you like). There is no sense in wanting to be good, in wanting to fit in. The loving must be there or there is no pattern.

Oil for the Motor

This is one reason why good living with children is so important. Bucked up by your faith in children, you get close to them. They like being with you and, liking, they want to do the things you do.

But there is another important reason too. Growing up is an effort. The youngster is willing to try, but becoming civilized means cutting across his natural ways of living. It means postponing, waiting, holding in and holding back. The child feels more and more up to this self-denial as he gets a full share of love in return. The trying is worth it with approval as the reward.

The effort—and the reward—begin all the way back in very early life. It is simpler just to soil, but I can learn to hold back and wait—for you. It is simpler to cry whenever I want something, but I can hold it in—for you. It is simpler to swing and hit

out whenever I feel mad, but I can control—for you. The adult's love and approval make it a good bargain.

All through life we are asking youngsters to take on the particular ways of living that we in our times and our part of the world have found useful. There is nothing inherently right about what we do. Some societies eat with chopsticks, and we happen to use forks. Some eat four meals a day, and we have hit on three. In some the woman is the worker, and in our particular little orbit the man is more likely to be. Some treat cows as sacred, and we eat them.

Youngsters have to learn our particular ways. Our love is a major reason why they do it. The more love they feel, the more they can glide into our paths. The less love that gets over to them, the greater is their struggle to fit in. And some youngsters feel so little love that they are not up to the job at all.

Friendly living with children, then, supports them coming and going. It gives them a pattern *and* it makes it worthwhile for them to try to follow it. This simple business which can come so easily to teachers and parents is a double-edged tool for keeping vigorous and strong the child's own urge to grow, to learn, to become skilled.

Top Priority

This simple business, in fact, becomes the Number One Job for adults. So long as the human feels this urge, he is safe. What he doesn't doesn't learn now, he will learn the next time. What he doesn't do now, he will do the next time. What he doesn't use now, he will use the next time.

Just so long as that fire is inside of him, you can count on the fact that education will never be over. He may leave school; he may graduate; he may finish all the formal learning that is asked of him. But with the urge inside there never is an ending. You want it to burn there for all of his days.

Once this urge is dimmed, then the going is tough. You have lost your crucial ally. Outside forces—a policeman, a boss, a teacher, a parent, a wife—have to do all the pushing. Lures have to do the work: prizes, rewards. You need goads: punishment, threats. You deal with inertia, and that is hard to move.

To get this good feeling of love and approval and interest and support and belonging over to children is your prime objective. Schools have worked much harder on other aids to learning: improved buildings with better light, more closet space, and lockers for children's clothing; on assembly halls and cafeterias and special-subject rooms; on color for the walls. Schools have spent money on motion-picture projectors and on tape recorders, on radios and phonographs. Staffs give up time to find the books that will be just right, to build up resource files of pictures and exhibits. A lot of effort has gone into the externals of education: better maps, felt pads with doodads to help children learn arithmetic, more workbooks . . .

In homes, too, we have tried to spur children's growth by fooling around with the externals. We have built separate playrooms for children with open shelves and low closets. We have searched for the right kinds of toys and records and books. For silverware and plates and pitchers that children can handle. We have all been concerned about the movies and the comics and the radio and television.

All this is to the good, but it is the internal that counts more. How do the adults feel about children? How do children come to feel about themselves? Is there a faith in youngsters—and from that faith, friendliness and companionship and praise?

This is the place to spend time and thought on the human relationships between adults and children. In an atmosphere of love real growth and learning will go on, almost in the face of obstacles. It is this atmosphere we must work hardest for.

4. Keep Your Eye on Growth

Growth is what you are looking for, but it doesn't come all nicely labeled. It is a process, and youngsters are in the middle of it. If you know this, you won't lose your faith in them.

Postponing, waiting your turn, sharing—all the behaviors we prize—develop over a long, long time. While they are in the process of developing, children must do impulsive and grabby things.

A three-year-old pushes another off the tricycle. "I want it. My turn." The waiting is still too hard for him, but he is using the words, at least.

A four-year-old brings his wagon to school for the whole group to use, but "It's my wagon. You get off. It's mine and I'm the only one who can share it." But it was his idea to bring the wagon in the first place.

A five-year-old wants Christmas to come: "I want a bicycle and I want it now. That darn old Christmas will never be here." Today he gripes; yesterday he would have screamed.

Nor is it a case of "Day by day in every way children get better and better." The youngsters get bigger but sometimes the problems seem to grow with them.

You often hear mothers say: "I'll be so glad when my baby stops nursing." But then there are all the bottles to sterilize. "My baby is so heavy I can hardly lift him. I'll be so glad when he can crawl and get around." But then there are all the hazards of falling downstairs, knocking over lamps, getting into ash trays. "It will be such a relief when my baby can walk." But once he can walk, he can run. And once he can run, he can run away!

Bigger problems, new problems. Every age presenting something different. But there is something here to feel good about and to enjoy. You can't brush over the parts you don't like or skip those ages that make your life a little difficult. They all do their bit to produce a person.

Upstanding Citizens

And that is what we are doing; we are growing *people*. They are bound to be stronger, more virile as the days go by. They are bound to assert themselves more as we help them grow. Don't be disheartened by this; be glad.

The infant spends a long, long time building up language, developing his balance, being lifted and hauled and set where he should stay. Small wonder that the time comes when he wants to draw the line. "No. I won't. Don't want to," and he runs away on his sturdy feet. Now he is boss, if you have done a good job.

The kindergartener spends a long time staying close to mother, holding hands when crossing streets, asking permissions and being told "Yes" or "No." Small wonder that the time comes

when he wants to hang by his knees, climb up on the rooftops, and ride his trike at top speed. Who is master now? And that is the feeling you have been working toward.

The Eight has had long years of being reminded and nagged and told what to do. Small wonder that he gets irritated, now that he is so grown-up. "You don't have to tell me to wash my hands. That's just what I was going to do."

Growing up means finding yourself and becoming real. It is not surprising that whenever you think you have it, you go overboard for a while. You are too resistant. You talk too loud. You swear like a big fellow. You know what you know too confidently. You have something, and you are trying to use it up to the hilt. You have yourself, and you are feeling big.

Every age does it. Fours and Fives have their way: they are very likely to swear and to go on binges of toilet talk. Sixes often are as boisterous as all get out. Sevens and Eights can be annoyingly cocky. Nines and Tens are full of wisecracks that you can't quite get back at. And older youngsters will stand straight up and talk right back.

It is hard enough to take it when children bounce on the furniture, but now they are bouncing on you. But you made them human, and this is what people do. This is the path toward growing up—a good path toward the good goal of an independent and real person. It is what you want and what you expect, but when it comes right at you it can be hard to live with.

Masquerade

This thing called growth comes in disguises. If you want to penetrate the surface you must keep your eye on the youngster. Would you say that children ought to be clean? That a teacher ought to stop outright messiness? One teacher was pleased as punch when Billy put finger paint all over his cheeks. Once Billy had been so overly well-behaved that he cried when he got the

least bit dirty. This "badness" was real progress toward freedom for this little fellow.

Would you say that children should come when they are called? Marcia once ran away from her teacher and the teacher thought it was wonderful. Marcia was a little girl who had clung to her mother at first and later wouldn't even leave the teacher's side.

A teacher of a five-year-old group had been with her children for two years. She knew them very well. This year there was a great deal of swearing. "Goddamnit" was an adjective, an adverb, a noun, a verb, a preposition and an interjection. You heard it everywhere. This might shock you if you came in for a short-time visit, but the teacher wasn't at all upset. "It's a strange thing," she would tell you. "These children are hitting much much less than they did last year. They are a much better working group. They get along with each other on a much higher level. All their aggression is in talking now. Last year it all had to be physical."

With a child-development point of view, you cannot simply look at the behavior and start judging. You have to look at the child who is behaving.

Would you say that hair-pulling was bad and ought to be stopped? One teacher was delighted when Mary grabbed a whole handful. This was the first time Mary had ever stood up for her rights.

Does thumb-sucking seem like a terrible thing to you? One teacher wasn't bothered when Tommy sucked his thumb. Now he sucked it only when he was tired or frightened or very excited. Not so long ago he sucked it all the time.

You have to look at where a child has been as well as where he is going. Frankie was just six. He couldn't read. He hadn't lived long enough to grow all the controls that reading demands. But frequently at bedtime Frankie wanted to read a story himself, instead of having his parents read to him. He would pick up a book, usually hold it right-side up, and proceed to "read"

—from memory. Some of the words were right. Usually his story went along with the picture he was showing. He didn't skip any of the incidents, but many of the details went by the wayside. Frankie's rough combination of make-believe and memory were a far cry from perfection. But you can look at him from a child-development point of view and this becomes very exciting growth.

Zig-Zag

It would be nice if growth were a steady march onward and upward, excelsior! But it isn't. Children have their ups and downs. Youngsters move into one stage of growth from what has gone before by advancing a little *and* by dropping back. The trend is all forward but the motion is back and forth. Unless you keep this in mind, every little dip can get you in a dither.

The youngster who can walk pretty well still wants you to carry him at times. The child who can go upstairs still likes to have you lift him now and then. The boy who can feed himself still wants to be fed. The infant who is dry most of the time still wets now and then. The child who can read still likes to be read to. The ten-year-old who is so casual and offhand with you still wants a hug and a kiss every now and again. The older child who is so set on having his own way and who always knows best can get very upset at times if you don't help him make up his mind.

This is the way children grow. They are Five in much of what they can do but they are still Four and Three and a little bit of Two. They are Fourteen but they are still Twelve and Eleven and Ten. It is no snap to adjust to this backward-and-forward moving.

Sometimes there is even more of it than usual. A youngster who is on the verge of some new big step in growth is very apt to take a deep breath before plunging in. Grace was going away from home to spend a weekend with her cousin. This was the

first time she had ever left her family for overnight. The eight-year-old was thrilled about the trip, eager for it, and feeling very grown-up at the prospect of being on her own.

But Grace was something to live with the last few nights before the big event! She wanted a lot of loving when bedtime came, extra hugs and kisses, a longer story, a last-last-last drink of water, and a long look at what her parents were doing downstairs.

Unless you could feel why Grace was doing this, it would be so easy to be annoyed. "Well, if you're not big enough to take the trip . . . if you're not old enough, we will just treat you like a baby . . ." But that is the last thing in the world that Grace really wanted . . . unless she could set the pace. To have it as much as she wanted it, and then to be free to grow.

Big events can bring this on: the birth of a brother or a sister; starting to school; entering a new group; going to camp. Sometimes the spark is physical: the child is tired or hungry, he is sick or about to be sick or getting over being sick. But it happens too in the normal process of growing up.

Betsy was eleven and growing fast. Menstruation had begun, her breasts were developing, and she was the biggest tomboy you ever saw. Climbing trees was fun, and wearing dresses horrible. Football was a game, but jacks something only for sissies. Slacks had style, but a slip? "Oooog!" and you should see her when she said it.

You had to drive Betsy to water. She shied away from it like poison. "Did you wash your face?" "Aw, must I? I never do." And she didn't unless you made her.

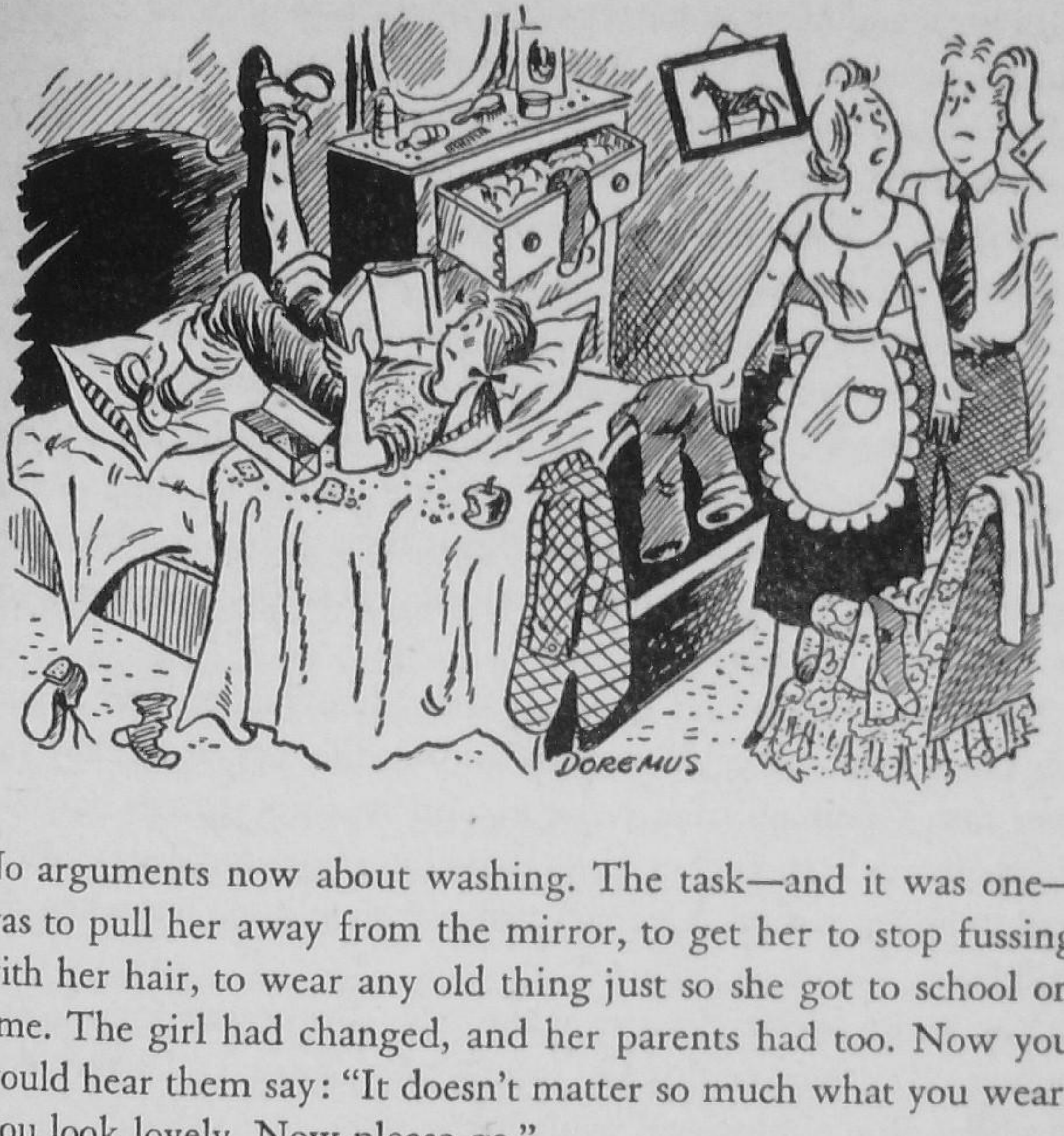
"Did you brush your teeth?" "Fooey!"

"Wash your hands?" "Oh, *all right!*" But if you wanted them really washed you had to go to the bathroom with her.

Her room looked like the stable of the horses she was so crazy about. And the best joke on her parents was to go to bed in her underwear any time she could get away with it. For a while it

was like living with a two-year-old. You had to remind about everything and do most of it yourself: nose blown, shoes and socks on, underpants before your overalls . . .

About a year later you couldn't get Betsy out of the bathroom!



No arguments now about washing. The task—and it was one—was to pull her away from the mirror, to get her to stop fussing with her hair, to wear any old thing just so she got to school on time. The girl had changed, and her parents had too. Now you would hear them say: "It doesn't matter so much what you wear. You look lovely. Now please go."

Children are a strange breed. They go backward as a way of going forward. But if you know this it doesn't bother you so much. You look for it and are ready for all the critical times in growing up. Six-year-old Terry was typical. Growing up was in the air for him. School was just around the corner. People were all saying: "My, how big you are getting." And inside of Terry

there were all the physical changes that are portent of growth: baby teeth falling out, bones growing, changes in his body chemistry.

For a while Terry wanted no end of attention: "Hold me the way you used to when I was a baby. . . . Let's pretend that I'm your baby and I crawl around on the floor. I must cry and you must come and pick me up. . . . I don't want to play with the kids. What are you going to do? I just want to stay around and help you."

And his help almost drove his parents crazy. For a time they couldn't shake him loose. It was easy to think that Terry was a pest. It looks quite different if you can see a child on the threshold of more maturity than he has ever known before.

Level Ground

This zig-zag path of growth includes many level spots. Youngsters can seem to get stuck on a plateau. Superficially nothing is happening. It is as though they have gone on a jag—some one interest obsesses them, and that is all they care about. It is easy to get frantic, to want to give them a push.

But this, too, is the way people grow. Children are not all "even-Stephen"—giving themselves in equal parts to all the things that potentially they could do. Some things steal the show. For a while they have the power to become all-consuming, and other interests lie dormant.

Children work this way, but schools don't. And in the conflict youngsters can be made to look "bad." Schools so often have a nice division: twenty minutes for reading, then twenty for your writing work, then twenty is allowed for out of doors, and then twenty more for arithmetic. You can cut up a school day or a day at home like a nice pie, with equal mathematical pieces. But children don't cut that way.

This happens so often in the primary grades. It causes such

superfluous grief, particularly over reading. Many a child—bright, normal, growing as he should—doesn't care a fig for books. The first year goes by and he isn't reading; the second year is well under way and there is still no real progress. All he wants to do is play. Or maybe snakes or paint or wood has hold of him. He is active, healthy, full of interests, and has friends, but he just isn't reading.

It is probably our mechanical world that makes us worry so. Here is a youngster getting off to a slow start. Two years behind now, and that must mean that he will always stay that way. Parents, teachers, all have visions of a twelve-year-old reading in a ten-year-old way; of a college senior reading only at the sophomore level. Things don't change; machines stay the same; objects go on year after year in identical ways. We find it hard to believe that people are any different.

Of course you can't go just by rule of thumb, a few generalizations that you memorize and then everything about humans becomes simple. There can be many explanations. Some youngsters are not reading because they need glasses; they are made nonreaders by a physical defect. Some youngsters are struggling against a hearing loss; it is doubly hard to master reading if words don't come in to you straight and clear. And some youngsters, fully able to do the job, rebel at the mechanical way in which reading sometimes is taught. It never ties down to the life they are leading; in their six-year-old world this skill has no use.

But sometimes all that is wrong is that a youngster is himself. "You can't go out to play until you memorize those words. . . . No art time for you until you catch up with the rest. . . . The teacher says to keep you in. She wants you to know these words before we let you go out of doors."

But persuasion won't do it, nor will threats, punishment, rewards, bribes. They can't reach down to where the trouble is: within the youngster, in his very being, in his particular way of

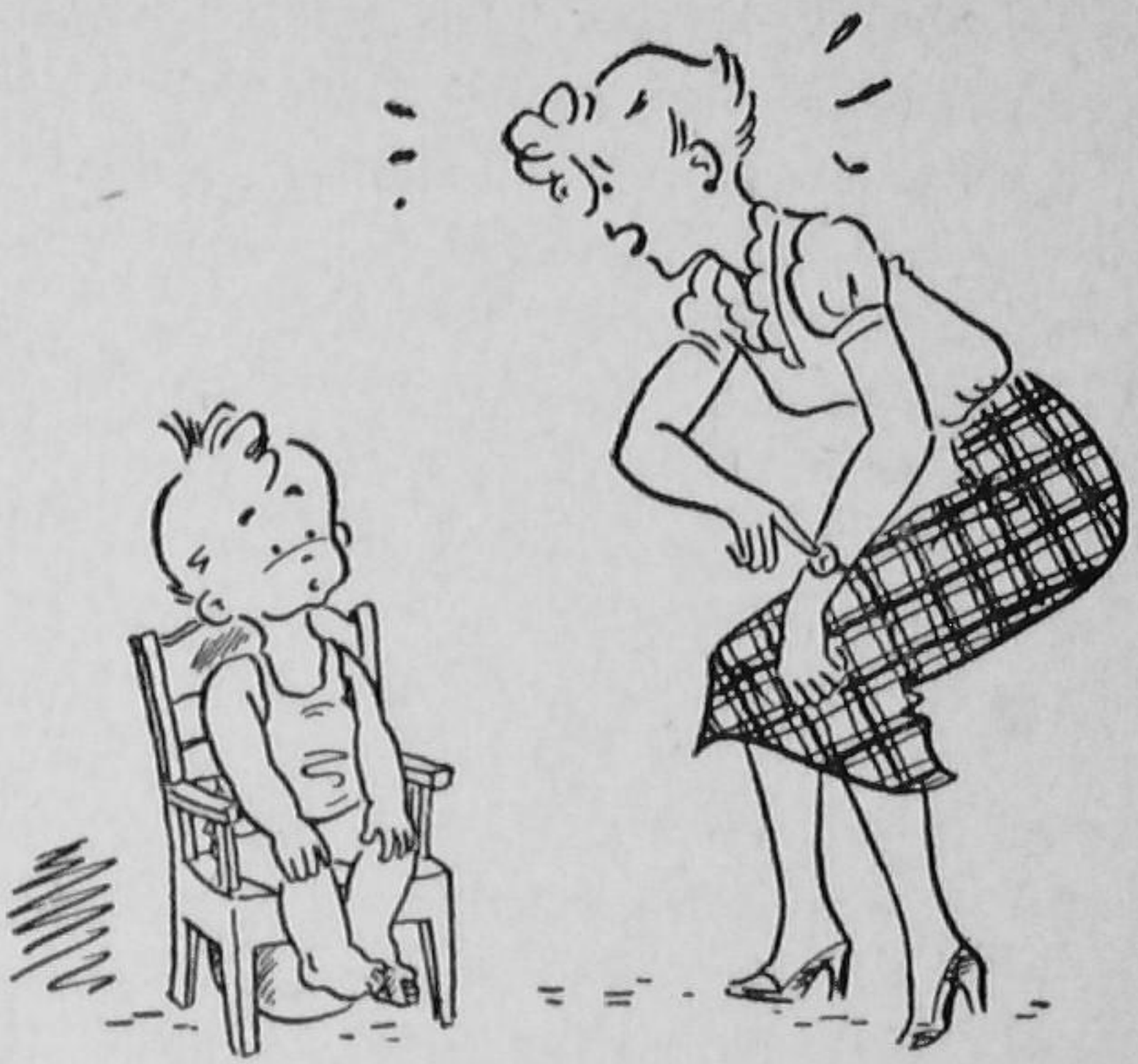
growing. Pressure from outside and the worry and the tenseness that go along with it can complicate the learning. They can dull the urge to grow so there is less fire there when the child does become ready—less self-confidence, less feeling of being loved and able, less liking for the task. But no outside force can change one whit the growing time that a youngster needs.

THE SECOND IDEA

There Is a Plan to the Way They Grow

"There is a fish way of growing, a mouse way of growing. Cats are cats, a bird does what a bird has to do. And people—humans—have their own particular architecture. Everyone follows his own private timetable, but for everybody first things must come first and you can't skip any steps along the way."

5. Obey the Laws



Our first big idea about children was simply that they grow. This was very down-to-earth. Any family scrapbook could prove it to you.

The second big idea is in the same simple vein: *there are laws that govern the way of growing*. There is a fish way of growing, a mouse way of growing. Elephants have their own peculiar plan. Cats are cats, a bird does what a bird has to do. And people—humans—have their own particular architecture.

There is a plan. It is definite, fixed, all laid out in a specific sequence. Most of the plans we deal with day by day are different. We decide, for example, that on our way down to the post office we will stop first at the bakery for some bread and then at the tailor to leave a suit to be pressed. This is one kind of a plan, and in it the steps are outlined in a clear-cut order.

As we drive along, however, we find that there is no parking place near the bakery, so we skip that stop; we will make it on the way home. Then we notice a paint sale at the hardware store, so we pay an unexpected call there.

This plan is flexible. We adapt it to situations. We change as we go along. What we don't accomplish today we can probably fit into a new plan for tomorrow, or we can leave it out altogether. Many of our living plans are like this; a great deal of them should be. These are bona-fide plans, but we are not tied to them.

But look at what happens when you build a house. Here the order is unchangeable. You have to dig your foundation before you can erect your structure. There can be no fooling around with the order of things.

You have to cover up your frame first so the inside men—plumbers, electricians—can work when the weather is bad. If you try to change the scheme you pay for it. You have to get the wiring in before the plasterers go to work. Change that sequence and your house takes longer to build, your costs go sky-high, and it is very possible that the wiring won't be done as well.

The human plan is like this. Things must happen in a certain order. You can't skip around if someone has a bright idea. There is a time for doing everything, and you have to stick by it.

No choice. No option. No I-will-if-it's-convenient.

Step after Step

Language development is a good example. First come single sounds, and they are always vowels. Then the single sounds include some consonants. Then vowels and consonants together, and you get a syllable. Then a repetition of the same syllable; then repetition of different syllables; and, lo and behold, now and only now do you get a word. From there on you are still tied to the plan: one-word sentences first, and they are always

nouns; then longer sentences; then compound; and then complex.

In the development of upright posture and forward locomotion there is again a sequence, and everyone goes through it just because he is human. First the head is down and the infant stays wherever you put him. Then he can lift his head, and then later the head and the chest both come up. He can turn over from his stomach to his back. He can sit alone; he crawls; he pulls himself up to a standing position; he walks holding onto something; he stands alone for a few seconds; and finally, out of all that has gone before, comes that important first step.

The sequence and plan are there wherever you look. In the overall development of the body: from the head first and then down to the toes; from the inside first and then out to the extremities; from the generalized first and then to the localized; from the bigger movements first and then on to the more precise. You can see it in the overall, or you can break it down into its specifics. For if you look at the development of grasping or the development of crawling, even there within one kind of activity, there is still a sequence which is followed.

The plan unfolds as internal physical changes take place. The development of brain cells, of nerve endings, of glands; calcification of skeletal structure, changes in the size of organs, muscular development. . . . These are physical developments inside and they determine not only bodily movements but all behavior.

Obviously a youngster can't walk until his neck muscles are strong enough to hold up his head, until his leg bones and back bones are strong enough to support his body, until his feet are big enough to balance that body. This is what we mean when we say: he has grown enough so that he has to do this (just sitting at six months, for example); he has not yet grown enough for him to do this (walking at six months, for example).

But this same internal all-covered-up-by-skin growth sets the

limits and opens the doors to all behavior. Here is one reason—yet you can't *see* it—why the eight-year-old is so likely to exaggerate; that youngsters about ten or eleven have secrets and clubs; that two-year-olds love water so; that Fours and Fives and Sixes are so active; that the fourteen-year-old will complain: "You're treating me like a baby"; that the six-year-old will cheat you at a game of dominoes. The plan is inside. It is physical. Yet it controls social behavior, emotional responses, intellectual interests, language, memory, and ethical outlook.

No Skipping

In this plan each step is based on what has gone before. Each step contributes to what lies ahead.

The human plan is a demanding plan; so much so that people speak of developmental *tasks*. That is a hard word. A harsh word. *Tasks*. They have to be done. But that seems to be the way people are made.

Farmers can appreciate this kind of law. If the farmer doesn't get his plowing done before the spring rains, he is sunk. If he sprays too late, the damage is done. If he waits with his seeding, there is no crop to harvest. And if he doesn't harvest while the sun shines, his crop will mildew in the field.

The human plan works out in exactly this way. Help a youngster do what is his developmental task, and you make him strong. Let him live as he has to live for his age, and you build for the future. Accept what he can do because of the growth that has gone on, and you make sure that more growth will continue. But ignore the plan—keep children from doing what is their business—and you knock out their underpinnings.

An infant has to get enough cuddling and warmth and kindly protection or he has no foundation for moving out into a less gentle world.

A baby has to have his very fill of selfishness—his way, his

pleasure, his ideas, his wishes—or there is nothing on which to build cooperation as he gets bigger.

A child must be a complete and utter capitalist when he is first developing a sense of property—"Mine, mine, mine"—or there are no grounds to nourish sharing at a later stage.

