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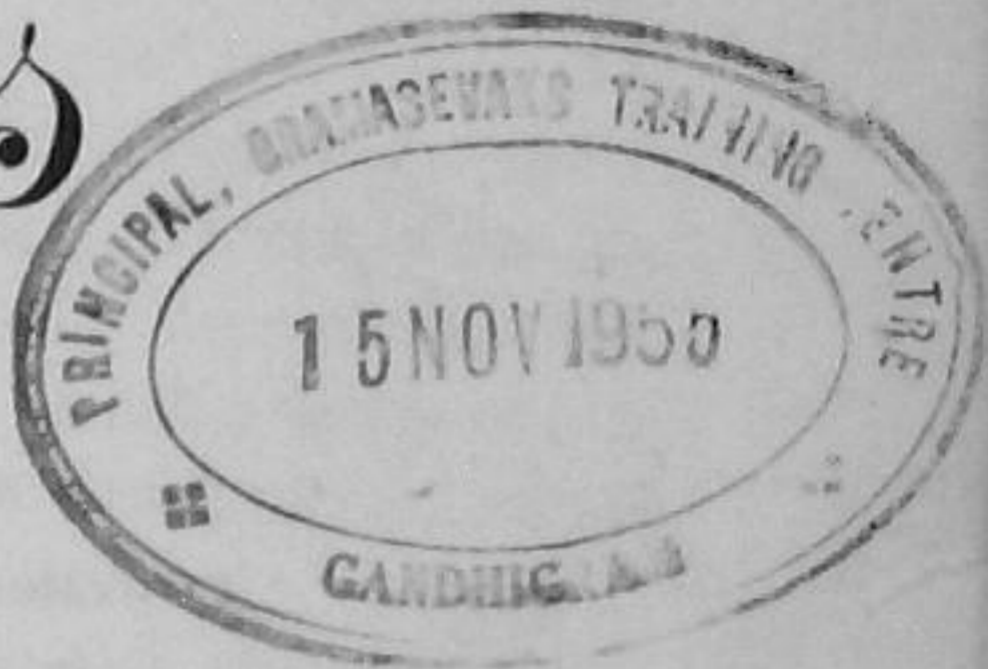
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UNDERSTANDING

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# Ourselfes



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## Foreword

Everyone is interested in an always-fascinating subject: personality. Who has not asked himself on occasion, "Why am I like this? How can I be different?" Who has not wondered whether he could learn to be more effective, more successful, as a person?

Everyone wants to reach certain goals. These goals differ for different people, but all people are concerned about how best to accomplish what they set out to do. Some are more successful than others in their efforts. Can the others develop, correct certain reactions, improve certain attitudes? These questions need not be riddles without answers. They may be puzzling, but they are puzzles which can be solved.

In recent years much has been learned about personality: how it grows and develops, how it can be harmed and impaired, how it can be improved and enriched. Scientific researches have been carefully conducted, and the results can be translated into everyday living to make it both happier and more effective.

An awareness of how ways of thinking, of fearing, of hoping, of believing, came to be, is not only interesting but helpful in such an endeavor. For it is such reactions as these that contribute to and influence everything you plan and undertake.

There is a challenge in the study of personality. Meet that challenge. It will bring great satisfaction. You can indeed live more adequately and become a more effective person.

HELEN SHACTER





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## Getting Along with Yourself and Others

In every group of boys and girls growing up together there are one or two who do not fit in with the rest of the crowd. There may be a girl who goes off by herself instead of taking part in the school life and the sociable activities of after-school hours. Or a big boy who is a bully, and is hated and feared. There may be a girl who talks so much about herself, her experiences, and her accomplishments that the other girls avoid her. Or a boy whose sense of humor seems to be distorted, so that things which embarrass or antagonize others he considers fun.

In every group, too, there are boys and girls who are popular enough but have certain habits or traits which even their friends do not like. About these you hear it said, "Fred's all right, but has he a temper!" Or, "I like Evelyn a lot, but I wish she wouldn't talk about how wonderful that house of theirs is. Everyone knows it's just an ordinary house." Or, "What's the matter with Claire now? She certainly is touchy!"

And then consider yourself. Perhaps most of the time you seem to get along all right. You have plenty of friends, even if you aren't the most popular member of your class. But how often have you felt disgruntled because others seemed to get all the "breaks"? How many long minutes have you spent thinking of the way you would like things to happen—the way, somehow, they never seem to happen?

Perhaps you have run for a class office and your opponent has won with a large and—to you—amazing majority. Perhaps now and then you have what seems to you an excellent idea, but you cannot "put it across" to your friends. It may be that you sometimes hope for an invi-



tation to a dance or party and are puzzled because others are asked but you are not.

What is it within yourself that has kept you from realizing your ambitions or has caused you unhappiness in your relations with other people? And what makes the otherwise well liked boy and girl in your group indulge in unattractive habits or traits which mark them out from the crowd? Above all, what makes some of the group so different from the rest that they do not fit into the crowd at all?