It is only out of a lot of "No" that "Yes" can finally come. Only out of "Me" over and over that "You" can appear. Messing and dirt and goo and goosh when you are small are the basis for accepting cleanliness later. The near at hand lets you understand the further away. The this-moment-now is the key into the that-moment-then. Making up your own rules gets you ready to accept more of the other fellow's. The specifics come before the generalizations, the concrete before the intangible, the inside yourself before the causes that lie outside of you.

There is no choice here. There is a sequence. There is a definite order. First things come first; and, more important, they have to come first. There never is a two until there has been a lot of one.

Everybody's Doing It

If you don't like this idea, there is one consolation. Whatever your twelve-year-old is doing, you can be sure that other youngsters of about the same age are doing something very much like it. It is not your child—or your class—alone. This human plan is human nature; it is a part of everyone everywhere.

Your baby has a two-way throat? The food goes up as easily as it goes down? It is not just your child who has the wrong idea. This is all babies the country over.

Your two-year-old likes cigarette butts to play with as well as the prettiest toy? It is not just your child who has queer tastes. This is all youngsters, wherever you look.

Your five-year-old is a cowboy and Indian rolled into one? It is not just your youngster who has to shoot guns. This is children with a capital C.

Your six-year-old has a broken heart if he can't come in first? This isn't a nasty competitiveness raising its ugly head. This is the age, wherever you find them.

"About four, and the noise she makes!" "About five, and the words he says!" "About six, and the way he complains!" "About eight, and those stupid rhymes will drive me crazy!" "About ten, and the junk in his room!" But save the exclamation marks.

Each of us raises his own children within the four walls of his home. We teach our own classes and we shut the door. We see our own youngsters and we think they are all special. But there is a common humanity in each one of them—the human plan unfolding that makes them brothers under the skin.

Each child and every child acts the way he does because of the growth that has gone on. Each child and every child cannot act in a different way until more months of growing have passed. The temptation is to see each alone and to think: It is only this one child. . . . Mine is the only one. But everybody is doing it because each one is human.

Who Is the Boss Here?

These laws of growth are stubborn laws. You can't move them, you can't change them, you can't control them. They are the child, from the moment he is born. And they stay with him, and they run through everything he does. They are a tough, deep bedrock down, down inside. Ungiving, unbudging, there to stay.

You can throw your weight around as much as you want to, but you cannot make a three-month-old talk. You cannot teach a five-month-old to walk. You won't persuade a two-year-old to be generous or a three-year-old to read or a four-year-old to menstruate. Tricky skills can't reach down to make an organ grow. Loud voices can't frighten a nervous system into maturing. Threats can't speed up calcification. Something inside the child has the final say, not you.

We like to think that people are captains of their own ship. "If only he would try . . ." is a favorite hope. "He doesn't want to . . ." is our pet complaint. We are great believers in will power and in determination. We think that if a man is a man and not a mouse he ought to be able to control what he does. You can find it written out over countless mantelpieces: "Where there's a will there's a way."

But this is not true about growing. A youngster may wish and wish and wish, but all of his good will cannot make the muscles

controlling the movements of his eye one day older. A baby may be full of the best intentions in the world, but not all of his grand desire can make his stomach larger so that he can hold enough food to carry him through the night. A youngster can say, "Day by day in every way . . ." until he is blue in the face, but it is growth inside and not determination that makes the ten-year-old really concerned about following the exact rules of a game instead of making them up as he goes along.

There comes a time when youngsters are so concerned about cleanliness that the big job is to get them out of the bathroom. There comes a time when they are so law-abiding that they re-

mind you of the speed limits. There comes a time when they accept so fully "the right thing to do" that they are ashamed of us uncouth old folks who have spent our lives dinning correctness into them. But growth sets the time.

Bones and muscles and organs and nerves are in the driver's seat. We have to let this knowledge make us humble.

Humble, yet Still Strong

This is more than some people can take. It knocks the wind right out of their sails. Talk about working with the grain of children! This goes against their adult grain.

After all, what is the sense of being an adult if you can't tell children what to do . . . and when . . . and how . . . and make them like it? What is the sense of being more experienced? Or of having gone to school to study? Of having lived more years? For some the whole game is up if they can't hold the reins. They get very mad about it.

"I'll hold your nose until those mashed potatoes stay down."

"You can cry your eyes out, but I won't feed you at 2 A.M. any more."

"You can sit on that pot until the cows come home, but that's where you are going to have your bowel movement."

Others just assume that of course Father Knows Best. They never give any alternative a second thought. I remember a doctor who told me: "Why, certainly it's the thing to do. It worked with my own child. When she was ten months old I smashed every nursing bottle in the house. She wouldn't drink out of a cup for a week. Boy! How she cried! She was so dry the tears couldn't come. But she finally drank from a cup. They all do."

Of course, people are not always this crude. There is a sweetness-and-light approach. "We don't expect all children to read at six." Oh, dear, no! "Why, some children, perfectly normal, don't read until they are seven or eight; they are simply slow growers."

But we will be darned if they get out of the first grade until they read. You can read at any age that suits you, just so long as you do it in the first grade.

You have heard the old joke: "The four happiest years of my life I spent in the first grade." But it is no joke when you are doing it. Whether it is with a hammer or a velvet glove, this is the old "make-them" approach again: "Fail them if they don't. . . . Hold them back until they do. . . . Keep after them and make them." And it is tough luck for the child if he can't.

Picture yourself at the top of the Empire State Building. They are urging you: "Fly. Try it. Come on, you can. Just spread your wings and try. Darn you. TRY!" And you don't have your wings . . . yet. Many a child is in the same position.

If someone is urging you to do something that isn't yet in your power, it doesn't make much difference whether they are nice or mean about it. If you haven't grown enough to do the job, you feel defeat. An emptiness inside yourself, an anger at the people pressing you, a giving up, an urge to hit out—just what you feel will depend on you. But it isn't an inspiring feeling. And you can't do better for having it, now or the next time.

Grown-ups don't have to shove children. You can be humble. You can know that growth has the controlling power, growth calls the turns, growth sets the pace. But instead of making you weak, knowing this can make you creative.

You can see your job as setting the stage. You fix the environment. You work so that when a child is ready to grow, you have made it possible and easy and simple for him. This is where your adult strength comes in. This is where you become powerful.

Concentrate on the child's surroundings. Fix them so that he can glide into the next move of his development when he has grown enough to do the gliding. The child still throws the switch, but he does it IF you have opened up the track ahead. The two of you work together as a smooth-running team.

This is an active role; it is not passive. This is a creative, thinking, planning, arranging, facilitating, easing role. You are humble, but not because you have abdicated in favor of children: "Now I suppose they can do anything they want to do." You are humble because you have a true sense of your own importance: "Of all the things they want to do, I'm the one who guides them into those that have the most importance."

Timing

You use your keen sense of timing. You know that youngsters of about such-and-such an age often can manage mashed potatoes. You offer them to your child, but his lips and tongue and mouth tell you what to do next. If he takes them, fine. If he pushes them out, fine too. You wait a little longer before offering them again. But you are the person who offers them.

You know the age when children often can pull themselves up into a standing position. When this time is coming, you put your child in a spot where there are low ledges, where he can get a grip on a table top or a crib side if he wants to. If he does, fine. If he doesn't, he is still a wonderful crawler.

Usually somewhere around this time children build a tower with blocks. You make sure that the ground is level and that the child has blocks that fit one on top of the other. If he just sucks them or holds them in his hand or lays them on the floor one beside the other, that is still all right with you.

About this time many children want to feed themselves. That means you get spoons your child can handle, a dish with a deep side, a pusher, food the child can pick up in his fingers. But if he is not ready and still wants you to do the work, you are not dismayed.

And it is about this time that youngsters like to add objects and figures to their block-building to make it more real. You put

wooden people and cars and trucks where he can get them. You make them available, but the child does the reaching out.

Many children begin to read at about this age? Wonderful. You have books all around. You have pictures with writing underneath them. You label objects where that makes sense. But you don't rub children's noses in the reading. Life goes right on with worthwhile activities for youngsters who are play children. As they are ready they will pick out the reading parts and say: "What is that word. . . . Help me with. . . . Show me where it says . . ."

Channels, not Dams

Some people have to prove their adulthood by hitting children over the head with it. With a child-development point of view, the adult gives. The adult shifts. The adult accommodates himself to where the child is.

To do this you have to feel strong and be strong, not simply sound strong. You can't shift easily if you are afraid that any little movement will get you off balance. You can't give much if you are afraid that it may mean a breakthrough. You can't accommodate yourself if you suspect that people are trying to take advantage of you.

The weak person has to say No and Stop. The strong person, even though humble, can afford to say GO. You are trying to open up possibilities instead of clamping down. Your goal is to make channels instead of dams.

"This age likes to make noise. What is a song we can sing that builds on that? How about *Pop Goes the Weasel?*"

"This age is so social. They jabber-jabber-jabber with their friends all the time. I wonder if I can try some committee work so that talk and small groupings will be legal?"

"This age has ants in its pants. They always want to be on the go. I'll have to fix up that playground so I can capitalize on this. They could learn some real climbing and balance and coordination."

"These youngsters are not reading children yet. But we don't learn just from books. I'm going to take them on a lot of trips; I'm going to bring people into the classroom; I'm going to use many pictures and exhibits and displays. This age can learn facts if they have the chance to learn them their way."

I Give Up

You open up channels because you feel strong. You do it because this is how you guide youngsters. There is no note of sadness here, nothing of regret.

A cartoon in a magazine shows two souls marooned on an island in the middle of the ocean. One fellow sighs and says: "Well. At least the neighbors won't bother us."

Another cartoon shows a husband and wife perched on the roof of their house. Water is all around them. The house is being swept away in a flood. The husband turns to friend wife and says: "It could be worse. At least this gives you time to wash my shirts."

Still another cartoon (if you can stand another one) shows a house that has just burned down. Everything is gone. The ruins are smoking and there are some hot embers. A sad little man, the owner, is cooking himself a fried egg over the last flickering flame.

This is making the best of a bad situation. It is looking for the bright spot in the storm. It is an attitude of resignation: "Oh well. If they have to be that way, I suppose they have to." But the whole tone and feeling are wrong.

Parents and teachers who think in terms of channels instead of dams are positive about it. We are glad youngsters are the way

they are. We are going to capitalize on it. This is IT and we are going to town. THIS is what they can do. . . . THIS is what they like. . . . THIS is what they want.

Always the open door. And you are the person who opens it. The child marches through, but he needs you to be there. The illustration in any children's book can make this idea clear. You show the picture to a two-year-old. He is pleased and says: "Choo-choo." It is a good book for him. Show the same picture to a five-year-old. He looks and asks: "Why is the engineer waving to the boy?"

With more and more development inside, children are able to pull out from life those things which their growth makes them ready for. But your job is to make sure that there is something good there for them to pull out.

The Modern School Program

This is the beauty of what schools call the activity program. It has many names and it is worked on in many ways. Essentially, though, the children are living. They are doing something. They are working on a job. They are busy on some responsibility. They are involved in some real doing and they are really busy about it.

As an example, look at this trip a class takes to the airport. How old are the children, you ask? It doesn't really matter. Five-year-olds could go with real profit. They would use their eyes to see, for Fives have grown enough for that. They would ask questions when they got there, for Fives have good language and they like people. They would touch the plane, sit in a seat, hear the motor roar. And they would come back to their classroom full of ideas.

Back in the room, some thumb through books; they will find pictures of planes. Some are painting—planes among other things. Some are working with blocks; they have a whole town and the

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to spot details and for the one whose growth only allows him to see the overall. Every youngster can feel: There is something here for me. Every one can know: This catches me where I live; this lets me do what I can do and it doesn't try to make me do more than I am able. The stage is set by a creative adult, humble, decent. And each child takes from it what has meaning for him.

Interest Is Your X-Ray

Growth is an inside business. It is an internal all-covered-up-by-skin kind of thing. The eyes can't penetrate to where each human's time clock is. But we do have a way of knowing how much growth has gone on.

Interest is the X-ray. What a child wants to do. What he wholeheartedly seeks for. What pulls him like a magnet. What he chooses to do over and over. What seems to have hold of him in a firm, tight grip.

You would think that people would be glad to use a tool like this. It is right at hand. You keep watching for what a youngster persistently seeks out, what he selects over and over, from the stage you have set. Here is a handy bit of technical parent-teacher know-how that ought to be right down our alley.

Some people prefer to guess. Take a quick look, close your eyes and spin around three times. Then you make a stab at it. If they weigh this much at birth, feed them every four hours . . . even though the child wakes up and cries and makes sucking motions with his lips. If they have lived this number of weeks, cut out their early morning feeding . . . even though the child screams because he is hungry inside.

Make them take an afternoon nap until this time, even though they never sleep. If they are six, make them read. If they are seven, make them spell. If they are eight, get going on those multiplication tables. And at nine comes geography, and at ten long division.

Kids have a game that is run the same way. "Bzzzzzzz. Bzzzz. Mumble, mumble. A hundred! Here I come, ready or not."

Teacher's Pet

If you sell out for a guess and close your eyes to the signs that a child's deep-seated interest can give you, you play favorites. The chances are that your whole game will be geared to the fast grower.

The fast grower is the one who was lucky in choosing his parents and the right set of ancestors. For a child's rate of growth is something he inherits. Each one of us is a little fast or a little slow. It is only all of us lumped together, who come out on the right day, as the book says we should. Each of us lingers a little longer here and hurries a little bit there. It is only when you pile us all together that you can see us at each station stop. Each of us is traveling the same route and making all the ports of call, but we set our own private pace in doing it.

Always and for everyone both arms reach out first, the whole hand scoops in, and only then comes the ability to pick up something between the thumb and the forefinger. But some babies will do it at eight months and some at seven and some at ten.

Always and for all girls the breasts enlarge first, some pubic hair grows, and then comes the first menstruation. But some enter puberty at ten and some not until sixteen.

Not that the child decides. This is momma and poppa at work, with four grandparents on the panel, and great-grandparents and great-greats before them ad infinitum. It all goes back to the genes a child gets. And of course a child can't choose. He is stuck. He has to take what he gets, and that is that.

But the fast grower is lucky. He will get his teeth early. He will crawl early and stand early and walk early. The chances are that he will talk before other children. He may be bright or just average, but he has selected his genes wisely: he will run and

climb and throw earlier. His nervous system will develop a little sooner, and the muscles controlling the movements of his eyes will come along a little faster. Lo and behold! he will be reading in the first grade and will take school and lessons right in his stride.

Without his knowing why, it will somehow be easier for him to sit still when the teachers want him to, to be obedient, to keep as quiet as they like. All the way through—by being smart about what he inherits—he will be smart about a lot of things: memorizing arithmetic tables; figuring out long division; being able to make good generalizations . . .

We like speed in America. Drive across the country sometime. The first thing they ask you when you reach California is: "How many days did you do it in?" And the quicker you went, the better people like it.

The speed-consciousness seeps into our homes and our schools. Our children are in a race. "Oh, your baby is still wearing diapers. Mine is in training pants"—and little Billy wins that one. "Oh, yours still naps in the afternoon. Mine gave up his naps some time ago"—and chalk up another for Billy boy.

What happens to all the non-winners? You hear so much of this: "Don't ask so many foolish questions. . . . Don't slam the door every time you come in. . . . Do you always have to do what everyone else is doing? . . . Don't you have any sense of time?" It is another way of saying: Be eight, instead of three; I can take you better then. Be fourteen instead of six; it is easier on me. Be twenty instead of ten; I can understand you better. Be a grownup and not a child; then I can really appreciate you.

If parents and teachers are going to guess, the cards will be stacked in favor of the fast grower. (Except you and I have to read for the word "cards": "organs, muscles, nerve endings, bones . . .") But it is not fair to build a system that makes just a few children lucky.

Be Yourself

In Prokofieff's *Peter and the Wolf* the bird and the duck have a silly argument. The duck quacks: "What kind of a bird are *you* if you can't swim?" The bird comes right back: "What kind of a bird are *you* if you can't fly?"

The child-development point of view avoids this foolishness. It lets Six-month-olds be six months old. It lets Sixes be six. It lets everyone be himself. Every person and every age has its limitations. You never can do everything, but you always can do some things. Here is a point of view that appreciates you for what you are.

This youngster is fascinated by water. When you can't find him around the house, there is only one place to look: at the sink. Time and time again that is where he is, a little stool pulled up, the faucets on, and the water splashing into glasses and pots and pans. You don't have to know why this is good for him. It is enough to know: he seeks it out every time, over all other things to do. Let him be himself and do what he has to.

This youngster wants to play, play, play. That is when he becomes alive: when he is running, building, making believe; when he is with his friends, when something active is going on. You don't have to know the whole story of why this should be true. It is enough to know that it is. He is fascinated by play, so capitalize on his interest and make it the best play you can.

This child clutters up his room like a pawnshop. He is always picking up things, always saving them. His pockets are full, his closet shelves and every inch of bureau top. You don't have to be able to spell out what is happening inside of him that makes him this way. It is enough to know that he is. Side with this interest, and you can turn this collector into an avid student.

Children almost shout at us with their persistent choices: "This is what I am like. . . . This is what I can do. . . . This is where

I am ready to learn." The details are all on the inside, but interest on the outside tells us what we need to know.

Fear of Habits

We have no other way of going inside of the youngster, yet we stay suspicious of the whole thing. Perhaps it is because we have trained too many Missouri mules or Tennessee walking horses or oxen for our plains or Pekingese for our apartment houses. We don't like the idea of capitalizing on what youngsters want to do. We find it simpler to "get them young, treat them rough, and tell them nothing."

Perhaps it is our mechanical, factory-assembly-line culture. We know all about how *things* are made. Get a mold or a pattern and make sure it is right. Knock out any flaws you see. Watch out for weak spots. Make it perfect from the very beginning. And then you can turn out the product by the thousands, if you have made a good start.

We carry this idea over to people. Knock out the bad habits. Don't let them ever get away with anything once. Rub out any evil the minute it starts, or it will continue and run all the way through.

Suppose you feed the baby when he is hungry. Won't he want you to give in to him all the time?

Suppose you let him go on sucking. Won't he suck forever?

Suppose you give him constructive and guided play when he is five and six and seven. If he loves it, will he ever want to read?

We carry over our mechanical knowledge of things and we apply it to people. The result is that we are plagued with doubts. We see what it is that youngsters are craving. We have no trouble knowing what they are all ripe to do. Their interest is a clear revealer, but we can't bring ourselves to go along with it.

"He doesn't want to practice a bit, but if I don't make him will he ever like music?"

"I have to force them to work on arithmetic, but I don't want any bad habits to start."

"They would spend all day in the museum if I would let them, but we have work to be done."

Somehow we have to shake off something that our whole way of life has built into us. We must at least put it in its place. Things, objects, products have no life. People do. With things perhaps we must be careful to make the beginning just the way we want the end to be. But with people there is growth inside. We can build on what they want to do now, and that leads us into something new that they will want to do later.

Going Overboard

Some people take interest too literally. I think of one father who became very disturbed. He had read that interest was a very important guide to what a child was ready to do. Now his four-year-old was asking him if he could drive the car. The poor man was in a tizzy. The only way he could get his feet back on the ground was to become completely skeptical. "Are you saying that I should let him drive just because he asks me to?"

This father was a college professor. He could translate French, German, and Spanish into English, but he could not translate four-year-old talk into sense. Instead of reading it: "I want to make believe that I am big. I want to be like you. I want to pretend to be just as grown-up as you are because you matter so much to me," the father took it literally and blew his top. He not only got mad at the idea of interest; he got mad at his boy too. That was too bad, when you look at what the child was really saying.

Some people do read Interest word-for-word, with every foot-

note and all the fine print . . . and miss the big point. A youngster wants his seventeenth ice-cream cone. "We'd better give it to him, because he is asking for it."

It is nine-thirty and the five-year-old still isn't in bed. "He says he isn't tired, so I guess we have to let him stay up."

It is past time for supper, but the youngster insists on one more ride on the merry-go-round. "It will make us all very late, but you are supposed to let them do what they want to."

This is dangerous in a lot of ways. In the first place, adults who feel pushed by what children want to do almost always land on the children sooner or later. They are giving in not because they want to and believe it is good. They think they are supposed to.

Someone else—some book, some article, some speech—wants them to. They are not themselves seeking for a key to a child's inner growth. The same thing happens to adults as happens to children who are pushed: there is an explosion. The adult gives in and gives in—reluctantly. Then all of a sudden he swings out at the child.

The idea of doing what is comfortable is important for grown-ups, just as it is for children. We each have our own toleration point. Every one of us is a mixture. Our culture, our own education, our particular personality structure makes each one of us himself. There cannot be a golden law which every one has to follow to the last dot. It would ask too much from some of us and too little from others.

Each of us makes his own procedures as he goes along. Each of us works so that he gradually extends his toleration point. Each of us tries to be able increasingly to let children be more themselves. But at any one point none of us can do more than to be himself. When we forget this, we get ulcers inside and eventually the children get bruises outside.

A Dull Acquiescence

This literalness is bad for children too. If you confuse what they-happen-to-seem-to-like with deep-seated, persistent interest, you are bound to give youngsters a dish-water diet.

I think of some youngsters who go to the movies every whip-stitch, and the movies they are allowed to see when they go. "But the children like it," parents say.

I think of the junky books that are read to children. Trash. With cheap gaudy pictures, cheap language, a cheap story. "But the children like them," people say.

The diet of sweets and soda pop that some children live by. . . . The crayoning ad infinitum that goes on in some primary grades. . . . The workbook after workbook that is the stuff of so many schools—but "It's what the children want."

Interest is not the equivalent of acquiesence. Naturally, if no one opens up any other possibilities to you, you might just as well twiddle your thumbs, play tick-tack-toe or solitaire. If nothing else is allowed, you might just as well get what fun you can out of filling in the missing letters or drawing lines to connect up the right word and picture. But there is no creative choice here. No selecting out because your whole body tells you to. No vigorous preferring because you have to. And that is what interest really is.

It is not the equivalent of amusement either. Keeping them busy. Anything to pass the time. Somehow we have to learn to draw a line between a superficial excitement and a basic contentment. Between tickling children and the kind of happiness that pleases because it goes down deep to muscles, bones, organs, and a developing nervous system.

Interest means that youngsters are happy. That goes against the puritan streak in many of us. We can't help being suspicious of something that works out too well for people. The lesson

ought to hurt a little bit if it is to be any good. The medicine ought to taste terrible to be effective. The sweater ought to scratch to keep you warm. Some people can't help raising their eyebrows at interest. Looking for what children deeply want is being too nice to kids. "We ought to make it a little tough for them."

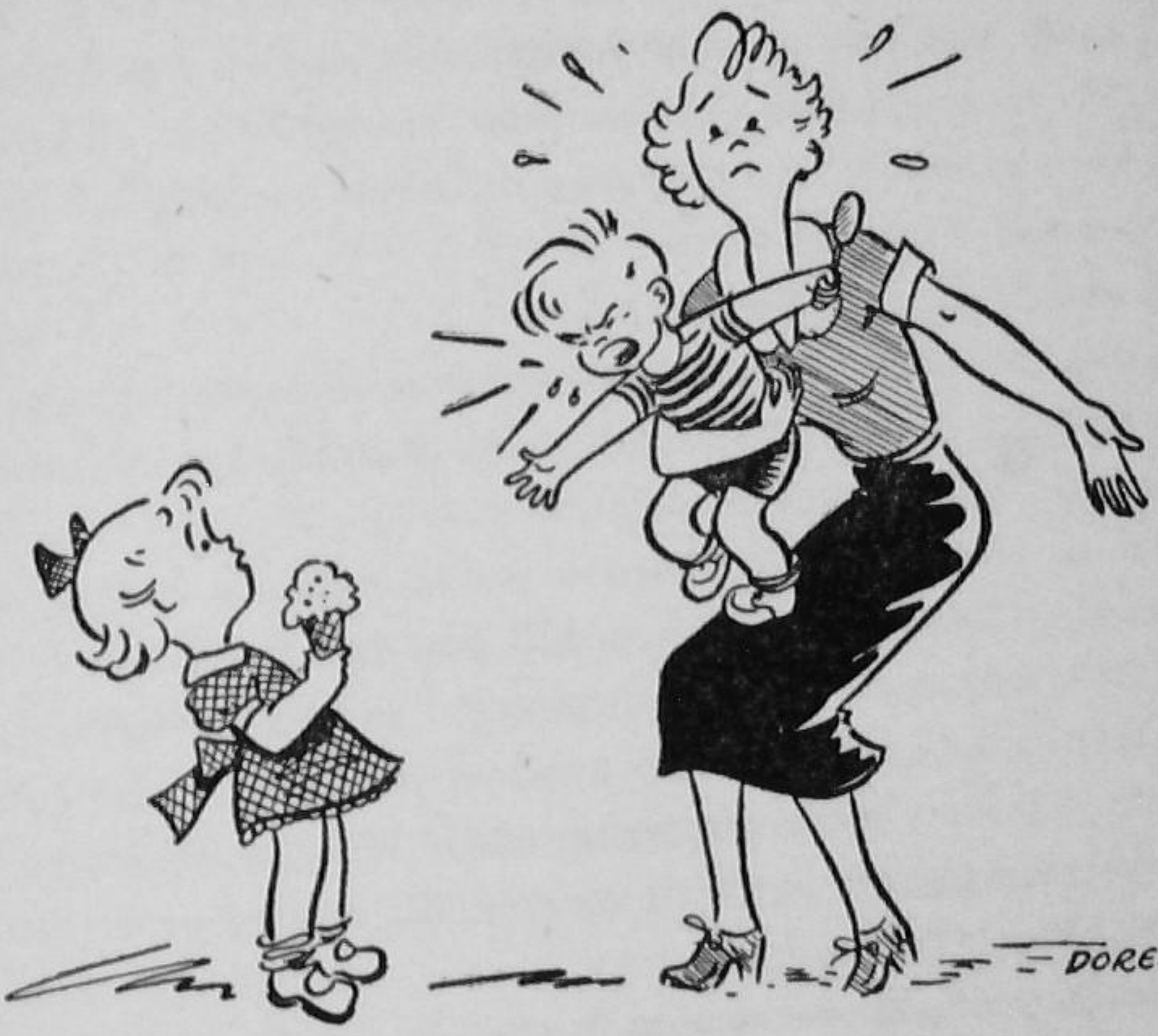
But while scorning amusement, the child-development point of view says: we want children to be happy. They must be happy. Their happiness, however, must come through doing those things that mean maximum growth for them. This is the way children live well for today; this is the way they build strength for tomorrow. This is a giving in to youngsters, but this use of interest is a positive and strong and creative approach.

THE THIRD IDEA

Children Want Things Out of Life

"A twelve-year-old always acts with his twelve-year-old muscles, bones, organs, nerves . . . but he doesn't act hit-or-miss. Children are always after something, and their urges can be powerfully strong. They are not all selfish urges, however. Every child wants to Give fully as much as he wants to Get. Children have to be satisfied —you can't get away from that—but it is a balanced diet that they want."

6. *"If It's Not One Thing, It's Another"*



Children are seeking, wanting, wishing creatures. Always inside of them there are driving forces that push them toward satisfactions which they feel they must have. The hunger for these satisfactions, the search for them, makes the person do what he does. Youngsters always are goal-minded. They want to get—they have to get—what they are after.

This third big idea about children is no more earth-shaking than the first two. We have bumped into it so often that we have a common expression which sums it up beautifully: "If it's not one thing, it's another."

A newborn baby has to have air, for example. At the very moment of birth this is the major concern. We say: "He *needs*

air . . ." He has to have it or else he dies. This is a human requirement.

Once the need for air is taken care of, then the list of needs grows. A warm room . . . a clean room . . . a place to sleep, some food, sucking . . . some human relationship too. Someone to handle him, someone to stroke him, to cuddle him. The baby is on his way. It will be a raccoon coat before too long!

More and More and More

People have this distinctive capacity to entertain more and more hungers. This can be hard going at times, but it certainly seems to be the way we are made.

Some of you know how hard it is for a family to live on a budget. You count your money and you make a plan. If you stick to the plan you can scrape through the month. Everything looks rosy and under control. And then someone in the family sees an ad! It may be for something small: new ice skates, a pop-up toaster, an electric razor; it may be for television or a new car. But bingo! The budget bursts.

After the purchase everyone in the family agrees: now we have all we need. We may have to spend some money for handkerchiefs or underwear or a new pair of socks . . . the ordinary, everyday things. But there is nothing big that we really want and have to have. Nothing that will throw the budget out of line. And everyone believes it until the next ad comes along!

It is very sad, but distinctly human.

The father of the family is apt to say: "This is a dog's life." He finds it a struggle to bring in enough cash to keep up with everyone's appetite. But he is wrong. This isn't a dog's life at all. This is exactly what the human life is like.

Look at our dog. Lady gets along beautifully on practically nothing. The same old mush day after day, a place to sleep, lots of chances to eliminate. Lady loves to be patted; her black tail

almost wiggles off when we stroke her and say: "Good girl!" She likes to chase a ball or a stick. She explores every now and again and comes back covered with sticktights and burrs. And twice a year Lady has gentlemen callers. She is very anxious to get out with them, they are very anxious to be in with her. And that is about all there is to Lady.

But humans!

We go on and on and on. The more we grow, the more we want. The more we can see, the more we have to have. Never is there an emptiness inside or a vacuum. Never a time when just a few simple satisfactions sum us up and tell our story. For this too is what growth means—the exciting addition of satisfactions that are important.

A father goes away on a trip. His five-year-old probably expects him to bring back a present, but the five-month-old doesn't care at all. The baby is simply concerned with food, sleep, elimination and some friendly attention. But we say in families: "You wait. It won't be long now. You will have to bring her something, too."

Or look at birthday parties. You can get away very nicely with a simple celebration when a youngster is one.* But: "You wait now. It won't be long . . ." Four- and five-year-olds surprise you. They invite the whole neighborhood, and you don't even know that the invitations have gone out. And try to talk a seven-year-old out of inviting his whole class to the party.

Three-year-olds are very happy to color a whole sheet of paper with one color of paint, making it as solid as they possibly can. But in one year, the four-year-old wants a particular color that is just right "to go in there." Bring a four-year-old a

*Sometimes we think the first birthday is very special. We go overboard on it. But the youngster doesn't really care; the adults do. One of the nicest one-year-old birthdays I have ever seen was a lighted candle on a simple cupcake, put before a delighted baby. That was the party.

package of gum, and you make a real hit with him. Bring your eighteen-year-old a package of gum and see what kind of impression you make! A three-year-old is very happy with a tricycle; a six-year-old feels he doesn't have anything if he hasn't a bicycle; and a sixteen-year-old will say you are mean if you don't let him buy a second-hand car.

It is a never-stopping process, and it goes on just because we are human.

Now This, Now That

Our list of satisfactions is continuously expanding. But "expanding" doesn't give the right picture. The number of important satisfactions does grow, but relative importance is changing all the time.

Go back to that newborn. For just a moment, what really counts is getting that child to suck in some oxygen and to start his own breathing apparatus. But once the need for air is taken care of, then sleep and food and sucking and love begin to take on a primary importance. The old satisfactions don't go away, however. We don't slough them off the way a snake gets rid of his skin.

You and I still need air. Think for a moment of how panicky most of us get when we are locked in a closet or when we are swimming and go under or when someone grabs us around the head or when we are taking an anesthetic. The need for oxygen is very much a part of us. But it quickly becomes a well-oiled part, running along smoothly. We don't have to give it a second thought, except in emergencies. We are free to turn our attention to new desires. But these emergencies remind us that the hunger for air hasn't been canceled out. The list has grown bigger and new needs are emphasized more, but old concerns remain a part of us.

Our relations with our parents prove this to us. When we are

very small, our parents mean the whole world to us. Even before we can really tell faces apart, we feel safer when our mothers are with us. We get to know the way mother holds us and picks us up, her particular way, and we like it. We get to know the sound of her voice and her special smell; it is pleasing to us.

There comes a time about the middle of our first year when we do know mother's face. We know it so well that other faces throw us for a loss. A strange face—it may even be father's, and that is hard for a man to take—makes us cry and shrink back. The person who has been feeding us, changing us, bathing us, singing and talking to us, rocking us . . . she is our whole little world. She is solidity and surety and certainty, and that is what we want.

Yet there is another time when this same sweet, dear mother doesn't seem to mean a thing.

A youngster goes to camp, and you have to hit him over the head to write a letter home. It is worth your life to get a kiss out of him when you are leaving on Visitors' Day. He is so wrapped up in his friends, in what he is doing, in all the new activities.

When a fellow is in college, the only time he writes home is when he needs money. And then in marriage young people go off, set up their own homes, become so involved in their own new life, in their friends and jobs and in their own children, that they never write at all. You hear grandparents say: "If you would only send us a penny postcard so that we would know everything was all right . . ."

In the beginning the mother was everything. Now it is the gang that counts or the sweetheart who matters or the children or the job. Yet the "old folks" haven't really dropped out of the picture. They are always there, but in a different perspective. When there is a crisis—a death, an illness, an emergency, an upset—the young come back to give strength to the old, the young go back to get strength from the old.

This process of wider and wider human satisfactions goes on, but it is a whirling, changing, reshaping process. There is a continuous regrouping and realignment and reorganization. One thing you can count on: the human is always seeking something. But another thing is equally true: that now one thing is on top of the pile, and now another. Now one is to the fore, and now another.

This happens even within a day. There are moments when we feel: "I can't go on another minute. I have to get some sleep." But when we have had enough sleep, we sing another tune: "I'd give anything to see somebody, to be out and doing things." But we don't park our need for sleep. It is a part of us, but not so driving now as our wanting company. Another hunger has risen to the top.

To make sense out of people you need a feeling for all this stirring, whirling movement inside of us. You have to know that new goals are constantly coming up, with the old goals constantly a part of us—the new becoming the old and the old becoming the new.

The Language of Behavior

Knowing this, the task is to discover: what matters to a child now? What at this point has real importance to him?

A youngster doesn't put into words the things that matter most to him. This is not because his vocabulary is short. He simply doesn't know. He feels the hunger inside; it makes him do much of what he does do. But it is not a knowing that he can put into words.

The youngster himself cannot say it out but his body can. His tongue cannot tell us but his behavior can: what he does . . . what he avoids . . . whom he seeks out . . . how he does things. This is real language: the language of behavior, the

language of signs and grimaces, the language of gestures, the language of action.

This may sound like a strange language, new to us and hard to get. Actually it is old stuff. We all have had a lot of experience reading it.

Our dealings with it go back into our own past; they are in our present all around us. We do have to sandpaper our fingertips constantly so that we become more and more sensitive to the messages children send us, but we have something to start with. We are much more skilled than we know.

We spoke and understood this language when we were children. We knew when to ask if we could go to the movies and when it was better to shut up and to wait for another time. Something in our mother's face would tell us: a look? a wrinkle? a tightness around the lips? Something of our father would say "Now is the moment" or "Hold off a while": the way he sucked his pipe? a tired way of walking? Neither parent had to put it into words. We could tell. At certain times the answer was almost sure to be Yes; at other times it was certain to be No.

We relied on this language when we were kids in school. One look at a substitute teacher as she walked into the room was enough to tell us: you can get away with murder *or* you better be good. Was it the way her hair was done up? or something about the way she walked? a look in her eyes or the way she held her hands?

And today people are getting over to us what they want to say without putting it into words.

You ask your friend about a movie that he has seen. He holds his nose and you have had a first-class review!

An idea is proposed in a committee meeting. Someone makes a clenched fist and points his thumb straight down. Do you have any doubt what he thinks of the proposal?

You are riding along the highway and you pass a pedestrian.

He too clenches his fist, but now the thumb points level, in the direction you are headed. We even say: "He is *thumbing* a ride." The thumb can speak as well as the tongue.

Even in Disguise

You and I, without special instruction, have become so good at reading these ordinary signs that we get them even when they are disguised.

You watch a speaker before he goes on the stage. He takes one sip of water after another. Do we think: My, he is a thirsty man . . . ? No. We know he is scared inside.

We are getting ready for an examination . . . maybe in a college course or perhaps for a driver's test. We eat and eat and eat. We can't seem to get enough food inside of ourselves. When we are studying we keep a box of candy by our side or we make countless trips to the icebox. Do we fool ourselves into thinking: How our appetites have grown! Or do we know we are frightened, and this is the way we show it?

There is even a common expression: "He is whistling in the dark." He sounds so happy-go-lucky, so brave, and so unconcerned. But we and people long before us have learned to spot what is really going on. The whistle doesn't mean nerve; it means fear. We read the sign for what it truly says.

We look, and we have always looked, even for the very little things: a shoulder shrugged, the raised eyebrow, the blush, a whiteness around the knuckles, the way lips are pursed. There is even an expression: "My hair stood on end." This language of signs, of behavior, of action is something we are familiar with. We don't start from scratch. We are better at interpreting it than we know. The big job isn't so much to sit down and learn; it is to use what we know to make sense out of what children do.

Children's Language

Youngsters are talking this way to us all the time. Not necessarily with these same signs—the yawn, thumbs down, whistling in the dark. . . . They use some of these symbols, but they have a language of their own. If we know this and believe it, we can understand them too.

First we have to know that youngsters have something to say. We have to believe that the children are talking. We have to feel inside of ourselves that there is language here.

Many people won't grant this. They will tell you: "Oh, Johnny! All he wants to do is to play all the time." Johnny has said it: in his choices, in his actions, in what he has selected for himself from every situation. The message has come through clear as a bell. People hear it, but they can't bring themselves to pay attention.

We recognize this as tragedy when we read about it: "We heard the tapping in the freight car but we thought it was rats; we didn't know someone was in there trying to get out"; "We

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fellow feel comfortable. Perhaps you pass the peanuts or bring a chair around. Perhaps you turn the conversation to some area in which your guest is interested. You try to make him feel important. You listen and try to make him feel wanted. You don't belittle or improve or squelch. You want the person to feel he is welcome and respected.

When you treat people this way they do reveal themselves. They feel "at home." But it is not fair to call these techniques. That makes them sound too studied. When you are the host you are simply a decent human being trying to treat another person well. You do the kindly thing. It pays off with all people, including youngsters.

The Open Field

Just your friendliness alone can't bring a youngster out, however. It also takes space and choice and possibility. It takes alternatives and open roads. It takes enough opportunities where there is no one right way. The right way becomes whatever way the person chooses—*his* way. It is under these conditions that people can talk.

You can't tell enough about a person if you only see the top of his head. A lecturer is always in this boat. He gets some few signs from yawns and fidgets, from the intentness of expressions and from the number of people who are knitting. But he can't tell what the people are like: what matters to them, what they are really concerned about, what is their personality.

This is the vice of most college teaching. The professor can tell whether a student takes notes or doesn't, knits or doesn't, sleeps or doesn't, comes to class or doesn't. But there is seldom enough behavior going on to give him any real idea: who is liked by this group and who is excluded? who feels sure of himself and who is empty inside? who has had enough of affection and who is really lonely? Students sitting at desks, looking up

into the professor's face, sitting quiet for fifty minutes by the clock: there is no leeway here for signs to come through.

Freedom of Choice

Lack of activity puts the lid on. Lack of choice does, too. There can be much moving around in schoolrooms, but if all of it means following directions, the teacher can't learn very much. If everyone is doing what the rules say he should, you don't see the person. You only see the rules. Cut along these lines, paste it here, draw a line between the word and the picture, underline the words that are the same, fill in with the color where it tells you to, make a picture that looks like this—too much of this and the person is lost.

Finger paint shows us the contrast. With it you can make a picture, any kind you feel like. You can make it with your fingertips or nails; with your fingers (all of them or just your thumb); with your whole hand or the heel of your hand; with your fingers, your hand, and your whole arm. You don't even have to make a picture. You can just play around smearing back and forth. You can cover the whole paper or you can work with just part. You can put one color on or as many as you please. But whatever you do, it is right. It is you. And it is good.

When youngsters live in this land of opportunity, then their behavior can talk to you. You can spot more easily their distinctive concerns. The child takes shape because of what he does. He comes to have a meaning of his own. He is talking all the time through the choices he makes and those he ignores, through the way he goes about what he does and through his attitude as he does it.

But finger paint is just one example. All art offers choice: easel paint, clay, wood. . . . All forms of expression: free writing, acting-out, puppets, talks children give. . . . The freer times of the day: the start and the end of school, the playground and

cafeteria, the hallways. . . . The times when children are in motion: on trips, in committee work.

A teacher has to get enough of this choice into her regular program or else youngsters, despite all climate of permission, will still act with blinders on. They will follow the straight and narrow, and the teacher won't learn much.

On page 49 we talked a little about the activity program: youngsters working on jobs, carrying responsibilities, following through on interests. We said that this was the way each child learned best. We have to see now that this works for teachers too. Teachers need activity or else they don't learn. Teachers need to see children doing—choosing, deciding, reacting freely—or else the teacher stays in the dark.

These, then, are the three foundations we build on:

The skill that we all have in reading the language of behavior . . .

The simple decency in human relations that is a part of every one of us . . .

The opportunity for choice and activity which teachers know how to provide.

Using these three with our eyes on the child, we can tell what it is that he is after, what satisfactions matter to him, what he will struggle to get no matter what.

7. Top of the Brain and Way Down Deep

These satisfactions that humans seek come in layers. There is a top layer of plans, desires, hopes, wishes. These are real, but they are not deeply embedded in the whole fiber of our beings. Often these are the hungers that we know most about. We usually can put them into words. We can say them out or write them out. Knowing them best, we think that these are the whole of people. We get fooled by the fact that these are more out in the open.

You meet a friend as you step out of your house and you tell him: "I'm going down to mail a letter and I want to see if there is anything for me at the post office." And this is your goal. This is what has determined all your actions: your getting up, your

getting dressed, your going out, the walk that lies ahead of you, your recalling the combination of your post-office box.

But your friend says: "Why don't you do that later? Come along with me. I'm headed downtown to do some shopping."

You change your plan. You decide for yourself that you would rather have the company or the ride or the sights downtown. You are the boss and you make the decision.

But there are deeper layers of goals too. We can't always spell these out for other people to see and we can't always spell them out for ourselves to see. These too guide our actions. And because they are deeper, more embedded, we cannot always control them. They have more power than we do. They are a part of us, they are built into us, they are us. But they can be the boss.

Overwhelming Strength

Sleep often shows this to us. At college we want an A; we want to pass the exam; we want to graduate. But we just can't keep our eyes open. We fall asleep while we are studying and the book drops out of our hand.

Or we fall asleep while we are driving. We know we shouldn't. It is dangerous. We can see it, we have read about it, we have heard gruesome radio programs about what happens if you drive when you are tired. We drink coffee, we smoke cigarettes, we leave the car window open. But almost daily a tragedy like this appears in some newspaper: *Driver Sleeps at Wheel. Car Runs Through Open Bridge*. Persuasion doesn't work. The usual educational techniques fail. Will power isn't strong enough. A deep-down hunger wins out because it is so deep down. It is the boss.

You have read about sentries falling asleep at their posts, even though they know the penalty is death.

You have read about shipwrecked people lapping salt water, even though they know it will make them more thirsty.

The mirages on a desert are an example. The wanderer has so great a thirst that it changes everything he sees: the far-off sand becomes a lake, the shadows of the dunes are coolness and the promise of a spring. There is no point in arguing: "You will waste your time running over there."

Nor are these deep-layer satisfactions only physical: food, drink, sleep, self-preservation perhaps. You have heard some people described like this: "He will do anything for a laugh." And about others we say: "She would cut off her nose to spite her face." And about still others: "He is going to be right if it kills him."

There is the "yes man" who will sell his soul for security; that hunger controls his every action. There is the person to whom money means everything; he would go to the devil for it. Another person hungers for respectability; no matter what, he has to keep up a front.

Some hungers can be that strong. Without our knowing it, they drop a film over our eyes and make us see what we want to see. Just as thirst transforms the desert, some great need may transform a classroom for a child so that it is not what it actually is, a place for study. "Maybe I can do something there that will make people notice me." A playing field becomes not simply a place for exercise: "Maybe I can come in first in all the races." A teacher is not just a teacher: "Maybe she will say something nice to me and be kind."

Occasionally we know what we are doing. We are invited to a dinner, for example, but in our mind's eye we see it as more than food and company and good fun. We say to ourselves: "This is a chance to get in some words for . . ." whatever is our pet idea.

But most of the time the need is so buried inside of us that we are not even aware of what it is making us do. If we are lucky we sometimes discover it later. At the breakup of an unhappy marriage, a girl who had learned a lot about herself

said: "I know now what I did. I really wanted someone to be a father to me. I read into him all the kindliness and protection that I really wish my own father had given me."

We need to know that these hungers inside can be overwhelming. We can't predict in advance for everyone: this is what will run the show, because the list is different for each one of us. But one thing we can be sure of: the need for some satisfactions will run it. Some goals will always be at the top level; the person can change them as he goes along. But other hungers will have the capacity to control. They can drive a person, over his will, until he gets what he feels he needs.

No Stinginess

The crucial question is: how can you make these hungers stay in line? How can you keep them from becoming so deep-rooted that the person is at their mercy? How can you free new satisfactions to march in and take their place?

The answer is simple to say: *Feed them.*

Give the person what he is after, and then he is satisfied.

Help him get what he feels he has to have and he no longer has to have it quite so much.

You can't talk the sleepy driver out of his tiredness, but you can sleep him out of it.

You can't talk the thirsty wanderer out of his mirage, but you can drink him out of it.

You can't talk the hungry waif out of his appetite, but you can feed him out of it.

Candy companies operate on this basis. I suppose every child dreams of working in a chocolate factory where he can eat and eat and eat. Factories say to their employees: "Help yourself to all you want." Soon people have had enough and they don't want any more.

Or children dream of the time when they will have enough

money to buy all the sodas that they want. But when they grow up they buy one or two, and that is enough.

Every one of us has seen this at work. I once knew a man whose heart's desire was to have a rest cure in a hospital where he could sleep just as long as he wanted to. After he had been there a short while, the nurse's problem was to keep him in bed. He had had enough. Now he was ready to move on to something new: activity, people, food, change . . .

This approach of feed-the-hunger-and-you-satisfy is a constructive one. It is a positive approach. It says: "We accept you the way you feel and we give in to it. Then you will change yourself." You begin where the child is. You give him what he seeks. The result is that you free him to grow. New hungers come to take the place of old. Less and less of his energy has to be siphoned off by the search for old satisfactions. More and more of his strength is available to use for today's needs and today's living.

Court Is Not in Session

Our everyday wisdom supports this, yet many people are bothered by it. With children they want to be the judges. "I will give in to this need; I will hold out on that one. . . . I approve of this and I understand it; I disapprove of that."

People start out with absolute standards in their minds. The child has to come up to them or they hold out and sometimes punish. A seven-year-old in second grade ought to want to learn. He ought to want to be good. He ought to want to cooperate with his teacher. This little Philip who does everything with one eye on what the other kids will think—has no right to act that way. This little Judy who onlys wants to be close to adults to get some loving—has no right to act that way. But we can't be judges with people. We have to accept each person as he is. Accept him where we find him. Accept him with a determination to feed the hungers that happen to be inside of him.

This doesn't mean that we give up our standards. It does not mean that we are no longer concerned with the long-run right and wrong. It does not mean that we approve of what the person is doing now. It does not mean that we want him to go on doing it forever. But it does mean that, in order to help him grow, we will feed the feeling that is inside of him *now*.

Real Fairness

Our understanding will shield us from another common doubt: "If I do it for one child, won't all the others expect it, too?" This doubt stays the hand of many a teacher who leans toward giving a Billy or a Jimmy or an Eloise what he or she as an individual is seeking.

The doubts and fears will vanish when we know: these hungers are individual. We are not talking now of those things that are common to all children because of the age they are. These are satisfactions peculiar in their intensity to specific children. Frankie may have a very urgent and persistent need to show off. But it is inside of him in a very special ferocity. The other youngsters in the group want attention, yes. We all do. But they need only enough to feel they belong and are reasonably appreciated. Their need is not the fermented one that Frankie's is. They have other concerns which matter more to them.

Here is an example from home life. You have a special treat for your guests—a plate of nut brownies. They appeal to everyone, and everyone takes a piece. This is like attention or love or praise or notice or approval in the classroom. Everyone wants some. And if it looks delicious enough at first, there may even be a playful scramble with each person pushing to get his piece.

But you pass the plate again. Most people will take a second or a third, but after that they say: "No, thank you." They have had enough—all that their particular appetites require. They are no longer hungry, even for this tasty morsel. A new hunger has

taken its place for them: to play cards or to talk or to dance or to look at television. Now that one hunger is met, others are free to rise to the top and to take its place.

But some of your guests do want more. You give it to them. And you pass the plate again and again. One person eats and eats because this fills some need of his inside. But he eats while others talk. He eats while others play. There is no jealousy, no scramble now. Each person is getting what he wants and feels he has to have.

And it works the same way in your classroom. Everyone wants enough for himself. But those youngsters who are reasonably in balance are not too concerned with yesterday's needs. They are functioning at today's level. Their satisfactions are coming from their work and their friends. It is no threat to them that Frankie gets more brownies than they do . . . or more love or attention for the time being.

This is hard to believe because it cuts across our concept of fairness. Teachers in particular think it is important that they be impartial. Everyone must be treated alike. Each person must get an equal share of the good things in the room. This is sportsmanship and fair play. We all value these things highly.

But a new concept must take its place: each person gets what he needs. People are individuals. People are themselves. Equal shares mean too much for some, more than they really want; and too little for others, less than they really need to have.

We have to know what we are dealing with. Dividing a cake, choosing teams, handling material things—perhaps the share-alike way of being fair is the thing to do. But in these subtleties of human needs—in love and attention and praise and support—each person must get a basic Enough, but some people have to have still more. Here a new definition of "fairness" is required. It must mean treating people as individuals, making sure that each gets what he as a person has to have.

Of course we always have to keep an eye out so that no youngster appears too different. Accepting differences is hard for children, whether the outward sign is glasses or crutches, fatness, skin color, boastfulness, or shyness. But this is different from a class resenting a child's getting what he needs, if there is a basic Enough for everyone. This is the slow building up of the difficult understanding that everyone is different in some ways, and that we are all still worthwhile.

Some Fences, Please

For most people the biggest job is to bring themselves to be willing to say Yes to youngsters, to feel confident that feeding hungers will keep them in place. But for some people it is a real task ever to say No.

It will help to know that a really basic need of children is to have some reasonable rules. Youngsters get confused if no one ever says No to them. The only guide they have then is their own infantile feeling inside. This is a weak guide. The youngster is trying to move away from relying just on his own impulses. He wants to become civilized. If his own impulses are all he has to

fall back on he is left in a bad way. No child wants his wishes trampled on and disregarded completely. That builds up too much anger inside. But he does want some strengthening of his own feeble, beginning urges to withhold, to do without, to postpone, to keep in.

It is frightening when you are given much more responsibility than you are ready for. You and I have each known this at some times in our lives. We have had many different choices and the whole thing has depended on us and no one has briefed us on what to do. You get a wild, empty, panicky feeling.

Youngsters who have too much freedom feel this. They also get concerned about being loved. One proof that you are loved is when you are stopped. Then you know someone cares about you. But if you can do anything you want to—it doesn't matter how many presents you get or how much time people spend with you—you are never fundamentally sure that they have a deep concern.

Some youngsters who have had too much freedom are hungering for someone to say No to them. That will relieve them a little of what has been called "the awful responsibility" of freedom. It will be a proof that they matter and that adults are concerned about them.

This hunger for a No drives them to push the limits all the time, to go just a little further than other people go, to see how much they can get away with before the boom falls. This is a very uncomfortable way of living. The child feels he has to go so far, he is driven into it, and then he almost always feels bad because he has gone as far as he has. He is really caught. His fright pushes him on and then he gets more frightened because of what he has done. He gets it backward and forward.

Knowing that children have a need for some reasonable limitations will help us see that a youngster doesn't have to have all the specifics each time as days go by: "I want a $27.00 dancing-girl

doll and if you don't get it for me, I won't like you. . . . I won't eat cherry ice cream; if you serve that I won't eat dessert. . . . I have to have a cowboy shirt with a steer's horns on the front. If you won't get it for me, I'll cry . . ."

No decent person goes out of his way to make children unhappy, but a healthy attitude on these top-layer specifics is: So what? The youngster is angry for a while; he skips dessert; the tears flow a little. All the commotion means no more than: "I wish you hadn't done that," but children sometimes say it with wails and it sounds just awful. Yet all this is top-layer. This is where the child can change his mind. This is where he can adapt to another situation. This is where it is within his power to adopt a new goal and to find real satisfaction in it.

We can, when we have to, hold out on these, and no harm is done. With what a child basically needs we must give in, knowing that this includes some reasonable No's.

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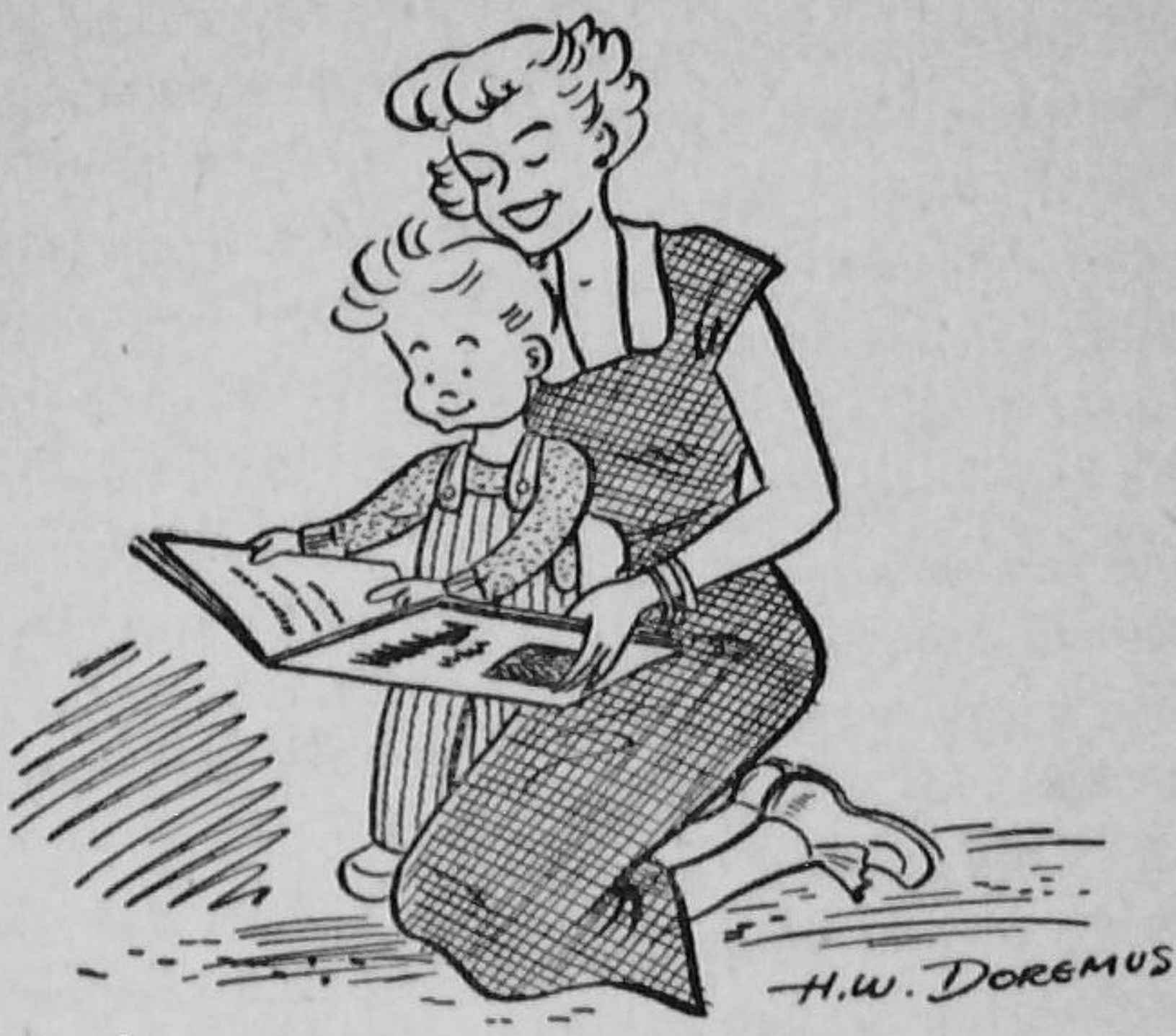
8. A Balanced Diet



The infant can take almost no No's at all. He is almost totally dependent on an unstinting giving from the people all around him. He needs kind hands to change his position when he gets weary. He needs gentle hands to change him when he is wet and soiled. He needs loving hands to hold him and to rock him gently. There has to be ample food and ample time for him to take it in. The whole world must be fixed so that the satisfactions all flow in his direction.