It does seem strange that people should get started in kinds of conduct which will make it hard for them to have friends and to be successful in their undertakings. It seems even stranger that they should persist in such ways.

### Getting Along with Others is a Skill

Has it ever occurred to you that getting along with people is an activity, in the same way that playing football or playing the piano is an activity? We know, of course, that in sports and in other skills we must first have, certain knowledge, and secondly, we must have practice. As a rule the more knowledge we have, and the more practice we get, the more successful we are. And yet in that most important and exciting activity—getting along with people—we rarely receive any specific information or training. And our “practice” is a hit-or-miss affair, seldom planned and thought through.

The idea that knowledge and practice are necessary to the development of skill is not new to you. You have recognized it since you first saw a tennis match: you were sufficiently interested to learn the rules of the game, and then had enough persistence to wield your racket in serves and returns until you could place the balls where you wanted them—at least most of the time. You have known it since you first had a desire to knit a sweater for yourself: you observed carefully the way to hold your needles and the way to manipulate them to make different kinds of



stitches. Then you kept on knitting until you could work so speedily and surely that you hardly looked as your fingers moved along and row after row appeared.

It was obvious when you decided you would like to play in the school band: you had to know something about the music to be played, and something about the way of playing, and then you had to play it over and over and over to perfect it. And it was undoubtedly just as evident when you learned to do algebraic equations, first absorbing the mathematical theory, and then doing problems until you were sure of your procedures and accurate in putting them into practice.

Whether we think of sports, of hobbies, of accomplishment in music, art, dramatics, or any other field—whether we are concerned with activities in or out of school—we know very well that the more knowledge we have about them, and the more practice we are able to get in them, the better able we are to perform and to achieve success.

It is just as true that if we are to succeed in that other challenging activity—getting along with people—we must acquire information and then put it into practice.

### Learning about People in General

There are a number of facts about people in general which you will find helpful in the daily experiences which are part of ordinary living. And learning about people in general will, of course, provide you with a better understanding of yourself in particular.

Then, having acquired some information and knowledge, if you will practice using that knowledge (just as you set out specifically to practice, for example, a new dance step, a new vocabulary exercise, or a new glee club number), it follows that you will be more skillful and more successful, both in understanding yourself and in getting along with others.

This is addressed to you as a person—as a personality.



It is intended to help you become more proficient in happy living and more successful in social living. The results of investigations in many different sciences—sociology, biology, psychology, for example—have provided us with a mass of data which are valuable in ordinary daily living. To make these data apply to you at school and at home means restating technical phrases and interpreting laboratory procedures in terms of everyday activities. That is the purpose of this book: to give you knowledge of the growth of personality, and to help you to use that knowledge in order that you may know yourself better and learn to understand others better. You should find this book helpful in becoming more skillful and more successful in living.

### Thinking of Yourself in Particular

In thinking of yourself and your own particular problems, be honest! Face facts as they really are, and do not gloss over some remembered failure, some unforgotten disappointment. For memories of unfulfilled desires and of plans gone astray are common to all of us. You are not alone in the kinds of experiences you have had. All of us at some time or another have been keenly aware of rebuff, frustration, or disillusionment.

It is no disgrace to have failed, whether at a mathematics problem, or in running for office in the athletic association, or in feeling yourself a popular and "wanted" party guest. But—if you have been unsuccessful in your attempt to do that algebra assignment; if you have been defeated at an election; if you have been ill at ease at a party, or have been a wallflower at a dance, or have felt out of favor when that girl refused your invitation to the game—and, in the light of these experiences have made no attempt to improve your ability, whether as a mathematician, or a club member, or a social participant, then definitely some discredit must be chalked up against you.

It is a comforting thought that everyone has gone



through at least some of the none-too-pleasant experiences which have just been suggested, and that so many people seem to have become successful and skillful when similar occasions again presented themselves. It is cheering—is it not?—to be sure that you can learn to be more able, more skillful, more successful, whether your problem is an academic subject, or a matter of running for president of the club, or a question of parties and dances and invitations.

You should remember that nothing worth very much can be obtained without some effort. That chap who places drop-kicks with such uncanny skill, and that girl whose hand-knitted sweaters always fit so beautifully, those many people who seem to achieve success at whatever they attempt—they first gained necessary knowledge of what they wanted to do and then they did it over and over again. Success in these items of living experiences was gained through concentrated practice in them. Success in living, so that you really learn to know yourself and can think well of yourself, and so that others seek you out and admire and like you, can be gained if you will consider certain facts and then practice consistently what you learn.

### Your Personality Today — And Tomorrow

You cannot change a personality over night. It has taken you all the years you have lived to become what you are today. You must have patience if you want to change. Not that it will take you years and years! But you must take definite logical steps to effect any change in your personality. First of all, you must know something of human personalities in general. Secondly, you must acquire sufficient insight into yourself as a particular personality so that you know not only what you would like to alter, what may be open to some improvement, but also what part of you seems quite acceptable and successful in this game of living. Then, thirdly, you must be willing to use patience and persistence and to be self-critical in bring-



ing about any change you may decide you wish, since practice in action is necessary to learn any skill.

Reading this book should help you in the first two steps in such a program of understanding yourself. The third step depends upon the first two. This third step cannot possibly be successful unless the first two have been achieved. The first two steps will test your maturity in thinking and your honesty with yourself. The last step will be successful to the degree of your sincerity and perseverance.



*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



## Personalities Vary in Many Ways

Did you ever stop to think that you have never seen another person who is exactly like yourself? This is true in spite of the fact that all human beings have many characteristics in common.

Obviously, everyone of us has a body with upper and lower limbs. We all have pigment coloring our skin. We all have hair. We all have the power of movement, and equipment for talking, seeing, hearing and feeling. We all have basic needs which we try to satisfy.

Less obviously, we all have some degree of accuracy in working, ability in planning, interest in other people, feeling of contentment. To evaluate these less obvious qualities, it is necessary to do more than merely look at a person—yet we must all consider such qualities in judging people, and they are all important to us in getting along with people.

There are so many people in the world that it hardly seems possible for these traits—along with many others—all to be present in different degrees in different persons. But such is the case. No two people are ever entirely alike.

### Differences may be Slight or Great

Suppose we consider such an ordinary distinguishing feature as height. Do you remember that first day in the gymnasium when the instructor asked the class to line up according to height? The few who were the tallest went immediately to one end of the line. And the few who were very short went as promptly to the other end. But most of the group looked speculatively at one another and tried to



decide just where to stand. Only after considerable shifting about was the line finally organized.

If at that time you had been interested in another common characteristic, hair color, you would have noticed that while some of the class were very blonde and some were black-haired, most of the group had brown hair. Among the brown-haired majority it would have been difficult to decide whether one head was just a trifle darker or lighter than another, and yet no two heads of hair would have been identical in coloring.

Suppose we were investigating still another common characteristic, speed of movement. This can be done easily and fairly by tapping. We can count the number of times during a given interval that each person strikes with a pencil against a board, or we can simply count the number of dots he makes with a pencil on a piece of paper.

The tapping scores of any unselected group will show that a few people are very rapid tappers and a few are very slow tappers, with most of the group tapping almost the same number of times. The average taps in thirty seconds made by one group of fourteen year old boys was eighty. Half of the boys tapped between seventy-one and eighty-seven times. A quarter of them were faster — they tapped more than eighty-seven times. The remaining quarter were slower—they tapped fewer than seventy-one times. Again we see that some members of the group were very much alike, while others varied greatly.

It does not matter whether we consider height, complexion, speed of movement, or any other characteristic: we will always find that a few members of any group will be at one extreme and a few at the other, with the great majority, varying slightly from one to another, in between.

### Differences Individualize People

You are perhaps wondering whether there is any particular significance in slight variations in hair coloring, or



in taps per half-minute period, or in height. Such differences are not so important in themselves as in demonstrating the fact that no one individual is ever exactly like another individual. You cannot think of any two people, even a pair of twins, who are identical in all respects.

Suppose we consider characteristics which are somewhat less obvious than height or hair color and somewhat less simple to measure than rate of tapping.

What of fatigue? Do you tire as easily as that boy with whom you took a long hike last week? What about your disposition? Do you get excited, angry perhaps, when most of the others remain good-natured and serene? Do all of your teachers show the same patience in explaining difficult class work? Do you notice when visiting at your friends' homes that some mothers always seem to be worried or impatient, while others are generally cheerful and pleasant?

People are all different in the ways they react to circumstances and in the ways they think about things. Not just you, but parents, teachers, neighbors, younger brothers and sisters. Since everyone is like only himself, everyone differs from other people.

### Your Own Individual Differences

In this book particular emphasis is placed on individual differences which have to do with disposition and personality and with the ability to get along successfully with others. Special stress is given to ways of improving individual characteristics. It is logical that we will have a better understanding of ourselves if (1) we can learn how certain desirable personality characteristics develop and if (2) we can discover what has caused undesirable ways of feeling or behaving.

To reach such understanding, suppose we consider next *why* we always find personality differences among ourselves, our friends, and our acquaintances.



## Heredity is a Factor in Personality Development

The basis for personality differences lies in two major facts: no two people have exactly the same heredity, and no two people grow up in exactly the same environment.

Perhaps you will say that children of the same parents seem to have identical heredity. But the inheritance of characteristics is not a simple matter concerning only two parents. You have only to think of your own brother and sister, and of the families of your friends, to find examples of its complexity.

Of two brothers, one may be tall and husky like his father, but have fair hair and blue eyes like his mother. The other may also be tall and strong, but have eyes and hair as dark as his father's. Even twins may be quite unlike. For example, Lester is somewhat like Louise in hair coloring and in facial appearance, but there the resemblance stops. Lester is taller and heavier and never seems to be ill. Louise is tiny, and she has one cold after another and seems to "catch" every disease that comes to their neighborhood.