And whatever it is that the infant needs, he needs it right then and there. There is no *mañana* when you are very young. Wanting something has a real urgency. You count on a happy promptness from the people on whom you are dependent.

So many feel a strong urge to get the infant over this. They can't believe that the youngster himself would not be happy to continue this way. But youngsters do want a balanced diet. They

are after protection *and* adventure; sympathy *and* risk; loving care *and* independence.

It helps to think of certain satisfactions as grouping themselves together. They are all a *getting,* a flowing-in kind of thing: love, support, interest, backing, assurance, belonging, approval, praise. Infants need all this flowing in tremendously at the start, and all people need it throughout their lives. But there is another grouping too—a *giving,* a flowing out: the satisfactions that center around achievement, contribution, adequacy, independence. These perhaps start second in the infant, but they do start and all people need them throughout their lives.

The getting and the giving intermesh. The one supports the other. Without the flowing in there can be no flowing out. And it is the two together that make a person. It is as though one line starts at the bottom of a page—a thin line. And one thin line starts at the top of a page. The two meet in the center and, where they join, the two thin lines merge to make a clear, fat, strong, dark impression.

That heavy line in the middle, the balancing line where there is both getting and giving, is the person: increasingly sure of himself, increasingly aware of other people, increasingly responsible to situations and laws and conditions.

This is the life line: the growth of a separate person who is himself, and the growth of a social person who is fit to live with other humans. The line is strong when the getting and the giving come together. It is weak when only the up line or the down line makes the mark.

That same infant, so seeking of things from people, soon becomes only too anxious to walk by himself, to climb by himself, to carry the milk for you to the table. When he was small he needed love flowing toward him and protection and comfort, but only so that he could become aware of himself and sure of himself. Once he has had his fill for the present, he uses all this as the

base so he can be more adventurous, so he can feel safe in going out to give comfort and friendliness and approval to others.

When he was small he needed the support of things, the proof of property, the pride of possession. Once he has had his fill for the present, however—as much as he feels he needs—he is in a position to be generous with what he has and open-handed with others.

A Tight Rope

Back and forth, up and down, the lines of satisfaction go. The oh-so-able two-year-old who is full of all he can do himself wants tremendous sympathy when he is hurt. The know-it-all six-year-old wants company when he is faced with a new situation. The self-assertive ten-year-old who almost forgets his parents are alive leans on them when he has to make a decision. And that self-sufficient boss, sitting in his private office and snapping out decisions all day long, wants someone to tell him at the end of the day what a hard day it has been.

We do not reach one plane and stay there. We do not stay infants, seeking simple protection, until some magical birthday when now we are big. We do not leave all our baby things behind us on the day we become a man. It is a balanced diet we constantly seek, with enough of the getting and enough of the giving so that we move forward satisfied.

It is not easy to adjust to this backward and forward. All of us, as teachers and parents, tend to get pegged. It is comfortable for us to do certain things for and with children . . . and we keep on doing them both before and after the child wants us to.

Sometimes we set our sights too low. We are wonderful people if the children are little. It is such fun for us to hold a baby on our laps. We feel so useful when we supervise an infant splashing in his bath. We get a sense of importance when we hold the spoon and poke cereal down the baby's throat.

We have time and energy and patience and we will do anything for the youngsters because they are so "good."

But it may be harder for us to give a child what he seeks when the darling baby has grown enough to say No! . . . or when the same gift from heaven bangs on the table with his feet and falls off the chair at dinner time because he is so fidgety . . . or when Little Blue Eyes says she wishes she were a boy and insists on wearing slacks to afternoon tea and when company calls. Now the child is suddenly "bad."

If your sights are too low you are very apt to keep on doing things for children that they could do themselves: "I'll button your buttons. . . . I'll hang up your coat. . . . I'll fix your bed. . . . I'll make the costume for your play at school. . . . I'll phone the veterinary to see about your dog."

You are very likely to let your fears keep children from doing things which would mean growth and adventure and importance to them: "You're not big enough to climb that; it's dangerous. . . . Don't do that; that's too dirty. . . . You will hurt yourself. Watch out. . . . Don't play with him; he's not nice."

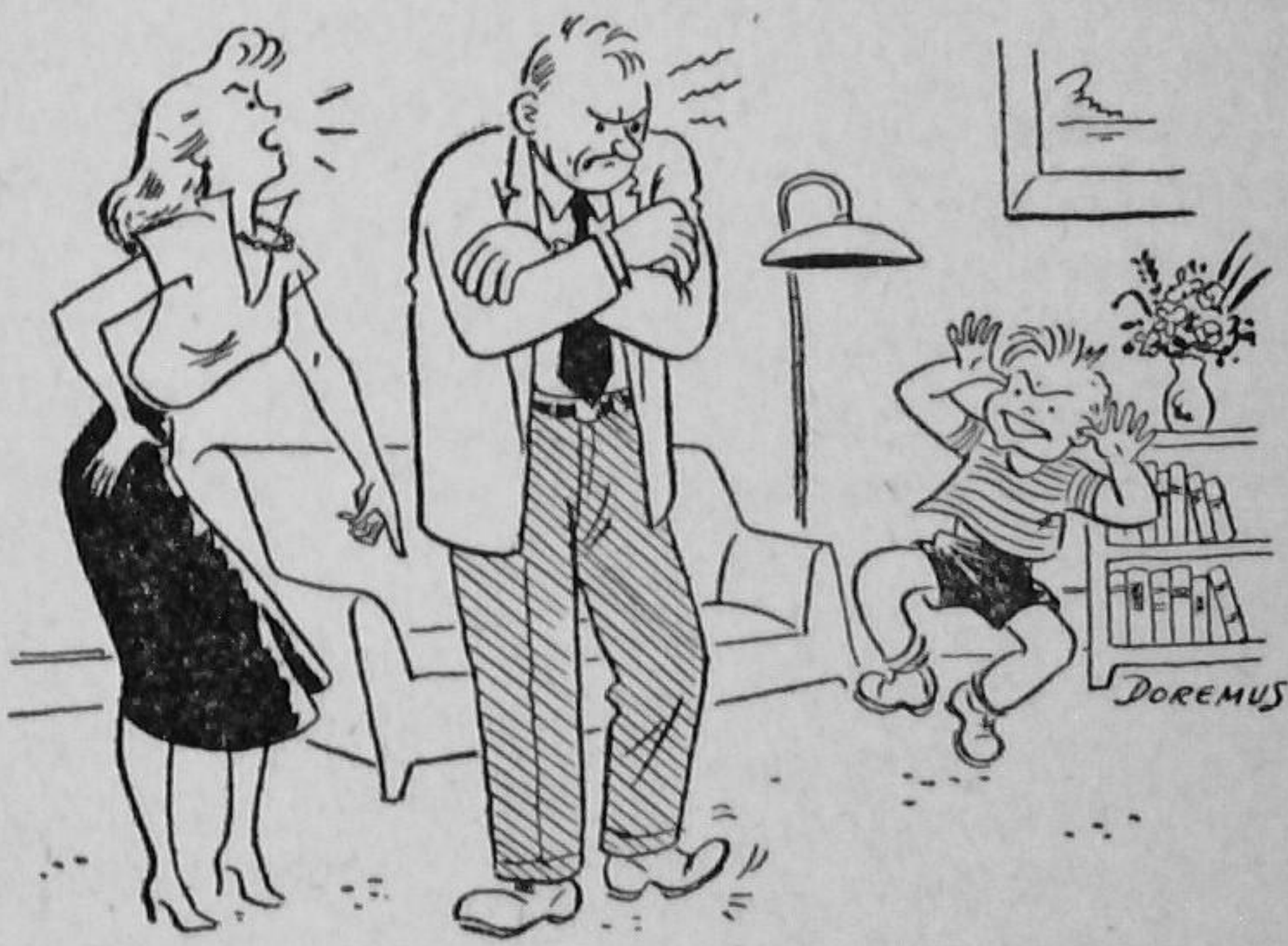
We all worry a lot about spoiling children. This is one of the prize ways of doing it. A child's beginning efforts to do things for himself are stifled and soon he stops making them. Fears so circumscribe what he tries that he gives up. A youngster gets stuffed with all the incoming foods: love, protection, care, dependence, assurance, sympathy. . . . He wants all these, of course, but he gets more than he wants. He is force-fed on them and he becomes bloated. Instead of balanced growth, he gets logy and stays at one level. It is not basically a comfortable feeling, but he makes the best of it.

This job of allowing youngsters to give is a hard one. When we as adults are meeting their need for getting, we know we are working. We feel important. We can see the things we do. But when we are meeting their hunger for giving, we actually

feel unimportant. The better we do our job, the more the child does. The more important we are in freeing him to grow, the more important he feels himself and the less important he feels we are. In a sense, we seem to be working ourselves out of a job. It takes real security inside to do that.

Too High

Just as many of us, of course, set our sights too high. Very frequently we do it in the name of not-spoiling: "Let him cry it



out. . . . It is good for his lungs. . . . If you run every time he squeaks he will keep you running the rest of your life. . . . He has to learn that he can't have what he wants exactly when he wants it. . . . He is old enough not to act that way."

There is a note of harshness in some of this.

A note of anger sometimes . . . almost a mean note. And the sad part of it is that this spoils children just as certainly as doing too much for them.

When you hold out on children, they don't get enough of what they want. The getting line never comes down to cross and to spring the trap that frees the giving line. The youngster stays stuck at something that is very appropriate for infancy, but he is stuck and cannot grow. He has birthdays, but his life line is caught in the mud.

People spot this. You hear them say: "You are acting like a baby. . . . He is just a baby." You even hear it as a complaint in the divorce court: "He acts just like a baby. He has to have his way in everything and just exactly when he wants it."

This is a good description. It is exactly what happens. The person has grown bigger but in his hungers he is stuck.

Of course this does not come about only in infancy, although that is a very important time. All the way through life there are gettings that are right for our particular age. If we get them, we move ahead to new givings, and then on to still new gettings. But if people hold out on us, we cannot simply skip what we need. We keep searching for it.

Give Them an Inch

Teachers and parents are always worried: "Suppose I do give in to him. Won't he want more and more?"

"He comes running for sympathy now whenever he is hurt. If I give it to him, will he ever stop?"

"He wants me to look at everything he does. If I do, won't he keep on demanding?"

"He always wants me by his side. Suppose I do stay. Will he ever stand on his own two feet?"

If life were a continuous getting, then one might be legitimately worried. "Give them an inch and they will take a mile. Youngsters are like little misers: always grabbing, getting, demanding more."

But children have no need to stuff themselves for the simple

sake of stuffing. They ask that their needs be met, because that is the basis of growth. There is no gorging even of life's seemingly most delicious bits: love, praise, attention, warmth, support, belonging, food, sleep, protection, comfort. Children use these to allow them to make the more out-going efforts: adventure, discovery, achievement, adequacy, independence. These taste every bit as good.

It is the satisfied person who moves out toward them. The unfulfilled person is hungry and holds back. Once you know this it changes your whole emphasis. Instead of saying: "He *just* wants attention," now you say: "He *wants* attention; let's give it to him." Instead of saying: "He *just* wants someone to notice him," now you say: "He *wants* to be noticed; let's look at him." Instead of saying: "He *just* wants to be bossy," now you say: "He *wants* a chance to be big; let's make sure he has one."

The minimizing "justs" are out! You look at the person to see what he wants, and you give him that—confidently.

You don't use mirrors to see what is inside of yourself. The goal is not to do what comes easy to us. It is to do what makes life and growth come easy to the youngster. This means that our giving in has to be a continuously changing thing. We move along and support in new ways as new needs develop within the child.

A Nourishing School

Schools face this job just as parents do. A large number of classrooms undernourish children because they hold out on the giving: there is too little praise, too little physical relationship between the teacher and the child, too standoffish a climate, too little friendliness, too little approval.

Teachers are becoming more and more sensitive to these hungers of children. But we still do terrible things to youngsters in school. We embarrass them publicly. We pick on them so

much that they can't help but wonder: does she like me at all? We demand sitting down and keeping quiet so much that youngsters feel: schools don't care for children. And we fail boys and girls; we still hit them when they are in trouble; we are sarcastic; we shame them.

Our great need is for more and more schools that pour into children the warm, cheering, bucking-up kind of support that oils the gears of growth. But we are learning. Teachers smile more. They are not all afraid today to hold a first grader's hand or to laugh at a sixth grader's joke. They "let their hair down" and play with the kids. And more and more of them know that a little praise goes a long way.

But to give youngsters the chance to develop adequacy, skills, strength, importance! To give them chances to leap ahead in their knowledge, to sink their teeth into something vital, to get real know-how so that they can feel able! We are not doing this job for many youngsters in schools.

It is a hard job to do. One overly simple answer is to stress reading, writing, arithmetic still more. This appeals because it is so clear-cut, and also because it used to work . . . for some children. A few. Those who were brighter than average. Those who were faster-growing than average. Those who had more intellectual interests than average. Those whose families had more cultural advantages than average. Those who started school at a later age than average.

These few really got a sense of power and of growth and of skill from digging into books and symbols right from the start of school. They got rewards which bucked them up. Every day they could go on to more skills, and that was satisfying. And they used these new skills in ways that appealed to them: speaking, writing, reciting.

But today we know we have more children in school than this

handful. They are not all eager for this kind of giving. But they all want to give.

We make an approach: a few little projects, an occasional trip, some diluted book work but book work nonetheless, a quick unit on Egypt and then one on prehistoric man. . . . But these can't build into all children this strand of strength, of knowing, of bursting with something you are dying to do.

We really need a whole new concept of school, a broader concept. One that sees the whole community as the curriculum: the people in it, the work going on, the problems children and adults face, the life of humans. One that sees real jobs and honest responsibilities as the core of children's learning. Not the make-believe and contrived activities of the four-walled school, but the essential and on-going affairs of people living together.

In such a setting, guided by teachers and parents who like to dig down deep to get at the good rich earthy root of things, children could thrive because their getting would be matched by their giving in affairs that really matter.

A Goal

Youngsters who are deprived of the getting they need show their malnutrition more quickly. And it is possible that this is the more severe hunger. Just as one added factor: the child who gets it in the neck at school is very apt to find his home down on him too. Parents tend to support teachers. If the report comes home that "Billy isn't cooperating and we have had to punish him," Mom and Pop are apt to jump on the bandwagon and add a little punishment of their own. The child who is hungering for love and approval and affection and support is apt to run against stone walls coming and going. He is really boxed in.

The child whose hunger for adequacy and learning and importance is not met in school has more avenues open to him. His own gang can give him some of what he wants. His hobbies can.

His play in the lots. His skills in sports. Sheer famine is not so apt to persist.

But the tragedy is there. For we tend to organize so much of what we do for children—in our communities, our camps and our churches, our homes as well as our schools—on a bargain-basement basis. We undersell youngsters. We underestimate their capacities. We do not tie as fully as we could to their own real urge to be informed, to be able, to contribute, to know.

We pay some price in the kind of adult we produce. We pay a price in the lower vitality that children find in their own present living. There could be a keener, fuller, richer human if we would size children up right in their giving urges as well as in their getting hungers.

THE FOURTH IDEA

There Is Some Reason Why

"Angels don't say No or get dirty or talk back or use naughty words. Children do. If you know this, you won't lose your faith in children or feel that they have let you down. You will search for the cause. And once you find it, you will know that each kind of cause responds best to a different treatment."

9. No Single-Track Minds

It is not enough to enjoy children only when they are good. It is not enough to have patience only when they behave. It is not enough to love them only when they are quiet and clean. This kind of love breaks down into disappointment and anger and bitterness the first time children are children.

Living with youngsters means that at times you will be threatened: your will, your way, your timing, your demands. Living with them means that your idols will be shaken: promptness, honesty, cleanliness, politeness, order. . . . Angels don't say No or get dirty or talk back or use naughty words. Children do.

If you know that living with real youngsters is not a smooth or happy-smiling path all the time, you are prepared. You won't lose your faith in the youngster. You will have no feeling that

you have been let down. No sense of disappointment will blind you. You will know there is some reason why.

Your acceptance of the normalcy of difficulty, the inevitability of upsets, the inescapability of conflict gets you ready to take the first step in helping any child: you search for the cause. This conviction that there is a cause and that you can do something about it is our fourth big idea.

A Mean Streak

Probably people have always assumed there was a reason why when children misbehaved. The child-development point of view is different because it believes that there can be many different kinds of reasons. Untrained people have one favorite. No matter what the child is like, no matter what he has done, no matter what the situation, they always dig down and come up with the same explanation.

Life is simple for them. They have it all worked out. There is nothing to it. One kind of cause, never a variation.

Their favorite is apt to be: Children are bad, therefore they do bad things.

"You're a bad, bad boy."

"You're a naughty child."

And as their temper rises the words become harsher:

"You're the meanest child I know. That was a mean thing to do."

"You're a nasty girl to do something like that."

"You're so stupid. I'll teach you not to do that again."

"You're a spiteful little creature and I'll show you that you can't get away with it."

Here is one approach: there is something wrong with the child. He has a streak in him—a fresh streak, a lazy streak, a mean streak, a yellow one . . .

Of course, if a streak really could be inside, it wouldn't go

away. But people feel better if they do something. That seems to be one of our adult needs: to do something big and strong and forceful. Whip the child or spank him or slap him. Be sarcastic or harsh. Take away something he likes very much. If he is at home, send him to his room. If he is in school, send him to the principal's office or out in the hall or stand him in a corner.

The idea seems to be to keep the bad streak from showing its ugly head. So the only point is: hurt the child. Psychologically or physically, it is all the same. Embarrass him or shame him or hit him, but hurt him. The treatment follows logically enough—if you can bring yourself to believe that there is a streak inside of children.

"They'll Outgrow It"

Another pet idea is easier on children, perhaps, but it is not necessarily the least bit more effective.

I saw an illustration of it recently in a small community. Some high-school students did a lot of damage. They punctured tires, broke windows, stole mail boxes.

Some people spoke up for the first cure-all: "They are bad eggs. Send them to jail. Teach them a lesson they won't forget . . ." But many others popped up with another idea. Although these boys had done real damage and were in real trouble, a large group in the community just smiled a bit. They shrugged their shoulders and were inclined to pass the whole thing off with: "Aw, you know boys. They're just sowing their wild oats."

Once I directed a camp for boys eight years of age and up. We were concerned with spotting those children who still wet their beds. Bed-wetting is something you normally expect from One-year-olds, Two-year-olds, occasionally from Threes, certainly tapering off very much at four years of age and five. For our age group at camp a hangover of bedwetting was a pretty good sign

of some confusion and mixed-up feelings inside the youngsters. We wanted to know these children so that we could help them straighten out.

As we inquired, many parents replied: "Yes, he still wets but we are not concerned. He'll outgrow it." We got the same answer over and over when we asked about nail-biting in this age group.

and daydreaming and great shyness. If something is normal it certainly is wise to go along with it, not to worry about it, and to let it run its course. But we humans have wonderful ways of protecting ourselves! Sometimes when we haven't found the way to change something, we decide it must be normal.

We wouldn't think much of a doctor who worked this way.

"Doc, I have a terrific pain in my side and I can't keep any food down. It hurts and throbs so that I can hardly stand it." And the doctor replies: "Oh, don't get upset. This is a very common occurrence and it will pass." But the patient dies of a ruptured appendix.

"Doc, I'm concerned because I keep losing weight. I'm a shadow of my former self. I seem to have constant indigestion too, and there is this pain here that won't go away." And the doctor replies: "Oh, don't get all excited. What you are feeling is human enough. It will go away of its own accord." Good advice? The patient had a cancer.

You are more gentle on children when you smile and say: "Boys will be boys." But you don't necessarily help them more. Good doctors have learned to look for different cues: the white count in the blood, the rise and fall of temperature, blood pressure, appetite, the location of the pain. . . . Each constellation of cues leads them to a different diagnosis.

Teachers and parents have to be as professional as this. We can't afford to have one kind of explanation that we like above all.

A Good Talking-To

We have to be professional in our treatments too. We can't have one remedy that we think will work for everything.

Once this was true in medicine. No matter what the trouble, the answer was to rub on some herbs. At a later time there was another favorite: let some blood. At the beginning of every profession, our tools are limited; no one can do more than he knows. But today we joke about a doctor who has only one medicine in his black bag.

"My stomach hurts, Doc. What do you recommend?" "Take these three pink pills in a glass of water."

"My eyes bother me, Doc. Can you give me something?" "Take these three pink pills in a glass of water."

"My foot has sores all over it. What do you think?" "Take these three pink pills in a glass of water."

But amateurish as this sounds in medicine today, our handling of children sometimes is like this. Some people are very "mod-

ern," for example. They reason everything out with children; they are always talking at them.

The teacher talks at them until she is blue in the face and then she sends them to the principal's office for a good talking-to. The principal uses all the words that he knows and then he sends a note home: "You give him a good lecture."

This is a trap we all fall into. We believe so much in learning. It is so easy to think that children can control all they do. Just get right and wrong through their thick heads and then everything will be rosy.

Of course it is much more comfortable to be talked at than hit. It is a much more decent way of getting along with youngsters and it usually threatens their feeling of being loved a lot less. But sometimes youngsters respond and really try . . . only to find that they are further out on a limb.

"You promised me you wouldn't and now you have done it again . . ."

"You have gone back on your word . . ."

"I am so disappointed in you . . ."

To the first sins, whatever they were, now is added another: the youngster has let you down. Actually, you made him do it. You made him promise more than he could do. For some causes of children's behavior are beyond the child's will. Talking—no matter how honeyed the words or how loud they are shouted—cannot reach to where the difficulty is.

Yet we feel modern when we talk at children. We ask them: "Why did you do it?" and that is being considerate.

"Why did you hit him?"

"Why are you wiggling so?"

"Why did you put your fingers in the pie?"

And once again the child is in hotter water than he was to begin with. Youngsters can't put everything into words. So first he was bad and now he is stubborn. First he did something he

shouldn't do and now he won't even talk with us, even when we talk nicely to him.

This happens when you have a cure-all—talking to them, reasoning—no matter what the cause.

The Good Old Woodshed

Talking is the "modern" way, but more of us still feel we have to swing for all we are worth or else we are not good disciplinarians. A stiff punishment is our one answer, no matter what the trouble is. We know there are many times in life when "Easy Does It." Yet we can't seem to believe this about children.

A golfer has his ball on the green. Does he want a powerful sock with his driver or will a little tap with the putter do the trick?

A fisherman has a bite on his line. Will a good healthy yank get the fish into the boat or should he play the line gently and calmly?

A tennis player has forced his opponent way back to the base line. The opponent is off-balance and tired. What will win the point? A strong drive with all he can put in it, or a little easy place shot just over the net?

There is an old baseball story of how a weak hitter won the ball game. It was the ninth inning and the score was tied. The home team was at bat, two out, and bases loaded. The pitcher had lost his control and had walked the last two men. As this weak hitter went up to the plate the coach called him aside: "If you take that bat off your shoulder, I'll knock your block off. Just stand up there and don't do a thing." And the batter won the ball game. He forced in a run on four straight balls!

Sometimes the thing to do is to be tough and strong and stern, but there are times when easy does it. It all depends on what is the cause.

The Saturday Evening Post once ran a story about a loaded

truck that was caught in a tunnel. The truck was just high enough to be too high and it was wedged tight. The truck driver had done all he could and whole squads of strong policemen stood around helpless. Shoving, hauling, pushing only wedged the truck in tighter. Then a little boy had an idea that saved the day: "Let some air out of the tires," and the truck went right through!

Sometimes all the punishment and threats and strong words are so much flailing around. They are sheer waste of effort because they don't touch what is the real cause. When you are working with people, you cannot afford to have a one-track mind. You must know that there can be a variety of causes and that each kind of difficulty responds best to a different treatment.

10. The Firing Line

Understanding why children act the way they do and treating them so that they will want to act better is a difficult job. Don't fool yourself into thinking that this is easy for anyone. It is never simple to know what is at the bottom of a child's actions and to what he will respond the best.

But all this is particularly hard for those of us who live with youngsters. Compared with social workers or psychologists or doctors or psychiatrists, we are in a unique position. We are at the firing line.

We can't say: "Stop. Freeze. Stay where you are while I study you."

We cannot say: "Hold it. Don't move. Wait until I talk with your parents and then I will know."

We are with children and we have to act.

We cannot say: "Come back in a week and I will study you some more." Our youngsters are with us all the time.

We cannot say: "I'll see you next Tuesday when I have scored this test." The very next minute the youngster is into something.

Ours is an exposed position. We never can stand still. There is no such a thing for us. Inaction is action. Doing nothing is doing something. Waiting until you are absolutely sure is out of the question. When you think you simply are getting more data, you are actually tolerating what the child is doing . . . and that is a way of treating him. When you think you are doing nothing while you make up your mind, you are actually overlooking his behavior . . . and that is a way of treating him.

Cues . . . Hypothesis . . . and Action

We have to find a distinctive way of acting that fits our peculiar firing-line position. As I see it, that way is to use what we have right at hand—the child's behavior, what he does and how he does it—to build an hypothesis. We have to be able to spot cues in that behavior that will say to us almost instantaneously: It is probably this kind of cause; probably this will help. And then we have to act on that hypothesis as if it were true.

While we act, we study. While we are doing what we think is right for the child in line with our hypothesis, we draw on all the other techniques we can to help us know the youngster better. This is our second step.

We make home visits. We talk with parents over and over again. We try to see the child in other situations. We look into the past records of the school. We talk with other teachers. We talk with ministers and doctors and scout leaders and camp directors. We use tests of all kinds to give us more data: sociograms, intelligence tests, aptitude tests, performance tests, physical examinations, projective techniques, tests of likes and dislikes.

But all these are Number Two. We carry these on *while* we are already at work treating the child in line with our hypothesis.

Their special role is to confirm or to refute what the cues from the child's present behavior have told us. Their distinctive contribution is to support or to weaken our initial hypothesis. In this order, with first things first, we can make the most of our exposed position.

If you have done a good job of reading the cues in the child's behavior, these secondary techniques will not tell you anything new that is essential to know. They will strengthen and support your hypothesis, and you can be glad for that. They will tell you how a youngster got to be the way he is—what the origins were, when the trouble first started. This will increase your sympathy for him. It will deepen your determination to help him. This is all to the good. But every day now, in all his present actions, the child is telling you the nature of his difficulty . . . and you saw it and read it right.

Sometimes you won't be so smart. More data from tests or from case studies or from other situations will tell you that you were wrong. This means that you have to change your hypothesis, but you do it with no regrets. You know always that even if you had waited until all the facts were in, you still would have been in action. Doing nothing with youngsters is pure illusion.

All you can ask of yourself is that you start with a real attitude of searching. You do your best to build the most supportable hypothesis you can. When you are right, you have a good head start. When you are wrong, you are not afraid to change your mind. You know that the cues give you an hypothesis, not a fixed conclusion.

Lights, Action, Camera

The one requirement is that you have behavior to see. Without this you cannot get to first base. Your cues come from what the

child does. Without behavior you have nothing on which to build your initial hypothesis, nothing to give you an operating principle.

The trap here is that many of us want to cut the behavior off just when it could begin to tell us something. This is understandable enough. It is no fun to be the parent or teacher on hand when there is some kind of an explosion: hitting, shoving, grabbing, tough talk. Our first impulse is to squelch the child. We cut off the very signs we need to see.