Of course we know that each new individual formed by the union of two parent cells later shows characteristics provided for in that union; we know that in the genes are the latent provisions for the many qualities and attributes of the mature being which is to develop. In general it is true that "like produces like." Yet children are never exactly like their parents. It would perhaps be more true to say instead that "like produces somewhat like."

The problem of heredity is complex, and it is not necessary for us to attempt here the consideration of its puzzling details. But this we must emphasize and always remember: heredity is an essential factor in determining individual characteristics of many kinds. To understand ourselves or others we must consider the heredity which lies back of each individual. There are a myriad of possible combinations of traits and attributes and characteristics. Children



are apt to show some resemblance to their parents, but always we find differences when we compare children with their parents.

### Some Effects of Environment in Personality Development

However, heredity was only one of the two major reasons that we mentioned as accounting for individual differences. You remember that we began this discussion of why people are all different by saying that (1) no two people have exactly the same heredity and (2) no two people have grown up in exactly the same environment.

It would not be surprising if at first thought you offer much the same objection to that second suggested reason as you might have to the first. You might well be inclined to say, "If two children grow up as members of the same family, living in the same house and going to the same school, surely they have the same environment!"

But consider two brothers, Bob and Dick. Bob is sixteen and Dick is fourteen. They have lived in the same house all their lives. They went through the same elementary school, and are now in the same high school. These are certainly environmental similarities. Now consider the environmental differences. For two years Bob was an only child; then Dick was born. Thereafter Bob was the "big brother." He had certain responsibilities as well as certain privileges. Dick, on the other hand, was never an only child. He has always been "little brother" and has always been somewhat protected by, dominated by, teased by, or favored by Bob, according to circumstances.

Here is another fact to think about. When Bob was six, school was an entirely new experience about which he knew very little. By the time Dick was ready to enter the first grade he had heard many tales from Bob about school and had even visited class twice with his big brother. School was not the new and strange experience for him that it had been for Bob.



Furthermore, an uncle of the boys who lives at their house has always been particularly fond of Dick. He has not been aware of playing favorites, but he has taken Dick on more excursions and has bought him more gifts. Does not that fact make for some difference in the social environment of the brothers, to be considered together with their differences in age and place in the family group?

### Environment Includes Many Influences

These are very real environmental differences. For by environment we do not mean only the neighborhood in which a person lives and grows up. We mean, too, his home, the members of the household, the people who visit the home, and the people who are met at play, going to the store, or on a summer vacation. Environment means more than just the house, the back yard, and the street and town which are the surroundings in which the individual grows and develops. The social environment is of great importance. Probably it is more important than the physical environment in considering individual differences.

The social environment is not so easy to discover and to understand, for people move about and do things and talk about them. Social environment must be thought of as not just the people who make up the social group in which the individual lives—his parents and his grandparents, and his aunts and uncles, and his friends. It involves also the things these folks say, and the things they do, and the ways in which they say and do them.

Sometimes people who are not even of the same family are thought to have similar environments. There are two girls who live in the same block and go to the same school. Their fathers are both successful business men, engaged in the same business. The girls are both fifteen and are very pretty. They are good at games on the playground and dance exceptionally well. They sound pretty much alike, do they not?



However, one is the oldest of four children, and for several years has had certain responsibilities regarding her younger brothers and sister. The other is one of two children, is eight years younger than her big brother, and has been babied and petted not only by her parents but by her grown-up brother. It is not difficult to guess which girl is more reliable and responsible, and which girl is more inclined to look for help and attention.

### Why You are as You are

We are what we are as persons because of all of our background: because of our inherited characteristics and because of the kinds of environmental experiences which we have had. These include the kinds of situations of which we have been a part, and the kinds of reactions to and from others which have been influencing us since babyhood.

We are not able to say that one or the other influence is of greater importance. We can only re-emphasize that both heredity and environment need consideration in any attempt to understand an individual. Heredity definitely affects size and appearance. But we must turn to environment to explain temper tantrums, shyness, and other temperamental characteristics.





*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



# 3

## How People are Fundamentally Alike

Now, if we develop into the kinds of personalities we are largely as a result of our experiences, and if we all have different kinds of experiences, how is it that there are so many similarities to be noticed in a group of people? How does it happen that so many people like to read detective stories? Why are such large crowds thrilled by the acrobatic feats at the circus? Why do some movies attract tremendous audiences? Clearly there must be some characteristics common to all people, even though there are so many differences to be noted.

### Needs on Which Life Depends

Basically, the human organism has certain needs. You know that we all need air, food and water if we are to survive. You know that there must be some temperature regulation if life is to be sustained — that the air in which we live and which we breathe must be neither too excessively hot nor too extremely cold. You know that periods of activity must alternate with periods of rest — that if the body is to survive it must have sleep to restore used up energy. You know that these needs, which we call *organic needs*, must all be met if life is to be maintained. These are important needs, and they govern many of our everyday activities.

There are other needs which, in a sense, develop from these basic organic requirements but which involve us in somewhat different fashion. A hungry man has need of food, but the ways by which he obtains that food may be



varied. He may hunt, fish, or visit the corner grocery, or he may steal. An exhausted man has need of rest, but the particular ways he chooses to get that rest may differ widely. To find the quiet and relaxation this organic need requires, he may throw himself down on the grass in the park, he may go to a shady nook in the woods, he may lie down on a park bench, he may go home to his bed.

### Needs on Which Happy Living Depends

Growing out of the human body's organic needs, which affect the person himself, follow certain considerations which involve other people. Food we must have, but society will not tolerate our stealing that food. Sleep is an essential, but it is certainly not to be had by entering a strange house and lying down for a nap. In other words, there are certain ways of behaving which are socially acceptable, and other ways of behaving which are socially unacceptable.

We all are greatly concerned with behaving in ways which are acceptable. For, in addition to the organic needs we have already mentioned, there are certain other very important human needs. These are *social needs*. They have to do with our relationships with others. All human beings experience the same basic organic and social needs. All human beings are impelled to seek satisfaction for those needs.

We do not live as hermits. We are members of groups of people. It is necessary to respect the rights and conveniences of others if we are to be liked and accepted by them. And our being accepted by them is important to us; it is one of our social needs. It is by fulfilling our organic needs that life is sustained. It is by fulfilling our social needs that life is made pleasant and happy.

Now, what are these social needs? Can we list them as readily as we did the organic needs of food, water, air, rest? Are social needs as readily understood? Perhaps not. But they are of tremendous importance to us, and we must



have some understanding of them in order to live effectively.

Just as we listed important organic needs without indicating that one was more important than another, so we can list important social needs without claiming greater importance for one than for another. Obviously, we need food, water, air — and the lack of any one of these needs will not be compensated for by an oversupply of any of the others. In exactly the same way we, as human personalities, need (1) approval, sympathy, recognition; (2) successful achievement in anything we may undertake, mastery of situations, overcoming of obstacles; and (3) to be like others of our group of associates, to conform to a certain degree in the ways of living, thinking, and behaving which are more or less characteristic of them. All of these are important for well-balanced living. The lack of any one of these needs will not be made up by an oversupply of any of the others — just as a vast amount of food will not make up for a lack of air nor quantities of water for lack of food.

These three so-called social needs involve other people. We can satisfy any organic need even though we live alone; but to satisfy a social need, obviously we must come in contact with others. The importance of these social needs is clear when we stop to consider that we do not spend our days alone but live in family groups — in association with friends and relatives and acquaintances.

### All Needs Influence Behavior

The behavior of people is regulated in large part by attempts to satisfy these social needs. In other words, we say that human behavior is *motivated* largely by social needs. It is not that we find them among some folks, where as other groups of people fail to manifest them. Instead, all people fall into ways of conduct which are attempts to fulfill these motives. All people behave in ways which seek to satisfy their social needs.



Of course, since we all differ in the extent to which we show any trait, quality, or characteristic behavior reaction, it is readily understandable that different people are motivated in greater or in lesser degrees by these dependable forces underlying human behavior. Some individuals need more food than others; some require more rest than their companions. The same differences are found among people when we consider social needs. Some of us may be extremely dependent for our happiness upon the recognition and approval of others. We probably know people who are much less concerned about the opinions of others. Some people may be ill at ease if they differ decidedly from other persons in dress, in manner of speech, or in expressed attitudes. Other people may glory in being unique in appearance and in ways of thinking and acting.

We should remember that we are all motivated by the same underlying drives to seek approval, success, and conformity — but we should never lose sight of the fact that *in the extent to which we respond* to such motivation we are all different. We all, as members of a certain social culture, wear clothing; but think of the many different styles which one may see when walking down any main thoroughfare or attending any public performance! We all have some concern regarding the opinion others have of us; but think of the many people who go to pieces because of the mildest kind of rebuke and the many others who permit criticism of their actions or attitudes to roll away like the proverbial water off a duck's back!

### Meeting Needs Means Making Adjustments

To some degree, we all act in response to universal, dependable motivators of human conduct. We are active in order to satisfy felt needs. Whether we are more or less concerned in satisfying these needs is not the point. What is important to remember is that in *some* degree, we *are* concerned. In other words, in our attempt to fulfill funda-



mental social needs and organic needs, living involves activity. And always activity involves adjustment. Life is a series of adjustments which we attempt in order to live happily.

You are never alone in any struggle you may sense to bring about adjustment to some particular set of circumstances. You are not the only one to meet difficulties in trying to satisfy needs. All people experience some degree of struggle in their daily adjustments to living. Adjustment ceases only when life ceases — all living involves adjusting.