We all live with youngsters in such public places. A child

makes a commotion in our classroom and the sound travels right down the hall to the principal's office. A youngster is upset in our living room and his cries go right out of our window and into our neighbor's. It is hard not to feel embarrassed in this kind of a setting, hard not to take the child's behavior personally.

Perhaps the objectivity that a doctor develops will help us here. The medical man does not feel ashamed if the patient's temperature rises; he studies the chart and tries to discover what this

change is all about. The medical man does not feel angry with the patient if the blood pressure goes up; he looks more carefully at the person, trying to discover why. Instead of shutting off the symptoms, he uses them for all they are worth. They tell him what his next step has to be. That is what a child's behavior—even his bad behavior—can tell us.

This means knowing how to judge ourselves, and how to ask other people to judge us. The test is not whether we can work wonders. Nor is it whether, as teachers or parents, we have such perfect children that no troubles ever show.

The crucial question is: *how do we handle problems when they arise?* How much use do we make of the behavior that confronts us? How keen are we in reading the cues that are there to see? How sensible are we in applying the right treatment for the hypothesis we hold?

This is process, not product. The good teacher and the smart parent want enough of the behavior to go on to indicate what is the probable cause and what may be the right thing to do. You are not concerned with shutting it off before you can make an intelligent decision.

Perspective

Our world is so much a world of finished products that it is hard to develop this approach. We buy everything we need all wrapped up and finished at the department store. So few of us make things any more: bread, suits of clothes, rugs for our floor. We forget what a mess things can be when they are in process.

The result is that we judge ourselves by the false standard that everything must be shiny and bright on the surface. This forces us to grasp for tricks that "work."

"He used a bad word, so I washed his mouth out with soap. That works."

"He was fresh so I slapped him right in the mouth. That works."

"He wouldn't make his bed so I told him there would be no Christmas presents this year. Boy! Did that work!"

These trick techniques complicate our real job. They push the behavior deeper down inside; they make it harder to spot the cues the next time.

Our world is a world of speed, too. It is so easy to get impatient. "I've been nice to him for a whole week and his behavior hasn't improved at all." "I've praised him several times but he still acts the same old way." "The whole class tried to understand, but after a month of it you get very fed up."

We all wish we could work wonders. Sometimes we wish it so much that we do anything to shut the behavior off, even before we have a chance to figure out: Why does he act this way? But there are no short cuts for teachers or parents. Sometimes it takes ten years of good living to make up for ten years of bad.

At the firing line we need a time concept to strengthen us. Most teachers live with children for short periods of time. They have them for a year while they teach first grade or fourth or seventh. They have them for an hour while they pound in English or science or art. Some few lucky teachers stay with their youngsters for two years or even three. This is wonderful, but it is still a short time in a child's total life span.

This time pressure makes us look for simple, quick tricks that will straighten everything out. But no wonder drug can roll back a calendar or make it skip a few years. No miracles can swap a day of good living for six years of bad. Unless we recognize this, we will feel that we are failing.

Our panicky feelings will make us swap horses at every way station: "I've tried this for a while; I guess I will try that. . . . I thought for a day or so it was this kind of cause; I guess I'll try out this other." The youngster gets no stability from us, and

we don't stick at one way long enough to get the data we need for confirmation or refutation, or to give our treatment the time it needs to get in its good licks.

There is only one way to relax. That is to see that the teacher's way of helping children is a team way. One teacher reaches what looks like a good hypothesis. He begins to collect data, and that data seems to support the first hunch. All the while he is doing what he can to help the child, in line with his hypothesis. But then the next teacher builds on what the first teacher starts. And the following teacher builds on that. It is the total school, the teacher team as a whole, which has the chance to live with children over a long enough time to make up for what a whole past has done. This is the slow, steady, day-after-day business of using school life so that it is a satisfying life for a child.

More Help

We have to know that for some youngsters this slow steady way is not enough. Some children need vitamin shots and special doses: a complete chance to destroy (as an example), because they never had any chance at all in their growing up; an experience in utter freedom, because all their life they have been so totally over-controlled; one loving adult completely to themselves, because life has cheated them out of all love.

We need to know this for our own self-protection. For it means that for some children the slow, steady way will take much too long; there are not enough days left in life. Just as sometimes a doctor gets an accident case that is too far gone for him to heal. The doctor makes every effort he can. He eases the pain so that the inevitable is no harder to bear than it must be. And he does not feel angry if the patient is beyond responding. Workers in human relationships must somehow do this too.

We truly fail only when we hold back on the professional skills that are ours. When we refuse to use them for all they are worth.

We must not blame ourselves—or children or parents—wnen we have done all we could.

We need to know this for children's sake, too. Some youngsters need referral. Our best efforts may not be sufficient for the child even to hold his own. Even though we do all we know how, his behavior gets worse and worse.

Unfortunately, most of us work like the general practitioner in the small far-away town. The hospital, the clinic, the laboratory are always over there . . . far off . . . in the big city. We say: "He ought to see a doctor. . . . A psychologist ought to look at him. . . . They ought to send him to a clinic," but this is wishful thinking.

Communities do not begin to have enough of the special services that children with troubles really need. Even in cities, where facilities are more likely to exist, there are waiting lists and lines and crowds. For the overwhelmingly large number of children the classroom teacher is the only person who is in a position to give objective understanding. But you and I as teachers have to know that this is carrying a lot on our shoulders. Some youngsters may well be beyond our skills. But if we don't do what we can, they have no one.

Wherever there are visiting teachers, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists, we ought to work together like hand in glove. This is an important part of our teamwork. But sometimes when a youngster gets special help we are disappointed. The physically ill patient may move from the doctor's office to the hospital. But the troubled child stays right in our classroom. Other professions may apply their special skills, but the youngster remains with us. Even though others are doing all they can to help him, he still needs what good teaching and good living at home can do.

The teacher's work and the parent's work always go on—inevitably. You have not the choice of someone wiser or more skilled

taking the child off your hands while you do something else. You are always on the firing line . . . but sometimes you have help on your side.

Your job is to look at the child's behavior. What cues can you find there? What hypothesis do they add up to? And what treatment flows from that?

11. A First Hypothesis: The Stage of Growth

Children can do laughable things, wonderful things. They grow and develop in exciting ways. They are eager to please. But they also can act like little fiends at times. They get under your skin, annoy you, do just the opposite of what you wish they would.

One possible reason why is that at any one time muscles have developed just so far. Organs are just so big. Bones are just so large and so strong. The nervous system has matured just so much. The child can do only those things which his growth up to that time will let him do. This may not be enough to please the adults, and then the child is "bad."

The stage of growth the child is in is, then, the first of four

possible different kinds of hypotheses. We have to consider it as Number One. As a cause it has its distinctive cues. If we find them, then The Stage of Growth becomes our hypothesis.

The Cue: I Remember

There is a human plan. That means we all carry a textbook in child development around with us every minute of the time. It is ourselves. Our memory. Our sensitive thinking back to what we did when we were six or ten or fifteen.

You see some youngsters about ten years old puffing a cigarette back by the fence. A bell rings inside of you: "Gosh, I remember . . ."

You see a six-year-old objecting to bedtime. The bell rings again: "I can remember . . ."

A gang of adolescents are in the back of the bus, talking louder than they have to, shouting their jokes, seemingly wrapped up in themselves but wanting everyone to hear. "I can remember back to when I was that age . . ."

We are human. That means we all did many of the same things —the good and the bad—when we were growing up. Circumstances were different. Perhaps we didn't talk on the telephone back and forth the way twelve-year-olds are likely to do today. . . . Maybe we did not write slogans all over our raincoats when we were fourteen or so. . . . We did not fuss over not being allowed to use the family car. . . . We did not dress like Hopalong Cassidy. But we had our own ways of doing the very same kinds of things.

You cannot be a good teacher or a good parent unless you have a strong memory—unless you can dig way down into your own childhood and call up sympathetically what you once liked to do, how you felt, what your wishes were, some of the trouble you got into.

The time you teased that girl by knocking her books out of

her arm . . . the time when everyone in the gang tried to steal an apple from the fruit stand . . . the nights you read in bed when the light was supposed to be out . . . a big lie that you got away with: every one of us can hark back to what we did as youngsters. And it is a very valid thing to do.

When we see youngsters in the same kind of trouble we were in at about their age, it ought to raise the question: Is it because of the stage of growth they are in?

You Can Go Astray

Good though memory is, handy though it can be, it provides simply one cue. When you are really good, you look for more than one. This is the difference between a teacher who is a professional and the one who is not very skilled in working with youngsters. It is the difference between a parent who is trying to be sensitive and one who does whatever comes to mind.

For while your sympathetic memory is useful, it has weaknesses. Memory does not go all the way back into early childhood, for example. If you rely on this cue alone you will be hard put to know: what did you do when you were two? what did you like? what was hard for you to tolerate? At two, or even at four or six or eight. Memory alone cannot interpret young children to you; it can be unreliable simply because it fades out.

Memory gets blurred too. We think we remember some things, but they never actually happened. They are in our minds because we want them to be there. Important as digging down inside of one's own self may be, we have to know this weakness. Sometimes we dig way down to stuff we put there only yesterday.

A third great weakness is that memory is individual. I can remember what I did; you can remember what you did. It is always one person. And that one person may have been a lulu!

Instead of reaching down to pull up some helpful remembrances of what all humans do, there is always the danger that

we will fish up some oddity or strangeness that was peculiar to us alone. Everyone has some troubles in growing up, some periods of unusual strain and stress. But we don't want to reach down to touch these when we are trying to figure out: Is this behavior normal for this age? Are most children this age going through this phase?

Three weaknesses—fading, blurring, and being too personal—may make memory seem like a weak cue. It isn't, though. It is available to every one of us. It is an instant tool, right on tap. It is useful just so long as you don't count on it alone.

The Cue: I Have Seen It Happen

Put your memory together with your eyes.

The human plan is there in all people, because they are human. It has to come out in all situations, because people are human. It is there for you to see in the park and on the playground, in the classroom, at church, on busses and in the library, in the department store and at the state fair, when you are visiting in other people's homes, while you are shopping and at the movies.

Keep watching children then. The more youngsters you have a chance to see, the more the bell can ring inside of you to say: This is the stage of growth they are in, this is what youngsters do about this age.

I saw this work out in a little confectionery store in a small town. The store was run by an elderly woman. Her face was lined and her hair was gray. She had some difficulty in walking; her voice was cracked. The store was neat as a pin, and it was easy to see that keeping it so clean was a real chore for her.

One day a man—new to the community—came in with his two children. The youngsters pressed their noses against the candy counter. They climbed on the showcase to see better. Soon their fingermarks and nose prints were etched on the shiny glass.

The father became embarrassed. He pulled them down and spoke sternly. But the old woman said gently: "Oh, don't worry. Children have been doing that for as long back as I have been here."

Numbers Count

You have to see a lot of children before this cue will work well for you. A high-school teacher told me of a boy in his school. On the playing field the teacher blew his whistle for the class to come in. This student flatly refused: "I'm not coming in, and you can't make me."

As he told me the story, the teacher's attitude was one of giving up. "They're all that way," he said. "Every one of them. No matter what you ask, no matter how reasonable it seems, the whole class seems to have a chip on its shoulder. It is like living on a powder keg. You never know when it will explode." He went on: "It used to get me down, but I guess that is the way adolescents are. They just have to fight you, I've decided. I'm not going to worry about it any more."

This was a young teacher. All of his work had been in this one school. He had never had a chance to see other adolescents. If he had, he would have known: this is not normal; this is not what you expect from the high-school age.

He was right in sensing that boys and girls who are almost grown-up want very much to be big people, to have their own ideas, to set their own pace as much as they can. But if he had seen more young people he would have known: something is twisting this natural interest into a flat rebellion, and that isn't what you expect.

Down underneath somewhere—maybe in the school (it was a bookish, barren kind of place); maybe in the community (it was an isolated, without-hope kind of place); maybe in the way these youngsters were treated when they were young—there

were forces other than their basic humanity making them act the way they did.

It takes seeing a lot of youngsters to know. Teachers have a real advantage here. With five years of experience a teacher can say, if she has had her eyes on children: "I've taught approximately 150 eight-year-olds, and almost every one of them did this kind of thing." The parent probably has had two children in these five years and watched another dozen or so in the neighborhood. This is one of the good things that can come out of close home-school relations. Teachers can really help parents know what is normal trouble at different ages. They can set many a needless fear at rest.

Freedom Counts

But it takes more than numbers; it also takes seeing youngsters when they are free. And parents often have an advantage here.

Schools are so apt to be strict! Teachers are so likely to see youngsters at some straining peak: the children struggling to fit in, to do what they think is expected, saving their true selves for after 3 P.M. and for weekends and vacations.

Everyone strains this way at times. On our first visit to new neighbors we don't say too much, our sense of humor doesn't show, we feel awkward and ill-at-ease. Often our best friends have to interpret us: "Wait until you know him better. You didn't really see him as he is. He is a good guy once you get to know him."

In school children are apt to be under this pressure. At home they can take their shoes off and relax. Parents get a real eyeful at bath-time, at meals, when youngsters are tired or sick, when they play with friends and with brothers and sisters, at the big events, such as Christmas and birthdays, in excitement and disappointment.

Home-school relations are really a two-way give-and-take.

Teachers can learn by listening to parents. There is a wisdom in parents that home living breeds. There is a richness of living that is very precious. If you are a teacher, you have to keep this in mind. You may have seen 150 children without ever seeing one real child at his best and worst. The more free your classroom is, however, the more this cue is there for you to use.

The Cue: Research—I Have Read About It

Your memory and your eyes are a part of you. You have them with you all the time. You have to know their limitations, but you must know, too, that these are strengths.

Now put these two together with the third cue: research. This is the newest way. It is the cue these recent years have added to the teacher-parent bag of tricks. It supplements and strengthens your other two cues.

Memory is personal; research is objective. Your eyes can tell you only what you have been lucky enough to see; research can go out to find what it is looking for. Your memory deals with one person alone; research can include studies of fifty or one hundred or five hundred children. You can never be sure your eyes are showing you the whole picture; research can control the situation and examine all that it is concerned with.

We have had at least fifty years of this careful looking at children. You need to know what this research says. This is what makes teaching a profession, what makes good parenthood something you work at. You can't rely on: "I think they found so-and-so," or "I guess maybe." This is where *you know*. You know without fumbling. You know without doubt. You know as cold and flat as hard study can tell you.

You know, or else you are not really a *professional*. You are fooling around with your trade. You are an amateur. You are like a carpenter who does not use a saw, like a dentist who is not skilled with his drill. Research facts are your tools and your

basic data. For every age this information is there for you to get: children do this kind of thing because they have grown as much as they have; children cannot yet do this because they haven't had enough time to grow.

It is there and get it you must.

Not that you become a walking encyclopedia. You use research as your third technique. It is not your only one. You temper what you learn from it with Number One and Number Two. You cross-check your information with what your memory tells you and with what your eyes have let in. The research doesn't cover everything. It has not studied every child. It does not deal with every social and economic group. There are gaps, tentatively rooted facts, partial conclusions. Living with humans is not a machine business: "The book says this, so I do this." But your firm knowledge of what research has found out—tied to what you know from your own living—can send out a real cue clear to you: They do this because of the stage of growth they are in.

The Cue: Your Feelers

One other way can give you your hypothesis. With this fourth cue you use your feelers.

Cats have whiskers to tell them how wide a hole is. A horse's keen sense of smell is supposed to go far ahead of him to warn of danger. You need some feelers to give you a sixth sense. If you don't have any now, grow some.

In using this last cue you ask yourself: does this behavior make sense? Does it flow out of what a child has been doing? is it (psycho)logical? is it a sensible strand in the whole weave of a child's development? The answer here is never a clear-cut provable Yes or No. But your hunch can add a lot of strength to what your memory tells you, to what your eyes have taught you, to what you know from your reading.

I was visiting in a home one evening. The family has a ten-

year-old daughter who is a fast grower. The girl is large for her age, has a more advanced vocabulary than other children in her class, is interested more in up-from-ten than in from-ten-down.

This was an evening party. My hosts had evidently made careful plans for all their children to have them either asleep or in bed or in their rooms (depending on their ages) by the time the company arrived. About 9:30 this ten-year-old came down to the living room dressed in a weird combination of pajamas: a big-girl top and some little-girl bottoms that she must have fished out of the discard.

In a loud voice—unnecessarily so—with a touch of bravado, she announced that she could not find her regular bottoms.

Her parents evidently were not pleased with her coming down, but said little. The child stayed for a few minutes listening to the adult conversation. Then the mother gently reminded her that tomorrow was a school day and that she needed her sleep.

There was almost a roguish grin on the girl's face when she said: "I don't want to go." Nothing more was done for a few minutes, and then again the mother insisted, a little more firmly: "Now it is time. You run along."

With the most exaggerated tone of being dreadfully put upon, the ten-year-old clumped away, complaining: "Awww right, awww right." Her parting shot as she went up the stairs was: "Here's that magazine you were looking for. You're bright. Right in front of you and you couldn't see it. You're bright, I'll say."

Look at it one way and you see defiance, bravado, rudeness, a touch of insolence, an unpleasant showing off. Yet the parents seemed to do nothing or, at least, to be very gentle in their reminders. When she had left the conversation centered on the girl briefly: "Isn't she big . . . how she has grown . . . never would think she was ten . . . a full head taller . . ."

Look at it again and you can see those feelers out. Why the gentleness? Here is a child trying so hard to prove how big she

is . . . she is even big enough to crash an adult party! Here is a child trying so hard to prove how grown-up she is . . . she is even big enough to be fresh to her parents. Naughtiness shapes down to naturalness when you can see something as "making sense" in terms of where a child is.

Another family had a two-year-old who liked to spit at other children. Spitting distresses many people, and this family and its friends were no exception. Yet it was the friends who helped the mother to see: this is what you probably have to expect at this age.

The hunch came at an afternoon party. There had been so much talk about how the child had grown: his balance was better . . . he ran so well . . . his body seemed to be in control: did you see him build with those blocks! And suddenly the mother got it. When you have spent almost three years working on mastering your body, you can expect that tongue and lips and saliva are going to get a workout too. Spitting isn't as nice as climbing or buttoning or feeding yourself, but maybe it is part and parcel of the very same thing.

Not Foolproof

You can go wrong with your feelers. This is a very subjective and personal technique. One eight-year-old swore like a trooper. He swore at home, at school, on the street. Almost every word—or at least every other—was spelled with four letters. His parents were concerned, but not overly bothered. "It is his way of trying to be big, and it will pass." But eight-year-olds usually find more subtle ways to prove their strength. Normally they have passed beyond the sledge-hammer days of four years of age and five.

One first grader ran wild on the playground. Every day there was a minor accident of one kind or another: a child's glasses broken, a skinned knee, a youngster in bitter tears from being jumped on. The teacher was very tolerant of the whole thing:

"You have to expect all this energy at six. They are full of pep, and yet they don't seem ready for organized games." But Six does not have to hurt or to run wild or to be hysterical to be itself.

No one technique alone can give the true picture. And even with all four we can still make mistakes. But there is some hope today of building a reasonable hypothesis. When these four bells ring inside of you, there is a good chance that you will be right if you say: "I think I know why he does it. While I am getting more information, I am going to proceed on this basis, that it is the stage of growth that he is in." No one cue alone tells. No two together. But when you find a cluster of three or four, this is a sound hypothesis until some further evidence disproves it.

Immediately You Know This

The very instant the cues come in to you, you have a basis for action.

1. The stage of growth the child is in? That means that all other youngsters of about this age are doing the same thing. This is not Billy Brown alone. This is not some one child. This is a human action growing out of our human nature. Whatever the behavior is, it is not individual or isolated or unique. This touches on the universal.

And that says something to us. It says: Don't get all excited. . . . Don't get in a stew. . . . Don't fuss and fume and be all bothered.

It says, if you are the parent: Don't blame yourself. . . . Don't feel guilty. . . . Don't be filled with misgivings. This is not something that you have done wrong.

It says, if you are the teacher talking to the parent: Don't be too concerned . . . all children of about this age do something like this . . . it is not your youngster alone.

No matter who you are there is tremendous reassurance here.

And that means calm. And comfort. And a staying of the hand. This is not one child alone; this is all children . . . because they are the age they are.

2. The stage of growth the child is in? That means that the controlling center is inside the youngster. Something—his bones and organs and muscles and nerves—is bossing him. There is where the force lies, not in the individual, but inside where he cannot touch it.

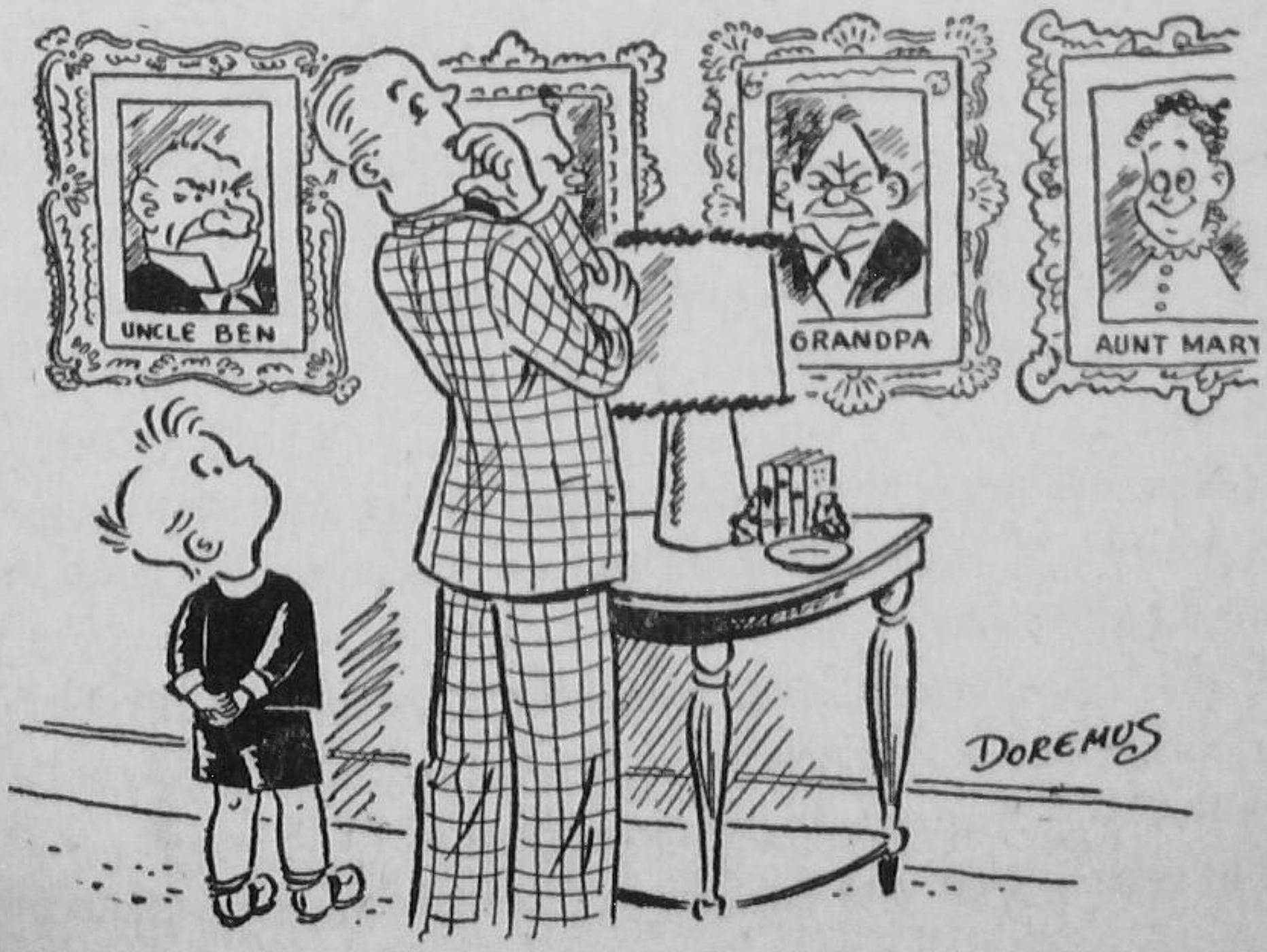
And that says another thing to us. It says: Lay off the child.

Don't nag him. Don't pester.

Don't persuade or bribe or threaten.

And don't blame.

This is not strictly the youngster's business. If you simply have to blame—if you don't feel happy unless you can point a finger at someone—blame parents . . . and grandparents . . . and great-grandparents before them. If you have to find a fault, here is where it lies. Long generations of ancestors did not conspire to



give this youngster the genes that would let him grow fast enough to please you.

No matter what you do, no matter how you stop him, keep cheerful. Keep your irritation low. No matter how firm you feel you have to be, don't get the feeling over to the child: If you were any good this wouldn't happen. It is happening to everyone about his age, and none of them can control it. Don't add to the difficulties by holding him responsible for something that is not his doing. His human nature is at the root.

3. The stage of growth the child is in? That means it won't last forever. What comes may be no better than what is confronting you now. It may mean jumping from the frying pan into the fire. But you can be sure of this: If it is a stage of growth, it will pass. Something else will take its place. This behavior has in it inevitably the seeds of its own destruction.

This says something more to us. You can keep your shirt on, if you know something will end. You do not have to worry. You can really afford not to be all excited if you know that the behavior is going to stop. And why blame when something is just in passing? Why pick on a person if his actions are sure to end?

But it says even more: *Tolerate.*

The end is almost in sight, so put up with it.

Go along . . . you are almost over the hill.

Accommodate yourself to it . . . it is going to stop even if you don't do a single thing.

No matter what you do, no matter if you stop him, be as easy-going as you can. This isn't life and death at stake. Nor any crucial question. This is behavior that will end anyhow. And knowing that, you can relax.

4. The stage of growth the child is in? That means it is important. It is an essential part of his growing up. It may be annoying; it may be bad; but this is a step in the whole process, and it has its place in the human design.

And that tells you your final approach: Make the most of this behavior . . . capitalize on it . . . turn it to some good end.

Your goal is not to stop it and make it die.

Your aim is not to put your foot down and end it.

Take this behavior and give it a twist. Put it some place . . . give it a new angle . . . change the setting so it can go on to make the contribution that it must in a youngster's growing up.

Three Steps

Shake all this down and it comes out to three steps. What do you do with behavior which stems from the stage of growth a child is in?

You tolerate it. You practice the fine art of looking the other way, of not hearing every word that is spoken, of letting a lot that goes on just slide off your back.

You channel it, when you have taken as much as you comfortably can. "You can't do this in here, but you can out there. . . . You can't do it now, but you can later. . . . You can't do it to people, but you can to this doll (or wood or clay or punching bag)." You find creative ways that let the behavior go on, but so that it is safe for you, safe for the child, safe for others, safe for property—ways that are easier to live with for you and the youngster.

You stop it, when you have racked your brain and no bright ideas come; when despite all your thinking, you cannot stand it any more. You stop it firmly if you must, but you stop it gently, without anger and without upset. You stop it definitely if you must, but with no illusions that it is stopped forever. You stop it until your brain starts ticking again so you can go back to begin all over: Tolerate first, Channel when you have to, and Stop as a last resort—to give you time to begin once more.

This is not a choice of three approaches: "Let's see now. Which one do I feel like using today?" There is a definite order. It isn't

Take Your Choice, with Stopping the favorite. Even though this behavior is troublesome, you know it has significance. It plays a part in the child's growing up. So it is Tolerate *first;* Channel, when you have to; and Stop only as a stopgap, until you can begin again.

This may seem like a strange approach to discipline. You stop the behavior by letting it go on. This may rub you the wrong way and offend your common sense at first. But if you think for a moment, it is not too weird. You can stop a radiator from dripping by letting the water flow out; you can keep a dam from overflowing by letting some water escape so that the walls will hold what is left; many machines work better when you equalize the pressure inside and out. This way has some roots in our everyday life. We do stop some difficulties by letting them continue for a while.

Your Skill in Channeling

One part of this is technique: channeling. Here is a skill you can sit down and learn. This isn't a totally new idea that has just dropped from heaven. We do not start learning it from scratch. All of us know some channeling from our own experience. It has happened to us many times, although we haven't given it that name.

Look at smoking as an example. "You can't smoke here, but you can go back to the smoking car"; "There is no smoking in the orchestra, but smoking is permitted in the balcony"; "Don't smoke in your rooms or out on the Campus, but it is legal in the Student Center." We know what this thing is if we dig down in our own living.

Take the way we dress. It is perfectly legal for a man to be unshaven—almost a badge of honor, in fact—*if* he is on a fishing trip. And women take their shoes off . . . in a theater, it is all right there.

Look at our public behavior. We are expected to be dignified, calm, and peaceful. But you can be as destructive as you want to be with the other fellow's goal post. And there is no criticism at all of the soft-voiced gentleman who shouts his lungs out—at a football game.

There is the Pennsylvania Turnpike, an express highway. Everywhere else in the state you are arrested if you drive faster than 50 m.p.h. The roads are too curvy, too narrow, too crowded with cars and people. But here is a road fixed so that you can drive as fast as you want to: straight, broad, separated in the middle, wide lanes for different speeds, no cross traffic. It is safe here; it is legal. Go as fast as you want to: 60, 65, 70 . . .

Halloween is a wonderful example. In itself it illustrates channeling. On this one night you can tear down fences, turn signs around, dress up to look queer, make all the noise you want. Be as prankish as you feel like, and it is all allowed. And now we have even channeled the channel! You feel like soaping up windows? Soap these—and the person who does the best job gets a prize! You want to dress up to be eerie and scary? Do it down here where we can see you—the best one wins an award!

On the 4th of July you can make all the noise that is pent up inside of you. At Mardi Gras, you can be as big a fool as you feel like. No one will sue you or even think less of you if you shout: "Kill the umpire. He's blind as a bat." It is legal at a baseball game.

A Central Theme

There is something here, we know, but we have to dig it out and use it for children. We are starting to do this in some isolated ways: That old swimming hole is dangerous and polluted; youngsters are going to swim anyway so let's build them a decent pool. . . . They are hanging out on corners now and getting into trouble; they want to be together, so let's set up a Teen-Age

Canteen. . . . They are dancing now in beer joints with juke boxes; let's move them right into the church hall and have our dances here. . . . They have a gang and are always together; let's start a live-wire Boy Scout troop, and then we can see what is going on.

But now we have to weave this approach into the whole fabric of our living together . . . at home and at school, in big things and little, the major problems and the everyday events of life with youngsters. This isn't substitution. It isn't trying to take their minds off what they are doing. This isn't a subtle way or a kinder way of stopping. This is opening up so that youngsters can go ahead.

Do it here because it is safe.

Do it here because here you won't bother other people.

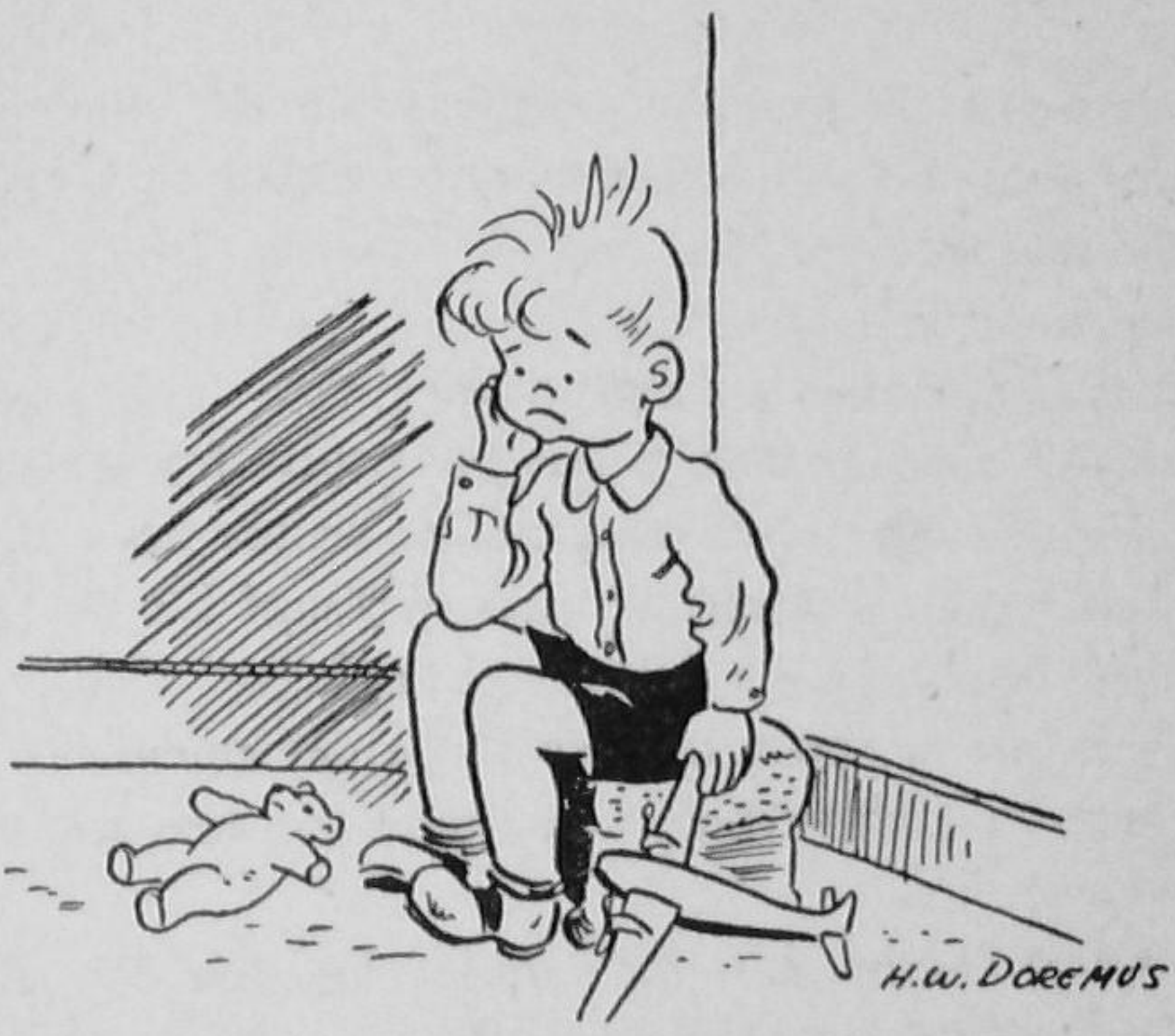
Do it here because here you won't destroy anything.

Do it here. I can take it here. I would have to stop you if you continued over there.

Of course in life the ideas don't always flow fast. We all get stuck; our wells run dry. And even when an idea works once, it wears out and you need a new one to replace it. But channeling does not have to take place right on the spot. It is good when it can, but even more crucial is the way of thinking.

The goal for teachers and parents is not superhuman perfection. When you get too good it is hard to be sympathetic with children who are not too good themselves. But each of us can at least be headed in the right direction. Trying to channel and knowing possibilities that sometimes work points us toward that goal.

12. A Second Hypothesis: Hunger Inside



The stage of growth a child is in is only one of four possible hypotheses. If the cues do not lead you to it, you must suspect a different kind of cause.

We eliminate possibilities this way every day. If the car does not need gas, something else must be the trouble. If the fuses are all right, the difficulty must lie elsewhere. This is a valid way of working, and we must use it with children.

We start with the most likely cause of trouble. We explore it. And then when we know that it is not the answer, we move on to consider other possibilities. Gas in the tank . . . fuses in order . . . the switch turned on. And with children: first, is it the stage of growing they are in? But if not, sometimes the reason is a pent-up hunger inside.

A SECOND HYPOTHESIS: HUNGER INSIDE

A youngster has missed out on something that was important to him. Instead of going away, the hunger has intensified. From being blocked and stifled and pushed down inside, the live driving force has fermented. It is as though today, in his present behavior, the bottle is uncorked and the pent-up juices explode.

Different cues lead us to this hypothesis. As we watch children in action we have to keep our eyes and ears open for signs like the following.

The Cue: The Behavior Is Inappropriate

Is this the kind of behavior that you expect from a child of this age, or do you get the feeling that an anchor has been dragging? Is this typical, or are you struck by a lag? Do you get the feeling that something is a little out of line?

You expect very young children to be dependent on adults. But here is an eight-year-old who seems to need tremendous reassurance.

You expect two-year-olds and Threes to be very self-assertive. But here is a seven-year-old who says No to everything.

You expect Fours and Fives to use their tongues as a means of hitting out, to swear and to act tough. But here is a nine-year-old who uses dirty words at every single chance.

You expect Under Sixes to fight openly and explosively when they don't like what adults do. This is the kicking-screaming-attacking age. But here are eleven-year-olds making direct attacks on the adult world: stealing, destroying, flaunting the rules. You miss the subtlety that pre-adolescents can have.

Something in the behavior does not ring true. It would be more fitting if a younger child did it. You sense that a youngster has grown up chronologically and had his birthdays, but his motor power is back in the past somewhere. It is caught in some younger year, and it is driving him in a younger gear.

That high-school student who flared up at his teacher: "I'm

not coming in and you can't make me." There is an openness here, a directness, an unabashed quality. This isn't what you expect of a sixteen-year-old; it is more like six-year-oldness coming through.

Of course, in one sense youngsters always act their age. The infant who is mad is not going to stand up on a soap box and make a speech about it. The high-school student who is mad is not likely to throw himself on the floor and kick in a violent temper tantrum. Children always act within some reasonable range of the muscles and bones and organs they have grown. But in the overtones it is possible—even easy—to sense: This is not what you expect of this age . . . in manner, in control, in method, in force.

This is really everyday business. Even when we are berated by a high-flown college vocabulary we are apt to say: "You are acting like a two-year-old." Not that a two-year-old could use those words, but the insistence and persistence spell out the age for us. Or we may see a grown woman under a strong necessity to have furs, cars, dresses, jewels. A child would not want those at all, and yet we say: "She is like a little child who has never grown up." The adult acts like an adult in the specifics of what she wants, but she acts like a child in the wanting of them.

The Cue: The Behavior Has an Electric Quality

Our second cue is very closely allied to this first. There is an electric quality in how the behavior shows itself. It isn't just saying No; it is how he says it. It isn't just insisting on his way, but how strongly he insists. It isn't just wanting assurance, but how precious assurance is to him, and how very much he wants it.

An electric note. A note of force. A note that says to you: this urge, this hunger, has been bottled up inside. It was not met when it would have been easy and appropriate to meet it. It had stayed stifled. Now it pops. It effervesces.

We are all apt to be quick on the trigger with this kind of behavior. We become aware very quickly of the youngster who blows off his steam. Sometimes his behavior is so bad—stealing, for instance, or destruction of property—that we tighten up inside and are trapped into being severe. But the very fact that there is an explosion means that the hunger has been a long time building up. Instead of rushing into impulsive action, we ought actually to make a thoughtful approach.

These troubles that show are the ones we worry about. Actually, their blowing off is more helpful than we know. In the first place we see them. We cannot miss them. Even though they may trap us into doing the wrong thing, they are at least constantly inviting us to do something. And that is healthy. At least there is less chance that these youngsters will be overlooked. There is almost no danger that people will not know they are in trouble.

The second point is that children are doing something about their trouble. We usually do not like what they are doing. And they are usually doing it the hard way. They are sucking life through a broken straw. They want love or attention or belonging or achievement or something, and they are trying to get it. Not in the usual way. Not in a direct way. But they are in there pitching.

These youngsters get a lot of hard knocks along the way, but along with all of these a little of what they do want seeps in. It is not enough to satisfy them. Not enough to give them what they are after so that they are free to grow. But there is a seepage. They wouldn't continue if there wasn't.

Occasionally this seepage is enough to keep a child going. And then something else later—his home, another teacher, a club, the church, his play (it is hard to tell what)—finally gives him directly and fully what he needs. And then the child is free to grow again.

Even though we worry a lot about these children, they are in a better way than some others.

Turned In

Some children have an electric quality to what they do, but it is turned in upon themselves. They are more silent, more quiet. There is no noisy explosion, no overt demanding. These are the youngsters we are more likely to miss, although their need is great, too.

But even though there is no noise, the electric quality is there. The child has to act this quiet way. He isn't choosing to; something is driving him to it. This isn't free choice or comfortable living. There is a note of compulsion . . . has to . . . MUST. And this is what you look for, whether the child tries to blot himself out or grind himself in.

It is hard to say just why these tensions inside should show themselves one way with one child—the loud-noise-you-can't-miss kind of thing—and another way with another child—all turned in upon himself in over-quiet. Almost certainly an inherited difference is at work. Some children are born more outgoing. When they are blocked, they hit out. And some children are born more self-contained. When they are blocked, they retreat.

But experiences enter into the picture too. Many youngsters have learned: there simply is no use. Life has hit them down whenever they have tried to get things for themselves, so that now they pull in their horns. They are not going to get out on a limb again. They tried that and were hurt. To protect themselves, they stay shut up inside.

In both behaviors, however, the same qualitative note is there. Call it electricity. You are struck with *how* the child does what he is doing. That note of force—inward or outward—suggests to you: Maybe there is a hunger inside.

The Cue: The Behavior Is Everywhere

We have an expression: "That's him to a T." A person has done something so much, we have seen him act a certain way in so many situations, that we say: "That's him all over." We feel this way about many children, and that feeling is our third cue, asking us to wonder: Is there a hunger inside?

Johnny does everything right up to the limit. He pushes the rules and patience just as far as they will go. He does it at home; the librarian complains about it; his Sunday School teacher is disturbed about it; you see it in the hallways and in work time and on the playground and at lunch. It is an all-day-long thing. This *is* Johnny.

And this may be another way of saying: there is something deep down inside that he has to have. He has long wanted it and needed it, and it has spread its hungry feeling throughout the whole of his being. This is not something that comes out once in a while. This is not something that shows . . . oh, when something goes wrong or when he is tired. This is Johnny. This is the touch he puts on everything because it is so much a part of him.

Always and everywhere.

When you see this cue you are apt to feel: I have to do something severe and to do it quick. Your eyes bring you the cue, but the school records confirm it. Johnny did not become difficult yesterday. He has been a concern in everyone's group. And home visits and seeing Johnny in his scout troop and at church make it still more clear. This is not limited behavior, confined to one situation. This pervades.

We have to learn to let this cue serve its legitimate purpose. It must not panic us. It must not propel us into drastic action. For, strong-sounding as many measures are, they are weak because they do not get at the cause.

Instead of letting "always and everyone" frighten you into mis-

takes, be cool-headed. Learn to spot this as one more cue. Put it with the others: inappropriateness, and that electric forceful quality. Perhaps together they add up to this: There is some hunger here that we can do something about.

The Cue: The Behavior Keeps Popping Up

Have you ever fought a forest fire? It can be a frightening experience. You work like a Trojan to put the fire out. You douse every flame and spark, and you think your work is done. But the fire travels underground. It pops up behind you. The heat has moved where you could not see it, and the fire breaks out anew.

These hungers go underground too. You squelch them, but you cannot force them to go away. You put cold water on them where they show, but that does not make them go out. It makes them go down deeper.

So often you hear people say: "We've tried everything, but nothing seems to work." They are talking about a fire that goes underground . . . or a hunger that won't go away.

You hear them despair: "He's worse now than he was before."

Or fret: "He stopped that, but now it is something else."

Many times when children give us this cue, we see red. Instead of spotting it for what it is, a sign trying to tell us something, we are so apt to get angry.

"He is just stubborn about it . . ."

"He is not half trying . . ."

"He doesn't care, and that's what the trouble is . . ."

The child's persistent behavior is a slap in our face. But we make the mistake of taking it personally. We assume that the child can control what he does, but it is his hunger which is in the saddle.

The slap in the face ought to make it easy for us. It is such a clear-cut sign. But we have to learn to see it as a cue, not as pig-headedness on the child's part.

If the behavior persists and PERSISTS and PERSISTS, ask yourself: Is there a hunger here? Or if it seems to go away and then comes back in some other form, ask yourself the same question. You have to keep in mind always that no one cue alone can tell you the story, but when you do find this being downright hard to stop *plus* "always and everywhere" *plus* the electric quality *plus* inappropriateness, you have grounds for your hypothesis. And now you are in a position to act.

Three Guides

1. A hunger? This means that the behavior will not pass. The longer the hunger is unmet, the stronger the brew grows. The longer it stays bottled up, the more force and the more pervasive quality it acquires.

This is exactly the opposite of behavior that stems from the stage of growth the child is in. That behavior has within it the seeds of its own destruction—the child grows and moves on to something else. But hungers bottled up inside ferment.

This says something to us: We have to do something. We need not do it with a note of tension and excitement. But we cannot fool ourselves here. Children do not outgrow the hungers that have been built into them. These hungers get worse and worse.

2. A hunger? That means that the child is not to blame. He is the victim, the innocent victim of the life he has had to lead. A better life would have met his needs, and his hungers today would be those appropriate to his age level. But as you see him today, he is not a free agent. His hungers are stronger than he is.

This says to us: Don't be angry with the child . . . don't blame him. In the yesterdays far back things were done and not done which built the hunger into the youngster. It was no doing of his; no error of omission or commission that he was responsible for. To blame now is not only fruitless; it is unfair.

Some people say: "Then the parents were at fault." This urge

to find a villain is a strong one. It was usually the parents who did or did not do something, but blaming them is no more helpful than blaming the child. We will see this if we bring our child-development point of view to bear on adults as well as children. If we reject the idea that parents do what they do "Because they are mean . . . or stubborn . . . or spiteful . . . or selfish." If we will ask of adults, as we do with children, Why? What is the reason?

We have to learn to wonder: What must have happened in the growing up of Mrs. Brown that makes it so hard for her to have any real fun with Billy? What must have happened long ago in the growing up of Mr. Smith that makes it so important to him for Jimmy to be obedient? What must have happened back in the 1910's to Mrs. Jones so that today she feels she has to do everything for Carol?

Parents too can be victims, innocent victims, of the lives they have had to lead. Here can be one of the very real values of home visits. The more you come to know parents as people, the more sympathetic you become, the less you are inclined to blame them or their children. You resolve inside yourself to do what you can do, and not to waste your energy in finger-pointing.

If you do have to blame, take a look at the world we live in and the world parents grew up in. It is not a perfect world for humans. We are all working to improve it, but it still has so many pressures, so many tensions, so many cross currents we all get caught in. The wonder is that we do as well as we do.

This imperfect world is making people: imperfect parents and imperfect children. And some of us have had more to contend with and more piled up against us than others. These people—children in trouble and their parents—need our help, not our anger or blame.

3. A hunger? That means we must feed it. Hungers go away when they are fed.

For a teacher this does not mean special rooms or special periods or special people. The teacher's job is to use her curriculum so hungry youngsters can find in it the food they are looking for. Feeding hungers is reading and arithmetic and science and English and art and playground—the regular classroom work that is going on anyhow—but now so turned that a child finds satisfactions in it. The teacher works through school life, but she works to make it a satisfying life for each youngster who is after something.

I'm going to sit beside someone anyhow. Who needs me most?

I'm going to call on someone anyhow. Who needs this most?

Someone is going to be chosen anyhow. Who needs it most?

Someone is going to do the job. Who will get the most out of doing it?

This is seeing children in the center of all we do: our reading groups, our committee work, the plays we put on, the themes that are written. It is the slow, steady business of regular classroom work, but angled to give Jimmy and Billy and Eloise and Frankie the particular praise or attention or prestige that they need. This is the teacher's way of feeding hungers.

You use your regular classroom work. You use whatever it is that you are teaching children, and you use all of it—the lunchroom and assembly time, the start of school and the end—so that youngsters find in their life with you what they need. You make your usual school living a good living for individuals because you help them get what satisfies.

Three Different Steps

Put these together now and it becomes clear. What do you do with behavior which stems from a hunger inside?

You feed the hunger. Actively. Through deeds, not words. Through giving in, not withholding. Through permission, not

punishment. You work so that each child gets from his life with you what he needs to feel good inside.

You stop the behavior whenever you feel you must. When children are hurting themselves, when they are hurting others, when they are really interfering with the group, when they are destroying property, when they are annoying you more than you have learned to stand. . . . Many, many times you will have to say No, and to say it so firmly that the child really stops. But you say it without anger or blame. You say it with an understanding inside of you as to why a child has to act this way. And you say it only to give yourself time.

Your No is not a period. It is a semicolon. A pause.

Stopping does not finish the business. By No you mean: No, not here; and later you will be able to say: *But* here. No, not now; and later you will be able to say: *But at this time, yes.* No, not that way; *but you can do it* this way. No, not to them; *but you can do it to these.*

You are always headed back to your third step:

You feed the hungers again. This is a continuing process in which you are working to let the child, with your approval and your active help, in ways which are legitimate and legal, get the satisfactions he is seeking.

Recognizing Hungers

We have talked a lot earlier about how easy it usually is to tell what a child is hungry for. All his behavior—everywhere and always—says it to you. It shows through everything he does—"This is him to a T." The child's actions almost shout at you: "This is what I want (love, approval, belonging, bigness)." Almost never are you baffled, once you know that children have hungers inside and that these hungers can lead them into trouble.

Only once in a while are these hungers hard to identify. We have some blind spots, for example. Even though the child's be-

havior is reasonably clear, we cannot bring ourselves to believe: This is what he is after. And occasionally the hunger is so disguised that it takes very careful looking to penetrate the cover-up.

Everyone, of course, has his own blind spots. There can be no full listing of them. Perhaps these are the most common: we forget, for example, that children need to express their angry feelings; we forget that young children, in particular, have a real hunger for goo and goosh, for dirt, for getting their fingers into things and messing around; some of us forget that children really want reasonable limits . . .

It is equally hard to list the hungers that are disguised. One person may be quick to identify something which another person cannot see at all. Perhaps two kinds of behavior are baffling to most people: that of the child who wants love so much but who covers up and acts tough; that of the child who longs for approval and belonging but who keeps all his signs inside of himself in a deep quiet and a silent sitting.

Perhaps if we look more fully at one hunger which we frequently miss and one hunger which is disguised, we will sharpen our sights for spotting all hungers and see better how hungers can be satisfied in school.

A Blind Spot: Angry Feelings

We tend to think that children are "innocent," "sweet," with only love inside. It is hard to imagine that they feel anger, resentment, hostility.

We have a dream picture in our mind of the happy, happy family where everybody loves everybody every minute of the time. Our ads support this. They always show mama and papa and baby smiling at each other and oozing good will. Our movies play up Romance with a capital R; there may be a little spat before the marriage, but only sweetness and light once the boy and girl say the magic words. Even in children's stories and in

their readers in school, family life is always in a rose-covered cottage with a white fence and a smiling daddy, a puppy dog whose tail wags all the time, and a mother who never frowns.

Maybe this lovey-dovey approach really is the good life. But if it is, most of us are very far from it. "Home Sweet Home" is sweet because it is the center where we do so many things together. That means it is the place where we get in each other's way and step on each other's toes and push each other around a little. The very thing which makes it sweet—the sharing and doing which is home life—also makes the setting which breeds conflicts.

No conflicts could only come through no-living-together. You would not have a home then; you would simply have a kitchen, bedroom and bath. To know what goes on inside of children, we have to be realistic about family life. The dream picture makes us forget that even good living builds some angry feelings into children.

We have to be realistic about child life too. Sometimes there is a nostalgic yearning to be a kid again—"Those were the good old days," carefree times with no college grades to worry about, no high cost of living, no parties to which we are not invited, no taxes. . . . But memory is very gentle to those "good old days."

Being a child means giving up fully as much as it means getting. Growing up means having the simple ways which come easy to you cut across and ripped by this thing we call "culture." It is not all bliss to be a baby, by any means.

You have to give up your sucking to chew and swallow. You have to hold in your wetting until the right time and place. You have to stop your touching, because "it isn't nice." You must hold back your crying, because "you're a big boy now." The chances are that you have to share the love and time and attention you are getting with some newborn rascal that you

didn't ask for. You must keep in your hitting in favor of talking things over.

You have to trade in all the things that come naturally—grabbing, getting, action, seeing—for the behavior our society approves of.

Life in the family and life growing up are not a perfect bed of roses. Or maybe they are, if you remember that roses have thorns. A child loves his parents and loves his brothers and sisters and loves his teacher . . . and sometimes he hates them. All these people are the source of the good things of life, but these are the same people who stop him, who punish him, who hold out on him, who stand in his way. Both love and hate are there, affection and anger or resentment.

You see it so clearly in the three-year-old who says to her daddy: "Go away. I don't want you. I don't like you." Of course she is crazy about him fundamentally, but not at that moment. Right then and there the anger is real.

Or in the two-year-old who clenches his fist and pounds his mother for all he is worth.

Or in the baby who is carried off to bed, screaming, red in the face, boiling over with disagreement but too small to do anything effective about it.

This seems the normal, inevitable process of growing up: to feel a great deal of warm love for the people around you AND to have moments when you are mad as hops.

A Piling Up

For some children there are a lot of these moments. Their wishes are blocked in a million different ways: feeding, toileting, dirt, new babies born, standards . . . And we have to remember that some children can take frustration better than others. The same obstacles make one child furious; another can shrug his shoulders. There is a vast difference, too, in the way grown-ups

handle children when they show their feelings. Some youngsters are squelched the minute a nasty thought crosses their minds: "Nice children don't say such things"; "You mustn't do that. Now tell her that you love her"; "Give the toy back and say you are sorry."

Out of this interweaving of the blocks and personality predisposition of the child and the way feelings are handled come some children who have a great many angry feelings inside of them. Life has built them in; life keeps the feelings from coming out.

Attack

This hunger to let out what is inside of you, to express the feelings that you have (whether you should have them or shouldn't) can show itself in many ways. One way it to attack. These children are mad at the world. It hasn't given them a square deal, according to their lights. They want to hit out and hurt.

There has been a piling up of moments of madness at mother or daddy or baby. The specific incidents are long gone now, but a generalized anger remains. You may see it now in shoving or pushing or hitting or breaking or in any kind of attack on people or rules or things. When you do, and when no other kind of hunger seems more clear to you, you might wonder: is this youngster looking for a chance to let his angry feelings come out?

Sometimes teachers sense this, even though they are not ready to accept it for what it is. "Oh, don't paint such an unhappy picture. Start again and make a nice one." They are trying to push the feeling back inside; you want to let it come out so that it can gradually go away.

Painting is a wonderful way of doing this. You use paints in your class anyhow. Letting children paint what they want to, without the censor of sweetness and light, is one real way of help-

ing them. Pounding clay or hitting nails or punching a punching bag, tackling a dummy, shooting with a make-believe pistol—a lot of the things that children do in classrooms anyhow are good safe ways for these feelings to come out. If we know this is normal and helpful, we won't be disturbed. We will be glad.

Some teachers let children tell stories or write them about times they were mad or angry. Your regular dramatic work, whether in plays or marionettes or little shows the children make up, is another wonderful opportunity. You use them to teach English or speech or creativity or poise, but some youngster can use them to hit out and hurt in make believe—and to feel better inside. He can be as mean as a rattlesnake, and it is just in the play.

Younger children in school have a wonderful chance with dolls.

They can spank the dolls, burn them in the stove, flush them down the toilet, step on them—anything—and it does not matter, because these are just dolls. The teacher does not have to do anything special to help. This is simply the doll play that goes on anyhow in the nursery school or kindergarten or in the primary

grades. The teacher's major job is to shut up. Just *don't* say: "Oh, you mustn't treat the nice dolly that way. Be nice to him." The child wants to treat him badly and he can, for once; this is just a doll.

Once you know that all children have some angry feelings inside, and that some children can have a lot of them; once you see how simple it is for these feelings to build up within a child; once you shake off the dream glow of "sweet, sweet family life" and "happy, happy childhood," you may spot this particular hunger more easily. And you will be able to think of even better ways of satisfying the hunger, of letting the angry feelings come out legitimately so they do not have to stay bottled up inside, consuming the child and dragging him back to some younger level.