Because one individual seems more poised and more successful than another does not indicate that he has not had to make a series of adjustments to achieve his poise and success. Because one individual seems happy and content and free of all worries does not for a moment denote that he has not had periods of unhappiness, discontent, and pressing worries.

All human beings are motivated basically by the same powerful underlying drives to activity. And all individuals go through a process of adjustment which is continuous and always stimulating. That is true for you and for me, as it is true for our friends, relations, parents and teachers. For we are all human beings. We are all different, and yet underneath our individual differences, we are all very much alike.





*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



# 4

## Our Desire for Approval: A Social Need

Consider now the first of the social needs discussed in the previous chapter: the need for approval. (And remember, the order in which our social needs are discussed does not imply that one of these needs is more important than another.)

Think how much better you felt when your father was pleased with the way you managed to carry through a difficult errand for him, as compared with that time when you felt that he was definitely vexed with you.

Do you remember how satisfying it was when the dramatics coach pointed out an instance of especially good acting on your part, since in the last play you could not seem to measure up to the requirements of your role?

And that day when you came home with a new hat which you had selected all alone: it was certainly far pleasanter to hear your mother praise your good taste than it had been to hear her question in no uncertain terms the judgment you used in the last purchase you made "on your own"!

### Social Approval Influences All Activity

It is not only the approval of adults in which you find pleasure. You are normally just as eager for the approval of your classmates, whether they are discussing a play in football, the results of a mathematics quiz, the way your new suit fits, or the attractiveness of a new way of dressing your hair. Their attention is pleasant; their sympathetic agreement is enjoyable. Sometimes their reaction seems



even more important than the reaction of the grown-ups.

We rarely stop to think about this desire for approval; we do not put into specific words any vague thought we may have concerning it. But recall several recent incidents in which approval or disapproval figured. You will agree that you felt pleased when you knew that what you had done was praised. Compare this experience with the time when your actions were not received with favor and you were aware of criticism.

In larger issues, too, much more significant than playing football, buying a new hat, or taking part in a school play, the approval of others is a powerful influence upon your actions. Your friendliness to that new student in class, your helpfulness to the cripple you passed yesterday, your cooperation in group undertakings, are reactions sensed by you as particularly agreeable when they are recognized by others. Not that it is essential that someone notice that we are doing the decent, the courteous, or the friendly thing in order that we may experience satisfaction from so doing. But somehow, if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that approval of a good deed, or of something well done, does make us feel pleased.

Granting that the approval of others is one of the factors which motivates our behavior, we can understand that some people are more dependent than others upon such recognition. Just as we find that individuals differ in other traits or characteristics, so we find that they differ in the degree to which they require or seek approval.

### Seeking Social Approval Brings Problems

Some people are so eager for the good will and approbation of others that they will not do or say anything which they feel might be contrary to what their companions accept. Such individuals are so dependent upon the approval of others that they hesitate to think or act in ways which are unusual to them. Even though they may be convinced



in their own hearts and minds that their somewhat different point of view is a correct and justifiable one, they hesitate to express a "different" opinion for fear of disapproval. This is so extreme a manifestation of the common characteristic of a desire for approval that it is to be regretted.

One girl in high school was acutely uncomfortable if she wore anything but the prevailing anklets, saddle shoes, sweater and skirt. To appear in a dress other than what seemed to be almost a uniform among the other girls made her quite miserable and dreadfully self-conscious. She was apparently unable to feel sufficiently sure of herself to risk even *looking* any different from her classmates. It bolstered up her feeble self-assurance to know that in appearance, at least, she matched the others.

More serious was the case of the first year student who was uncomfortably certain that his friends were going contrary to both school regulations and good sense by their secret indulgence in smoking. Yet he felt insecure in his inner conviction of behaving foolishly. He was not sure enough of himself to go contrary to the group opinion. He continued to join the other fellows in their escapades because he feared to arouse their laughter or their disdain. He feared, too, that he might lose their fellowship, and he depended upon association with his "gang" to maintain his feeling of self-importance.

Certainly such an attitude is undesirable. Whether it is in regard to our clothes, what we read, or what we think about current events, we should not be too ready to conform, too willing to refrain from independence of thought and action. Such spineless behavior is a mark of weakness and of immaturity.

### When Social Approval is Lacking

It is equally inadvisable to be at the opposite extreme, to go completely contrary to the opinion of others, to be



oblivious to what others are thinking. That is the way of the person with peculiarities which are outstandingly opposed to the judgment and conduct of the group. And of the person who, merely to be known as "different," ignores the suggestion of others and insists on his own way of carrying out a plan or of reacting to a situation.

Here the "being different," "being individualistic," is not the result of a firm inner conviction that one's point of view is sound and has been carefully thought through. As a matter of fact, the person who insists upon following discordant ideas very often is voicing his differences because he is uncertain of his importance in a group and is eager to attract attention.