In Disguise: The Hunger for Love

Some youngsters at home and at school cling to the adults. The untrained person will shove them off with the strong-arm approach: "Make them stand on their own two feet". . . "They've got to learn sooner or later" . . . "He's a momma's boy and we have to break him of it."

You will recognize this clinging for what it is: a real hunger for love. You will stop the behavior the right way, by giving the child what he is seeking until he has enough. You won't be stumped by what the child is after. He makes it very plain.

There is another way this hunger for love can show itself—a way that is much harder to identify. It is so masked that it looks exactly the opposite from what it really is.

Some youngsters act tough. They don't seem to care at all for what the world thinks. They have a hard shell and a chip on their shoulders. They seem to be fighting the world, and the impression they give at first is one of not wanting to be liked, not wanting to fit in, not caring at all.

Have you ever seen a cat backed into a corner? The fur stands

up, the back arches horribly, the mouth is open, spitting. It is not pretty, but you know the cat is scared.

I once chased a snake. It slithered away as fast as it could and then it came into a corner from which there was no escape. It turned and coiled, its tongue darted, it hissed and looked mean. But the snake was more frightened than I was.

Perhaps we all do this. When our back is to the wall we turn and bare our fangs. We are our unloveliest. Fighting and frightened. A quick look makes us seem tough and mean and aggressive. Only a deeper look shows the scare inside.

Some youngsters who want love very badly are exactly like this. They have tried hard to get it and have never found enough. They feel backed in a corner. They feel that the world is against them. And now they are going it alone. The face they show is a fighting one, a mean one, a rough one, but there is mostly fear inside.

These children rarely kindle any warm spark at first. They are out to get you, you feel. And it is hard not to react in kind. You have an urge to land on them, to crush them, to show them who is boss. Or their chip on the shoulder makes you want to leave them alone. There is an impulse to make them "earn" some attention by showing that they care and will try. But if they trap you this way, what you do proves the lack of love and builds up the fear. It increases the hunger and makes the toughness worse.

Mother Love

Perhaps we are slow to penetrate the disguise because we have a tendency to assume that all children get mother love. This is in our folklore. The minute a child is born, something magical comes over his parents so that they drip with warmth and kindness and tenderness. Unfortunately, it doesn't work out this way in every family.

The folklore is strong enough so that people rarely put their harsh feelings toward children into words, but the feelings get over to children nevertheless. Some youngsters simply are not wanted, and they can sense it even from the muscle tone of the arms that hold them when they are babies. The sad news comes to them through countless events all through their growing up.

There are other youngsters who have been robbed of love by harsh events: the death and illness of parents, divorce, crushing economic struggles in the family. Because teachers tend to come from more stable homes, it sometimes is hard for us to picture how cruel life can be to some youngsters.

Our own more rooted backgrounds also make it difficult for us to know fully how frightening it is to live without love. Very few of us have experienced the loneliness, the emptiness, the bitterness that comes when you sense that you are totally on your own. Some youngsters—from wealthy homes and poor ones, from homes with two parents and from homes with none—have this gnawing feeling.

How You Feel and What You Do

Once you see the cues in what these children do—the inappropriateness of their behavior, its forceful quality, its persistence and pervasiveness—your attitude toward them changes. You know it is not meanness or badness or obstinacy, and you are free to get a liking for them. You know they are not attacking you personally, and that frees you still more. And as you get more data to help you see how life has piled up on them, your sympathy and understanding and respect grow. Children sense this in you. They appreciate it because this is what they are after.

They want someone who will believe in them. Who will not be harsh over every little thing that goes wrong. Who will come back to them even after they have been bad. When they find that person in you, you reduce their need to be on the outs.

Of course you will still have to stop them many times from the things they do, but your stopping is gentle. It is friendly even though it is firm. And no matter how continuously they are the transgressors, they soon know that you won't lose your faith in them.

Sometimes you may assure them in words: "That's all right. You will learn. You will do better the next time." But continuously you assure them by what you do: choosing them, talking with them in fun and friendship, walking with them, noticing them, praising them as much you can.

On the surface these children are acting tough, so you start with them where they are. You give them chances to be that way where they can get away with it: parts in plays, rough-and-tumble games, stories, marionettes. But what matters even more is the subtle business of how you feel inside. Even though this is intangible, it gets over to children. And this stems from your knowing keenly: these are not bad children, they are hungry youngsters who must be fed.

Time, Please

It is important now to restate that it takes time to help children get their feet on the ground, and it particularly takes time for hungers to go away.

Physical hungers are built into us by just a short span of living. The man is tired; perhaps he hasn't slept for three days. The man is thirsty; perhaps he has had no water for a week. The man is famished; perhaps he has been without food for ten days. These hungers are sharp but they are new. They stem from yesterday and from the few days before. The hungers inside of youngsters as we see them in the classroom and at home have their beginnings in whole years of yesterdays.

They too are sharp and biting, but no glass of water makes them go away. Days and days and days of living have built them

into children; days upon more days and still more of better living are needed to make them go away. The start here was no shipwreck a week ago; it was an infancy ten years ago. The start was no plane crash on the desert last Friday; it was an early childhood many birthdays past. The process is the same: feed the hunger and it will be satisfied. But we need a time concept to strengthen our determination to keep on doing this.

13. A Third Hypothesis: The Present Environment

Hungers that drive youngsters into troublesome behavior have their roots in the piling up of yesterday before yesterday, in the whole long history of the child's past. There is another kind of cause we have to consider: *the present.* What is right around us now, the very air the child is breathing.

We have been talking about all the accumulation of the past in a child's life. Now we want to look at his Today: this moment now, an hour ago, as far back, perhaps, as this morning's breakfast.

In some ways this is a pet explanation. It seems like the simple way of straightening children out. A child is misbehaving in class; move him to another group where the children will be larger. A child isn't doing as well as he should; move him to another group where the children will be smaller. There is a

yawning temptation to think that we can fix up everything by fooling around with the environment. A little patching here, a little fixing there, and a devil becomes an angel.

You hear some people say this in extreme form: "If he could only be away from those parents of his. A good foster home . . ." Just lightly pick the child up from his very roots and transplant him on top of a rock.

You hear some people say it in wishful form: "It is that terrible neighborhood. If they could only move . . ." If the family only had a million dollars; if the father only had a different trade; if a slum would blow away and a rose garden bloom instead.

You hear some people say it in narrow form: "You are tired. That is why you are acting this way. Now go to your room and rest . . ." Lie on your bed and, magically, you will become six instead of the three years of age that you are. Lie on your bed and you will dream away the hungers biting you inside.

The Mote in Our Eye

We are very conscious of environment . . . usually the other fellow's! We are full of bright ideas for what the other person ought to do: the parent at home or the teacher at school, the neighborhood, some place always "over there."

One of the really ticklish facts here is that you and I are a part of the child's environment. What you and I do and don't do enters into this matrix from which stems the child's performance. And our part is the last thing we ever think to look at!

Billy is wiggling and inattentive. Could it possibly be that we are boring him to death with the stupid stuff we are teaching?

Joe is cheating. Could we be the ones who are driving him to it by the high standards we hold?

Mary is lying. It could not be our sternness that keeps her from telling the truth . . . or could it?

This whole group is out of hand. Is there a possibility that we have fallen down and not given them the equipment that would put their energy to some constructive use?

George is disobedient. Or is our rule wrong?

Some people overplay it, but present environment, the air we breathe now, can drive us into worse behavior than need occur. You can sit just so long on the hard bench in church, and you have to wiggle and change your position. You can stand just so long, and then you have to sit down. You can keep quiet just so long, and then you have to blow your top. But we can all see the other fellow's mistakes quicker than we can see our own.

If I lecture to a class and someone falls asleep, I know exactly why. He is a bad student . . . or it is these terrible fraternities with all their dances and the late hours they make students keep . . . or it is that football coach who drives his team so hard that they can't study or do their real work. Some Tuesday in 1980 it may dawn on me that I am talking nonsense in a monotone, and only those with insomnia are still awake.

If I lecture at a teachers' meeting and half the people are out shopping, I know exactly the reason why. Teachers just don't want to learn. . . . They like to go along in their rut. . . . They are intellectually lazy. And it won't occur to me until Doomsday that maybe I always talk over their heads on problems they never face anyhow on programs they did not ask for.

If my youngsters at home are restless and excitable, you don't have to tell me the cause. I know. It's television! Or the comics. Or the radio. Or the movies. I swing out in all directions. Not until I spin around so much that I get dizzy and land on the floor will the light ever break: Maybe I have been nagging them too much. . . . Maybe I always take them by surprise when I ask them to do something. . . . Maybe I have fixed up a wonderful home for a decrepit adult that is pretty terrible for active children.

We love to jump to conclusions, particularly if they point to the other fellow. It takes very unusual security and strength to be willing to include in the possibilities: Maybe I am the one. This soul-searching is the last thing we come to, yet each of us is a part of the environment children live in. Each of us makes children act the way they do.

One Cue

It would be wonderful if there were some clear-cut cues that could warn us. This is where we really need something to tap us on the shoulder or to hit us on the head. The bells here ought to ring loud and clear.

Unfortunately there seems to be only one major lead: *the process of elimination*. If the cues do not add up to The Stage of Growth and if they do not seem to indicate Hunger Inside, perhaps this is the answer. Perhaps something in the present environment of the child holds the key. You build your hypothesis by elimination, by the absence of evidence pointing in other directions.

This is not a sure way of coming on a sound operating principle, but you often get a quick check on whether or not you are right. This is an added safeguard that frequently makes up for the lack of clear-cut cues.

For if the present environment really is at fault, you stand a good chance of seeing quick improvement. You leave the child alone. You keep your hands off him. You don't fuss with him. You forget about him for the present. But fix up that environment and, if you are right, his behavior will frequently perk up immediately. The treatment can be like a quick shot of some wonder drug.

This is not true of The Stage of Growth; it is not true of Hunger Inside. But with this one cause alone, there are times when you can legitimately look for improvement almost one-

two-three. And if it doesn't come, the chances are that your hypothesis is wrong. You have a quick check on whether you have hit the nail on the head.

Provide desks that fit them and, if that was the cause, you will quickly see better work.

Give them chairs of the right height so their feet can touch the floor. If that was the cause, the restlessness and wiggling will speedily end.

Open the windows and let in some fresh air. If that was the cause, the attention will snap right up.

Try giving them juice in the middle of the morning. If hunger and tiredness were making them so irritable, this will help right away.

Or almost right away. Some time lag is certainly legitimate. It takes trying one thing and then another, trying combinations, looking at the big things and looking at the little. This isn't always a matter of minutes. Juice in the morning may bring some improvement; more activities going on at the same time may bring still more; a longer play period out of doors with better equipment may bring still more. Yours has to be an experimental approach, and this does take some time.

But behavior that stems from pressures in the present environment does not have the long, involved, personal history that hungers do. It is more susceptible to change. Nor does it have the structuralized support of being built into the whole fiber of the person's being, which the stage of growth has. This behavior is more open to improvement.

Complications

In putting this emphasis on the possibility for quicker change, we must be clear as to what part of the environment we are working with. The word "environment" is so broad. Sometimes we mean by it the specifics of material things: Open the window . . .

get a softer chair . . . turn up the light so you can see better . . . build a low shelf, then they can put their own things away. . . . These concrete, homely details are important at home and at school, and these lend themselves to the quickest change.

But environment is the intangible, too.

A youngster became constipated in one class because, according to him, the teacher let the children go to the toilet only at certain times. When the parent complained, the teacher was honestly surprised. She insisted: "Why, they can go any time they want to." But her face was stern and unsmiling and the child had assumed that she probably would not like it. It takes longer to fix or adjust the environment when human relationships are involved.

A parent group gradually dissolved because no one wanted to attend. The teacher blamed the parents and said they just sat and had no ideas. But the parents said among themselves: "She has everything so cut and dried. It is all worked out in her mind, and she gets upset when you want to do something different." It takes longer to rebuild the flexibility that is missing in this environment.

A faculty group griped about its meetings after school and rushed away at the moment of adjournment. The principal had his explanation: "They are nine to three workers; they don't want to do anything extra." But the teachers said: "No matter what we decide, he keeps all the power. If it is anything important, he overrules us." It takes longer to repair this environment, because you have to restore the faith that was damaged here.

A youngster from one of the most active families in the PTA changed her report card so her parents would not see a low grade. When she was found out, she cried: "But you love me so much and you are so nice to me and you do so many things for me, I just couldn't show it you." It takes longer to build freedom and equality in the place of dependence.

All Around

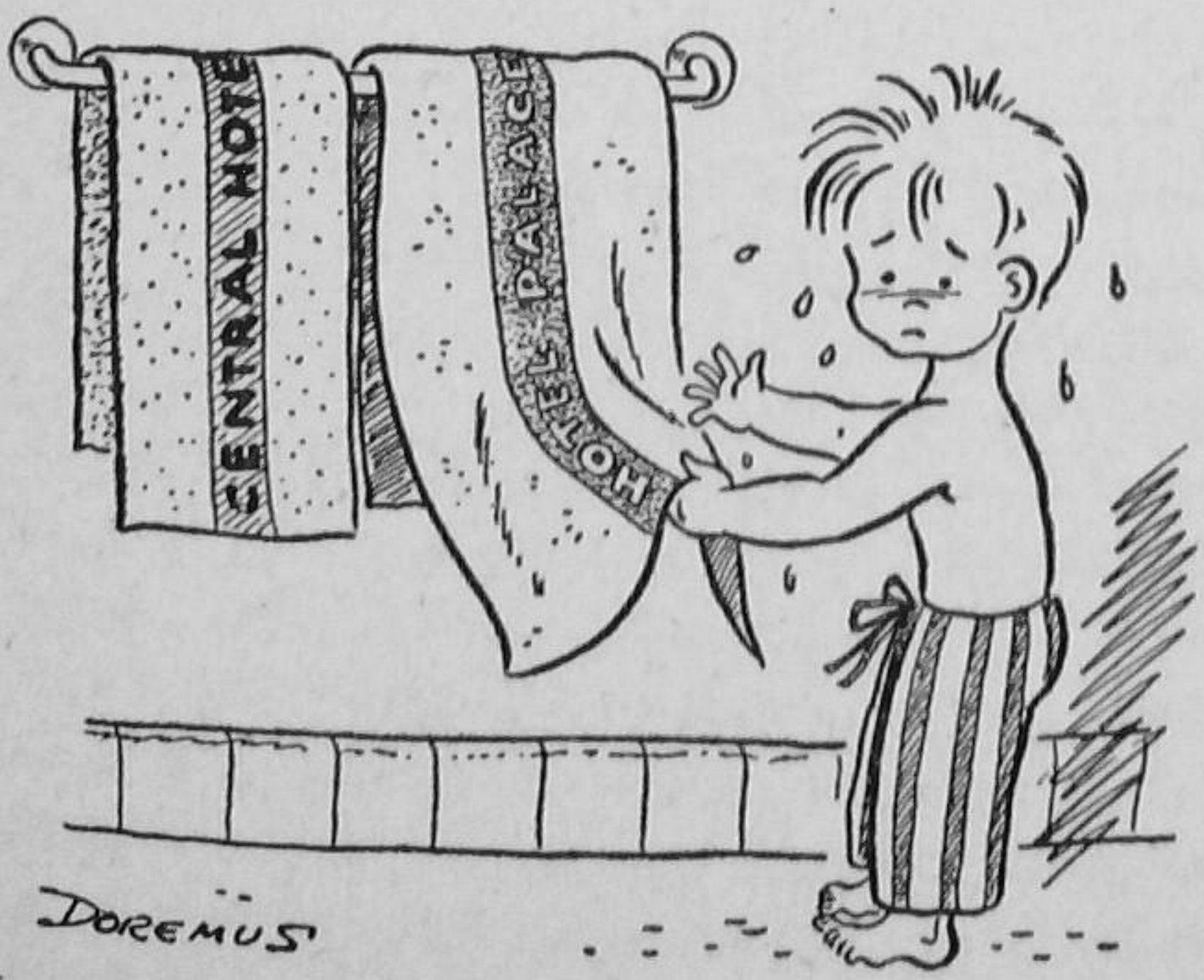
Environment is material and it is intangible. Environment is specific and environment is pervasive.

A child was being severely reprimanded by his fifth-grade teacher for using a word that the teacher considered bad. "No nice person uses a word like that," was the teacher's crowning blow. The youngster sulked and returned to his seat. The rest of the day he sat glowering and silent. As he left the room at the end of the day, the child said to the teacher: "My daddy is nice and he says 'Damn.'" And then he strode out.

Teachers spend a large part of their time telling children: "Don't hit. It isn't nice." At home the youngsters are instructed: "Hit him back. Learn to fight your own battles."

Schools say over and over: "You mustn't take things that are not yours." Youngsters go home to bathrooms where the towels are marked "Hotel Statler" and the salt and pepper shakers have the stamp of American Airlines.

Teachers go gray fussing at children about obeying laws: "Don't



run in the halls . . . walk to the right . . . don't jump on the stairs . . . no pushing." The same youngsters watch Daddy drive over sixty, and they are all too aware that the car did not come to a full stop even though the sign said it should.

In schools we work toward cooperative living, sharing, and working along with the other fellow. Yet the weight of our world outside is highly individualistic. We get no glow when our neighbor borrows our power lawn mower; we are burned up instead.

We talk at children about peaceful ways of living together: "Be nice now. Don't hit. You two can get along." But our newspapers and broadcasts and telenews show only too clearly how much our world centers on violence.

Neighborhoods, Families, Children

Theoretically our public schools are dedicated to the proposition that every child has worth and potentialities. But many a neighborhood dins into its children: "No matter how hard you try (you Negro, you Puerto Rican, you Mexican, you poor white, you Jew, or you little Irishman), you're not going anywhere." Teachers fool around with stars and A's and honor rolls, but these cannot reach a youngster unless he feels there is some future. A great many children think these rewards are just a snare—there is no point in getting excited about stuff like that. That is for the other fellow, not for me.

Some families have learned that they can get along only by vociferously sticking up for their rights. You are no good unless you dare to talk back to the policeman, unless you argue with the storekeeper over every weight and every price, unless you can think up some way to beat the landlord out of something. Tough sledding has taught a tough lesson: the world is out to get you; you have to beat the other fellow to make out. Children

who live under these conditions can mouth nice words about cooperation and trust and faith.

Other youngsters feel a different pressure. They come from homes where the eyes are always up. Who knows? Maybe the children will be Quiz Kids. Maybe Momma someday will be Queen for a Day on the radio program. Maybe Father will be sales manager, if everybody behaves.

The parents make sacrifices so that the children can have every advantage: dancing lessons at three years; piano lessons at five; violin, singing, elocution. . . . The children go to Sunday School and to everything that looks educational: museums, libraries, art exhibits, even to lectures at the PTA. But an environment in which there is too much future can be just as complicating as one in which there is too little.

Children have their own culture too. We teach health in school, but maybe the smart thing to do in your gang is to steal a smoke when no one is looking. We teach honesty, but if you want to get in you have to sneak a candy bar when the man's back is turned. There are certain words we don't say at home or at school, but you had better say them loud and often with the fellows or they will think you are a sissy.

Often the virtues of the teacher are not the virtues of the neighborhood or family . . . and the teacher does not know that the gap exists. We do become aware of the child-culture. Children fight to bring it to our attention: "Do I have to wear rubbers? None of the other fellows do"; "It's not fair. You make me buy my lunch and all the other kids carry theirs from home"; "I don't see why I have to go to bed so early. No one else does"; "Why can't I go to the movies? All the other kids do."

We cannot miss knowing that this culture exists. But it is hard to bring ourselves to believe that it is really important. Each one of us lives in our own private world. We love to believe everyone else treasures what we think is important too. We can only

see the world through our own eyes. What looks red or blue or green to us must look the same way to everyone else under the sun.

We get to be smug about the Right. Right is what we think is Right. And we forget that children are looking at the world through their eyes, that different families see the Right a little differently, and neighborhoods and religions and skin colors and economic levels and political points of view all have their own ideas.

Your Understanding

For every youngster there is some pull and hauling from conflicting environments. Teachers need to have a feeling for the boat that children are in. We need not give up our nice goals of promptness and politeness and honesty and cleanliness and severance and whatever else we may think is important. But when the child's world argues differently—whether it is his world of other children, or the parents who are all the world to him, or the neighborhood which has been the very stuff of his growing up—we have to know there is a conflict.

To touch that world of children or family or neighborhood may be a long, slow job. It may well involve more than teachers and schools can alone do. It may be rooted in economics and history and may respond ultimately only to social change. What we do at any time may be no more than to make a dent. Yet sensing what this means for children shows us where to put our emphasis. We work—even with little dents—on the environment; we don't make children's living more complicated by picking on them.

Our time table of expectation changes, but the process and way of working do not. We are gentle with children. We are understanding. We are aware of how they are caught. We put our

efforts on the environment and we keep to the minimum our demands on the children.

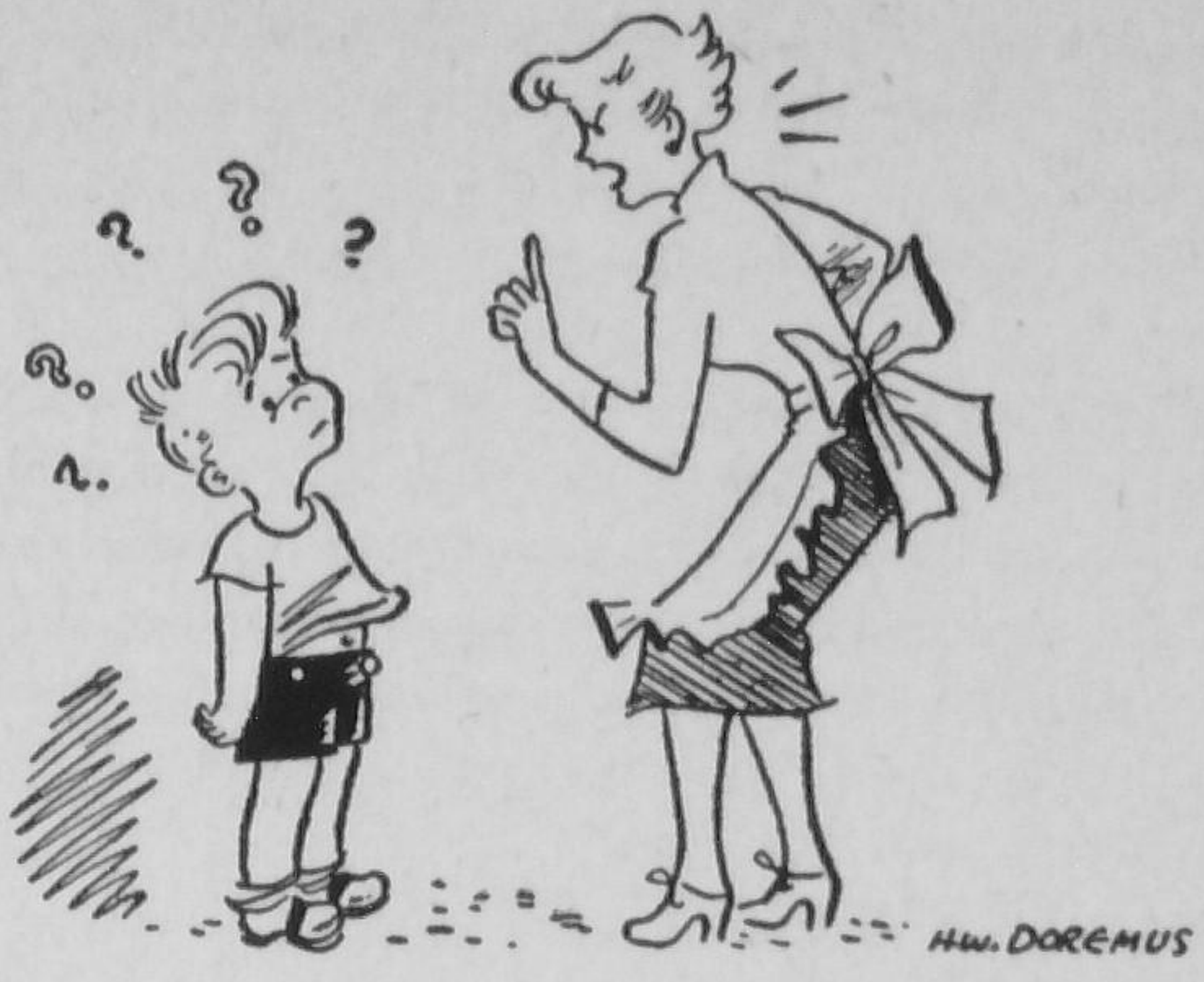
This one thing we can always do: we can hold back from complicating children's lives. We can at least keep from muddying the waters. To nag, to fuss, to insist, to punish for the sake of a goal which a child cannot accept as his own—whether this means "Wear a dress" when the gang says "Wear slacks," or whether it means "Say 'darn' when the gang says 'damn'"—is putting too great a burden on children.

It is self-defeating in the long run. It weakens youngsters. Our overinsistence destroys their confidence in themselves, and it is only the strong, secure person, the able-feeling individual, who can rise someday to the level of conscious choice. The weakened person is always at everyone's mercy, and must remain that way.

If you can take this long view, working gently for the goals you prize and at the same time working to build good feelings into individuals, there is a strong chance of eventual success. You hold your goals because they seem to work well for you and well for people as you have been able to see them. You think there is something inherently attractive and worthwhile about them.

If this is true, confident and sure youngsters will eventually arrive at them. Reasoning children will see the virtues just as you have seen them. But beaten youngsters—defeated, blamed, punished, unsure—will never have the clarity of vision that could lead them in the long run to what you believe must be right.

14. A Final Hypothesis: The Youngster Does Not Know



Each kind of cause has its particular treatment. What is right for one is wrong for the other. Our final hypothesis makes this clear. This is the one situation where it is fruitful to work directly with the child. It is the one situation where talking helps, where reasoning makes sense. It is the one situation where you can hope for basic improvement if you use rewards and punishments.

Children sometimes do bad or troublesome or annoying things simply because they do not know any better. One five-year-old put this into words. He was walking with his mother down a city street when he broke away to press his nose against a window pane that was on the ground level. He was spying to see what he could see.

Embarrassed, his mother grabbed him by the arm and pulled

him along the sidewalk with her. "That's not polite to do. You mustn't do that, don't you know?" and she emphasized each word with a squeeze on the child's arm.

The boy walked along quietly for a while and then his resentment came out. "Well, you never told me that I shouldn't look in to watch people while they were eating." And it was a very fair complaint.

The Cues

Once more our main guide has to be the process of elimination. If it is not The Stage of Growth; if it is not Hunger Inside; if it is not Present Environment, then consider that this might be the cause: perhaps the child does not understand, perhaps the right thing to do has not yet penetrated.

To this we can add a further cue: this is more likely to be a common cause of young children's misbehavior.

And the still further one: it is likely to be the reason when anyone of any age is in a new situation, confronted with a new problem, facing new possibilities.

We must remind ourselves of one thing. Our rules have been with us so long that we assume they make sense. We adults take them for granted. But children have to learn them all one by one. It takes a great deal of living to do that.

"Don't run in the living room, don't you know that?" But why should he know it?

"Wipe your feet so that you don't drag that dirt into the house." But it is not always clear to a child why a little dirt in the house is so bad. You know it best when you have spent your life wiping it up.