Oddly enough, much as people covet the good will and approval of others, they frequently find it more desirable to forfeit approval in order to win recognition, than to remain ignored entirely. Nothing seems harder to bear than to be overlooked. Hence when one is being disregarded there is occasionally a tendency toward extreme dissension, because that is certain to attract at least *some* attention even though the attention be not wholly approving.

### To Be Ignored Hurts Most

Does that point seem difficult to understand? Do you think that to behave thus would be most peculiar and unusual? We see it even in little children. The youngster who whines, clowns, or nags will often become cheery and docile if his mother devotes more time and interest to him. It is when she ignores him that the whining, cutting-up, and nagging serve a purpose. Then attention is directed toward him for *misbehavior*.

The same motive is back of the discourtesy or impudence that is sometimes seen in the high school student. It is also the answer to the behavior of the girl who talks too much and laughs too loudly at a party and is generally too boisterous. So often behavior of this kind has as its

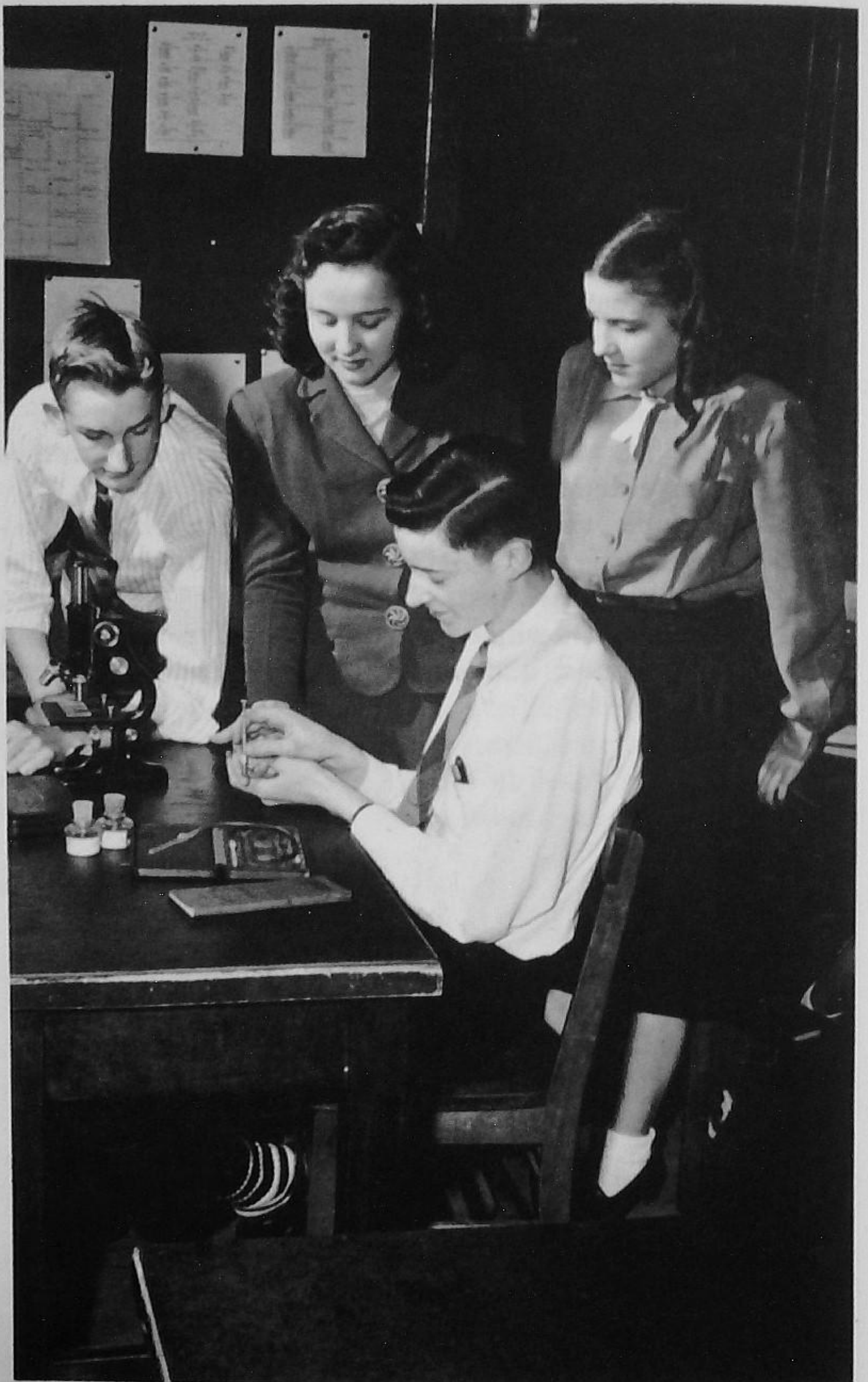


object the attracting of attention. To be recognized in some way seems to be even more significant in such instances than to be recognized with approval and admiration.