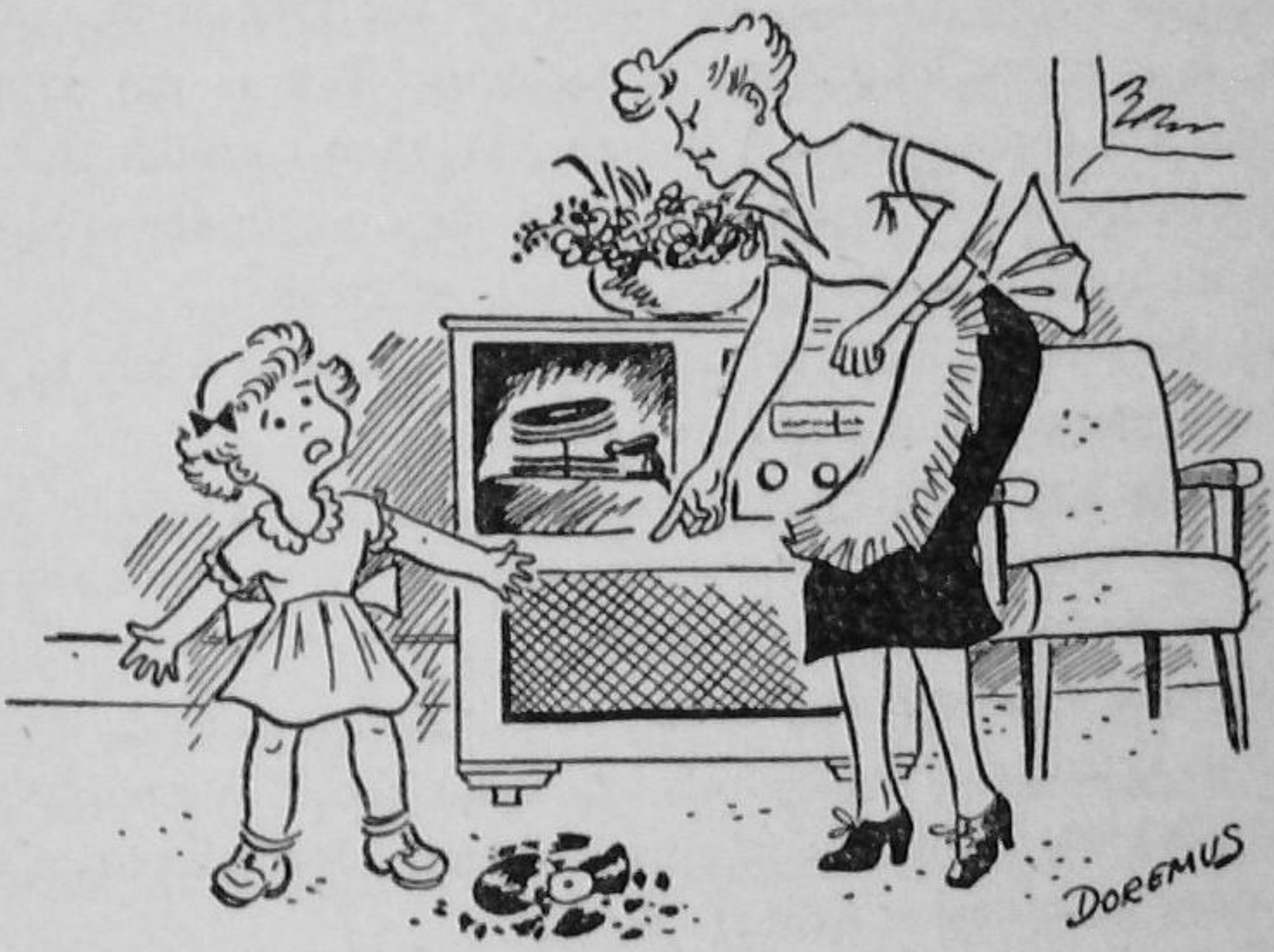
"That's not the way to treat a book. Don't you know any better than that?" But you may not, if you haven't dealt with many books.

Adults get very angry about it, but children have a real case.

The eight-year-old pushes the three-year-old on his sled down the hill. The sled gets out of control and the little Three is badly hurt. "I'm sorry. I didn't know he couldn't steer. I didn't know it was so steep."

The seven-year-old knocks over his full glass of milk. "Whoops. I'm sorry. I didn't know it was so tippy."

The six-year-old breaks the phonograph record. "It's not my fault. I just touched it. I didn't know it would break."



What You Do

We have a theme song that we sing at children over and over again: "I've told you a hundred times . . ."

Stay out of the garden. . . . Keep your arm in the car. . . . Be quiet when I am telephoning. . . . Bread comes after you have finished your milk. . . . Don't run on the stairs. . . . You can't talk when others are talking . . . "I've told you a hundred times . . ."

And this is exactly what we have to do.

We have to say it a hundred times and then a hundred more. But if you have a child-development point of view, this does not bother you and you do not get mad. You know that children have to live a long time before they can comprehend all the rules of life. You do not expect them to know at six what it takes ten years of living to learn.

This is most of all a talking approach. You explain why, and you make a little dent. The next time the situation arises you explain why again, and the thing becomes still more clear. But each time is a little different, and no one explanation makes everything so clear that you never have to say it again.

This is the slow, slow piling up of understanding. The child "knows" in one sense from the very first time you tell him. But there are many kinds of knowing. If a rule is of any importance at all, it will take more than the first "knowing" to get it really under the skin. True comprehension—where you know and you understand and you accept—is a long time in growing.

Rewards and punishments have their place here. Sometimes they can be a real aid. The pleasure of something nice or the displeasure of something not-so-nice can strengthen a child's memory and make the understanding come quicker. But we have to use them sparingly.

There is such a temptation to make things go fast. We bypass the doing over and over which is the real basis for learning. Or we make the reward so wonderful or the punishment so terrible that the child's eyes are taken off what is the real lesson at hand. All he can see is the glitter of the prize or the gloom of the pain.

Relied on as the major technique, rewards and punishments defeat their own end. Used judiciously, in specific and appropriate situations, they can be a useful tool. For their true role is to buttress our talking approach.

Talking sets the tone of the relationship we want. We are not trying to buy children's good behavior; we want them to see the sense of it themselves. We are not trying to frighten them into good behavior; we want them to believe in it themselves. We are not treating children as animals or objects or things, to be manipulated by pain and pleasure. We are working toward the development of a reasoning, planning, and respected person who will someday soon be his own boss.

One tendency is to talk at children too much. We use words and arguments and persuasion where these do not apply. But when the cues lead you to think: The child simply does not know—then this *is* the time to reason. This is when the good sense you make and the friendly way you make it can lead a child to more self-directed and social behavior . . . slowly, over a long period of time.

15. "The Children Are Soft . . . Discipline Is Soft"

Some people get very irritated at our modern ways of dealing with children. They point a finger and accuse: "You are too easy with them. Your discipline is soft, you are soft, and you are making the children soft."

This is hard to take. It puts you on the defensive. It makes you tighten up when you least want to—just to prove that you are no easy mark.

But instead of ducking and denying, let us accept this charge. Instead of an accusation, let us see that this is praise. Instead of being ashamed, let us be proud of it. Instead of lowering our eyes, let us raise our heads high and reply: Yes, indeed! That is what today's discipline is. It is an easy-going discipline . . . and we are glad of it and think that is exactly what it should be.

For good discipline is soft discipline, a gentler way of living with youngsters, if you mean any of these things by it:

1. *If you mean that love is the basis of what you do.* There is nothing to feel guilty about here, nothing to hide. This may be soft, but it is good discipline.

Despite any charges that people make, you and I have to know: love is crucial. Youngsters have to feel it from us, or they have no reason for wanting to be good. Youngsters have to sense it in all their relationships, or they lose confidence in their ability to be good. Take away love and you take away the surest guarantee that a child will work through his problems, whatever they may be.

Knowing this, we are not too severe.

We are not too strict.

We do not nag all the time.

We do not correct and improve and pick on children for every little thing.

We are not proud of being stern. We are proud when youngsters like us and seek us out and want to be with us.

We want to laugh with children and joke with them and have fun together.

When we have to stop them from doing something, our concern is with making up after the incident is over. We want to be sure that we get over to the children who live with us: It's all over now . . . we're friends again.

We know that inside of children there is a strong urge to grow, to learn, to practice, to fit in, to do the right thing. Our concern is to keep that urge alive. If we look "easy" when we are doing it, we are not going to let that get us down. For we know that comfortable, happy relations count.

2. *If you mean that you overlook some of the things that children do.* There is nothing sloppy about this. Nothing to make

us feel that we are shirking. Nothing to have regrets about. This may be soft, but again it is good discipline.

The child-development point of view includes the conviction that children change. We see youngsters expanding, enlarging, encompassing—reaching out everlastingly to more mature behavior. We have no delusions of grandeur about ourselves. We do not think that we are God-like teachers or parents who pull the strings while puppets move. We know the growth force inside and we have confidence in it.

With this faith, we can afford to go along with children.

We can string along with a lot of what they do, certain that it won't last forever.

We can accommodate ourselves to their level, with no fear that they will stay that way forever.

We spare ourselves and we spare them the unpleasantness of continuous reform. We let growth do a lot of the work.

So far as we are concerned, children can be children. If that means noise, it means noise. If it means dirt or freshness or giggling or shouting or bouncing, that is all right with us.

This may be soft, but it has a note of inherent decency in it, of according to childhood a respect that is a healthy sign in any society. And we do it not for softness' sake or because it is the easiest way. We do it because we know: you cannot be a strong adult until you have been strongly a child.

Our easy-goingness is not something we have slipped into. It is something we have worked for. To develop a tolerance, to develop an acceptance, to build inside of ourselves a real capacity to enjoy children and what they have to do—none of this comes without effort. But the effort is worthwhile if the goal of human relations is to build a world of free people able to work with others because they are able to live with themselves.

3. *If you mean being willing and eager to begin where each child is.* We raise the word "Interest" to a battle cry. It is no ac-

cusation to us, but the hallmark of a skilled professional worker deftly doing what is right.

People sometimes say: "You have your head in the clouds." This is where we can reply: "We have our feet on the ground." For our initial concern is not with what might or should or ought to be. In living well with children we start with what *is:* where children are, what they are concerned with, what they feel is important to them, what matters enough in their living so they will put out effort to do something about it.

It sounds soft: "You let them do what they want to do" but that is exactly what we are searching for: what they want, what they seek, what they are eager for and enthusiastic about. And we guide that "wanting to do" toward the ends that the world considers important.

We have no concern with beginning in an alphabetical order or a logical order or an historical order. What gives the order to what we do is the human who is approaching the job. What looks like a handle to him is the handle we accept as the start. Others can call this soft, but we know: begin with what the child is keen about and you get persistence, doggedness, determination, follow-through, avidity—the hardest of virtues—and it is the child who is doing the work.

There is nothing wrong with a soft discipline and the easy-going way if you mean these three things by it: a persisting decent relationship with youngsters, a confidence in their wanting to grow, and a willingness to take them where they are as your starting point. Let someone call you "soft" for these, and they are praising you in the highest.

Soft . . . and Hard

But today's discipline can be hard and tough too. It has its demanding sides. If we know them, we can be more certainly

confident of our easy-going ways. For one backs up the other. There is mutual support.

We are not hard for hardness' sake alone. We are not tough because we are afraid of what others will think of us. But we have a demanding discipline in these ways because we know that children want it:

1. We draw the line always and without hesitation when youngsters are in danger themselves, when they are hurting other people, when they are unnecessarily destroying property, and whenever we simply cannot stand what they are doing.

There is no shilly-shallying here. When these lines are crossed we say No. It is perfectly true: we simply *say* No. We don't hit youngsters with iron bars or shoot them on the spot or take away their allowances or desserts for seventeen years. We may not seem as brutal or as dramatic as some few people like to see adults be. We don't throw our weight around so that the whole house shakes and the child trembles in his boots.

We *say* No because talking, reasoning, explaining, interpreting —the way of words—is the decent way of dealing with humans. But our No can be as firm and as definite as it has to be. We stick at it until the child gets our meaning: this cannot be.

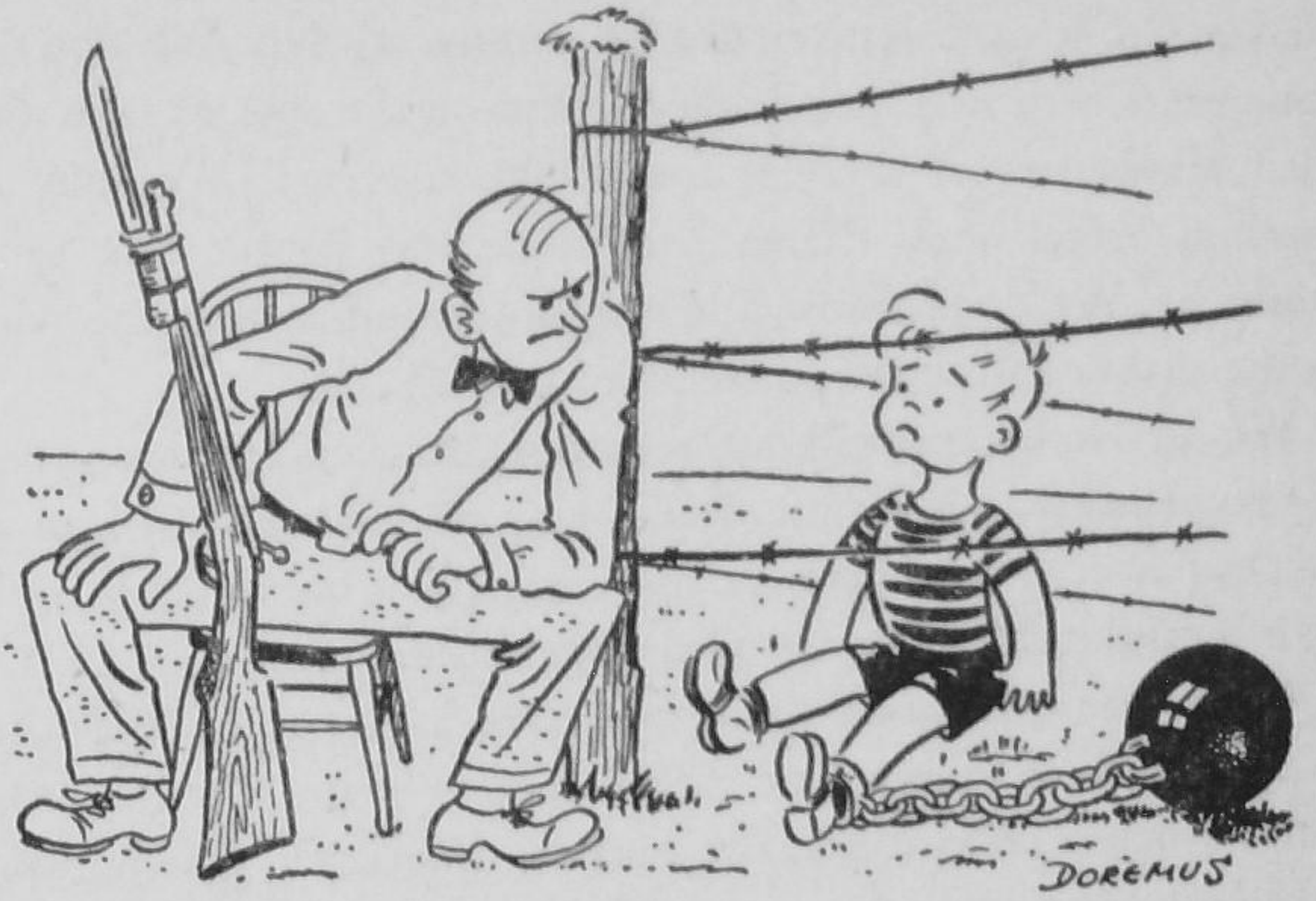
We have no illusions about this. We do not think that there is an objective clear-cut line where danger begins. Or that a bell rings when a child is actually hurting others. Or that lightning flashes in the sky to tell us when the destruction of property must be stopped. We know these limits are within each one of us. It depends on what we think and on what we see and on how much we are able to take. This is a matter of judgment entirely.

But we are not afraid to exercise that judgment. We try not to be arbitrary. We try not to be capricious, approving one thing today and being all upset about the same thing tomorrow. We try constantly to expand our tolerances. But we are not ashamed of

being human, and we think it is good for children to live with humans.

It is true, too, that we don't stop with No. We are looking for open doors. But this wanting youngsters to live, to do, to act where it is legal, legitimate, and safe in no way weakens the No —when we feel it has to be said. You can call this a hard discipline and we will stand by it.

2. We draw the line always and without hesitation when we sense that children want us to. We know that youngsters want limits. It is our faith in them that tells us so. We have a feeling



for how the child himself is struggling to take on the ways our world considers right. We want to bolster his efforts, because we know those efforts are there.

When a youngster has gone too far, when he is out of control of himself, when he is flailing out to find some limits, we will be a pillar: "This is as far as you can go. But no further."

We know this will spell love to the child, because it will be a sign that someone cares. This will give strength to the child, be-

cause it will take away some of his fears. This will give him confidence, because he will be aware that he has an ally; he does not have to do the whole job of growing all alone. And all this is what we want our discipline to do: to build up the person, not to tear him down.

Our limits are part of a team: ours outside, the child's own efforts inside. This tempers what we do. Ours must be the limits of words, of gentle persuasion, of calmness but firmness. They need not be of steel and barbed wire, sternly forbidding, as they would have to be if they existed all alone. They are real, objective, existing without doubt—a hard discipline, if you will—but not so overpowering that children are made to feel small by them.

The Real Question

What matters most, of course, is not whether a discipline is hard or soft. Our concern has to be: Is it effective?

In so many people's minds the effective thing—what works—is the same as what squelches. What pushes down, what suppresses, what keeps in. . . . It is a negative, hiding, quieting trick.

The child-development point of view turns this about.

What works is what frees. What opens up. What makes possible.

The human has inside of him a unique potentiality: his capacity to think, to reason, to puzzle, to evaluate, to decide. To consider, to compare, to foresee. To act according to a judgment. This is man's crowning glory.

This is a developing power, small at birth but enlarging with every passing year. It expands from the specific to the general, from the here and now to the there and then, from a concern with me alone to a feeling for you and all my brothers.

This thinking process is what we have to free.

It alone can be the safeguard in our world of today and to-

morrow. Only with it can man be himself. Only with it can man live.

What works is what makes it possible for children to grow and develop and mature so that this potentiality becomes a reality. What works is what frees the child to be himself, his human self at every stage of his growing, so this distinctly human facility can come into its own. What works is what allows the child to use the power that is his without the dragging anchor of immaturity.

A child-development point of view may seem soft or hard, easy-going, lenient, flexible. But its concern is with none of these directly. It strives for the effective way—with what works to let man come into his own.

CONCLUSION

Don't Sell Children Short

There is something we call "human nature." You can't tamper with it and bend it to your will. You accommodate yourself to it, work along with it. You ride it where it takes you and you make the most of every inch along the way. But there is an area, too, where people are made . . . where they have the chance to rise up to their most noble heights or are forced to sink lower than they otherwise would. You need your vision and your broad view of life, to work well here.

Your Vision

A child's particular rate of growth, his own special and private personality make-up, the innate limits on his capacity, the hungers that happen to be inside of him—these are all hard taskmasters. They are controlling factors, and we must face up to them and adjust to them as creatively as we can.

But although heredity and a youngster's past experience set limits, these limits are not posted. They are there, but they are not written out so you can see them. There is a ceiling, but it takes groping around to find it. What you think is the ceiling may simply be the mantelpiece.

Your humility and your creativity let you work with consideration for these limits, but you need also hope and vision . . . a capacity to see where a human has come from, where he is now and where he is headed . . . a daring to dream and to work for the best.

I think of a first-grade teacher I knew. She never smiled, and in her room it was work, work, work.

She was always right and the children were wrong. Out in the open everything was either good or bad: "Johnny is cooperating today. . . . Frankie is being bad. Do we like that?"

She picked on her children for little things: "Don't you dare be late. . . . You are whispering. . . . Come back and hang your coat up straight!"

She never did things with the children, but she was right on hand to make sure that they did them. There was an exact place to put your pencil and an exact way to put it.

You cannot change human nature, but here was a teacher who made children tattle more: "Teacher, teacher. Georgie's talking and he shouldn't be." She made them hit more and hurt more; I saw three of her boys shout at a girl just learning to ride a bike until the girl fell off and cried. She made them scream and yell more and get out of control; you should have seen that group when they burst out of the school's door. She blocked their thinking, she lowered their spirit, and some youngsters got sick (people called it "the regular winter stomach upset").

What did it? If you looked in her classroom you would see errors in technique. If you looked at the person you would see a tight, gaunt, dry personality. If you looked into her thinking you would see there a vicious habit-training concept: Make them prompt now and they will never be late. . . . Make them polite now and they will never talk back. But the crucial thing was something you could not see: there was no hope . . . you would find no vision there.

Here was a person bounded by the narrow limits of the first grade. A small person with a tiny outlook. Hemmed in and pinned down by the little things of the sixth year of life. No scope. No dreaming. No reaching out to the world beyond.

"Your nose is dirty and you shuffle your feet. . . . Your 'e' looks

like an 'o' and you are not sitting up straight. . . . You forgot your lunch money and you didn't drink your milk. . . . Hold your book nicely. . . . Walk, don't run. . . . If you wave your hand, I just won't call on you"—and she called that life!

It is life . . . fenced in by September to June.

It is life . . . packaged and stamped "9:00 A.M. to 3."

It is a little life with no perspective. There is nothing that extends beyond.

But the person does, the child does. The child moves on from year to year. You need a vision of youngsters in their total life span.

In the Beginning

You may be working with children at seven or eleven or thirteen, but go back to when they were born. Go back even further. Get a picture in your mind of what it means to have a child come into a home: *all the joy*—"What will it be, a boy or a girl? And what will we call it?" . . . *all the excitement*—"Won't we need a baby scale? And I wonder if I got the right kind of talcum." . . . *all the changes that take place*—"Of course I will have to give up my job soon. No, I don't think we will have money enough for that vacation we planned."

There is worry often—"You'll come through all right. You won't even feel it." . . . *and illness*—"She is snappy and fussy, but then it has been hard; she hasn't been feeling well." *You even find sorrow*—"But can we afford a baby now? What will it do to our living, and suppose you are drafted?" . . . *and sometimes there is an angry note*—"But I don't want a child. Now we are tied together and that isn't right!"

A youngster is all of these things, coming into that first or fifth or eighth grade. There has been a whole play of feelings and events in every day that has gone before: that terrible nagging worry about infantile paralysis all last summer. . . . How he

cried with that bad case of poison ivy. . . . The time when he was four and had the sleigh-riding accident; that wire just missed his eye! . . . How she would gag at night with those bad colds when she was two; she couldn't get her breath. . . . And do you remember the way she cried when she first came home from the hospital? The nurses told us she was such a good baby and never cried at all. But we couldn't seem to do a thing right; it was such an awful, empty feeling.

Worries. And proud hopes too: all the jokes about the first word he ever spoke. Mother could hear it every time but it sounded like goulash to Father, and he was never around at the right moments. The time he first built a tower of three blocks, one on top of the other. And that first real birthday party when he was three. Will you ever forget the marshmallow icing all over his face? And then the way he would sit and listen to the Victrola; I think he has a musical ear. And the way he could hit a ball when he was five; that fellow is going to be a baseball player when he grows up!

There was the fun at picnics, the arguments over going to bed, the excitement on Christmas morning, and the tears in the doctor's office when it was time for a shot. The way the moon used to frighten her, and how scared you were when that truck came up over the curb and almost hit her carriage. No youngster comes into any grade cold, as though that were the beginning and end of it all.

The First Groove

We think now that if any years have a very special importance, it is those long years before school begins, way back in very early childhood. Those baby years when youngsters are first getting their initial impressions of this world. What kind of a place is this anyhow? Is it a tough, demanding set-up? Do they ask a lot of

you here, so you always have to be on guard? Is it a holding-out kind of place, where you fight for everything you get?

And what are the people around me like? Stern? Cold? Rigid? Standoffish? Can I trust them, or are they apt to leave me alone? Will they be nice to me, or must I cry it out myself until there are no tears left? Are they sensitive to me, or do I pound and howl so they will remember I am here? Is this the beginning of a two-way love, or do I fight?

And it is me, too. When you are small you are building impressions of yourself all the time. Do I measure up? Can I do what they expect me to? Am I the kind of person who puts his foot into it every time? Am I wanted? Do I get a great big smile? Or do I have to be careful, so they will be sure to like me?

We think all the little events of everyday dealing carry these messages: the feeding times when you are small (whether you are fed when you are hungry, whether you are given all the time you need, whether you are held as though you were welcome, whether you can suck as long as you want to, whether the food you get agrees with you, whether you get enough of it to make

you feel round and full inside); the toilet times when you are little (whether you are blamed when you wet or simply accepted; whether you have to sit on a pot when you don't know what it is all about; whether the face you love tightens up when you soil in the wrong place); the bath time, the play time, bedtime, dressing. . . . All the everyday happenings of Month One and Month Two and Three and Four say to you: you are all right (or you are not so good); they are friendly (or watch out for them, they are out to get you); it is a good world (or you have a struggle ahead).

These are the beginnings. Like a river starting at the beginning of time, the water flows in a certain way. It makes a little bed, and then all the water that follows finds it easier to flow into that same cut, to broaden it and to deepen it. These first impressions make a groove. Everything that happens later tends to slip into this same groove of feeling: this is the kind of person I am, this is the kind of people who are here, this is the kind of world it is.

There is a groove in the child. His parents are wearing down a path too. If you keep shoving the nipple back into the sleeping baby's mouth because the doctor said, "Eight ounces," it is easier to keep nagging later: "You just have to clean your plate." If your heart went into your mouth every time the baby fell, it is easier later to say: "You better wait. You are not old enough for a bicycle." If you rushed every time to snatch the dirt out of the baby's mouth, it is easier later to say: "Now you be a good girl. Sit still and be sure you keep your clothes clean."

A Continuous Remaking

The beginnings make a groove. It is a thousand times better if the groove is a healthy one. But people are made and remade with every passing day. No one period of years stamps the person forever; no one event is so forceful that it says: This is now You, and you are stuck this way. New patterns of feeling

and acting can be laid down, old unhealthy ones can be dried up.

Your eye needs sweep, not only into the past but also into all of the child's present living.

Piano lessons, appointments with the dentist every third day, a dancing class once a week, a grandparent to be nice to, a father who works so hard that he must not be disturbed: how much pressure can a child take?

Not allowed to play football, has to be in the house at 4:30 because he will get overtired, less spending money than the other fellows, eyeglasses, a squeaky voice that they tease him about: at what point in loneliness do you have more than you can stand?

The right religion, that big home with its outdoor fireplace, only an older sister to give him competition, two parents and both with a sense of humor, a bedtime story every night: no wonder he is easy to like, but is he the one who needs all the praise it is so simple to give him?

Tonsils that have to come out and pets that die; toys your baby sister always breaks; a jelly sandwich for lunch; a turtle who really understands you; new shoes that you must not get scuffed: this is the youngster who comes to school.

The star you give him is not his only joy, nor seven times three his only concern. You are not the only adult in his life, nor is this desk his real room. Once you know there is a past and there is a present, it gentles your touch. Never again can this little spot in time—this first grade or seventh or eleventh—seem like the limits of the earth. You become less sharp.

But until you see this, you think you work alone. This magnifies you too much for your own good. It intensifies you too much for the child's good.

The Long Look Ahead

It is past and present and the long future too.

No one knows tomorrow. Our future is unpredictable, but that

tells us the one important thing to know. Whatever the world is like, it will be different, changing, new. It should make us ask ourselves: Does this child have what it takes to live in a changing world? Is his life now one that gets him ready for a bomb that may fall, an industry that may change, a way of life that may be disrupted—for new problems, new values, new situations, new opportunities?

Once we raise the question, it does something to us. We teach our reading and writing and arithmetic. We work with children so they become more aware of time. We continue with a concern for decent manners and being careful and accurate, clean, responsible, informed. But once we raise the question, we know: We don't teach reading, we teach children. We are not building skills, we are building people. We shift our concern from what we are knocking into youngsters over to the children into whom the facts are pounded. How do they feel? What will last inside of them? What is it doing to them as people?

This vision—backward, all around, and far ahead—tempers what you do with any age. It tempers in the sense of "make more gentle," so that seven or eleven becomes a good year to live. It tempers in the sense of "make more strong," so that seventeen or eleventeen becomes a safe, sturdy year of life.

THE END