We must enlarge upon our interpretation, then, of the desire to be approved by others. We must have it include the desire to be noticed by others. This applies to all of us. It accounts for much of our own behavior which sometimes we find difficult to explain. It is the explanation of much of the behavior of our friends and acquaintances which has seemed so pointless and incomprehensible.

Most people, of course, go to neither of these extremes which we have discussed. Most of us are interested in having others think well of us; therefore we regulate our behavior, at least in part, by the attitudes of others. We are wary of behaving in ways that will expose us to criticism or to disfavor, even while we earnestly strive to maintain our own self-respect and display the courage of our own convictions.





*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



# 5

## Our Desire for Success:

### Another Social Need

Rather closely linked with the social need for approval is another of the social needs — the experience of success, the mastery of undertakings, the overcoming of obstacles. When we are successful, we are of course more than likely to gain the social approval which means so much to us. But the need for a feeling of successful accomplishment can be noted in other than social situations — that is, in situations wherein we ourselves are the only ones aware of what we are trying to accomplish. There is a *self* reaction as well as a social reaction involved.

#### Desire for Success — An Important Need

Perhaps this tendency to want to be successful has never occurred to you as a need, and you may question considering it important in the same sense that the needs for food, sleep and air are important.

Which do you like to play best, tennis or baseball? Which would you rather do, mathematical problems or an English theme? How do you prefer to go to the movies, to go swimming, or out for a hike — alone, or with companions?

If you prefer tennis to baseball, it is fairly certain that you play a better game of tennis than you do of baseball. If you do "math" in preference to composition, it is probable that you are better at figuring than you are at putting thoughts down in writing. If you would rather do things alone than with others, it is pretty good evidence that you



get along with yourself better than you do with other people.

We are inclined to *like* to do best that which we *do* best. Which is only another way of saying that we like the experience of success.

That is why a very small baby shakes a rattle and enjoys it, but shows no interest in a complicated picture puzzle. He can play successfully (hence happily) with his rattle, but he has no understanding of a puzzle, and so he is not made happy by it.

That may be why you like to make a batch of fudge, but are not at all inclined to bake a layer cake. You perhaps have experienced making good fudge, and thereby enjoyed satisfaction in your success. But that cake you tried once fell and was tough; therefore it did not give you a feeling of success or of having mastered the cake-making problem.

This same feeling of success in certain undertakings explains why some students volunteer to do the various jobs connected with school plays. Some offer to do the publicity and posters, others to take care of the lights, fixtures, costumes, etc. Each one volunteers for the thing in which he feels most competent.

### Desire for Success — Sometimes an Unconscious Need

The poster volunteer has the pleasant reaction of being successful in his art work. The one who likes to act usually acts well; the girl who prefers to make the costumes is successful at designing and sewing. The artist with brushes or crayons is not inclined to do the sewing; the expert designer of costumes is not inclined to try out for a part to act; the good actress has no desire to have charge of the lighting. And so on. We are all inclined to do that which we feel fairly sure we can do well. We desire to try that which will give us some measure of success and which will help us feel we have accomplished something with merit.

Two boys went on a week-end visit to the summer home



of a classmate. They had all been together in their city environment many times, but had never been together in the country. They arrived, exchanged greetings, and unpacked. Then the host suggested that they go fishing, but one of the guests said he would rather play tennis. The other indicated that as far as he was concerned he would prefer to try the golf course. Now, of course, all of these boys, as is true of most fellows, enjoyed many different activities. But the host had only recently learned the trick of casting; one of his friends was an excellent tennis player, while the other was particularly skillful at golf. Their first suggestions for activity concerned the particular things at which each was most adept, at which each would achieve the greatest success. They were not thinking of "showing off" their accomplishments; they were merely reacting to an underlying general motivation. We all have the desire to be successful. We enjoy doing what we do well.

Two girls were discussing plans for an evening party for a few school friends at the home of one of the girls. One girl suggested that they turn on the radio, roll up the rugs and dance. The other, a rather large, awkward girl who was not very light on her feet, was insistent that they get together some games which would be played around a table. How easy to understand the reasons back of each suggestion!

### We Enjoy Most What We Do Best

It is not strange that we *like* to do best that which we *do* best. We are fulfilling our unconscious desire to satisfy one of our needs, that of being successful in what we undertake.

Do you ever have science assignments which make it necessary to look up material in the library? You select a reference which sounds helpful in the card catalogue, but it turns out to be full of long words and complicated explanations which you do not understand. What do you do



when that happens? Generally, you give up that special book. Your struggle with material which is too technical is a decidedly unpleasant experience. Your efforts to understand are in vain, and you are only too well aware of a lack of success. You find another book which uses less difficult terms and which really tells you what you want to know. You are happier with this book because you are successful with it.

Have you ever been asked if you could fix a lock which does not work? You may have considerable skill at that kind of undertaking. You may have been able to turn keys easily in a lock which seemed very stubborn. You may enjoy working with tools and being precise and careful in your movements so that your job is expertly done. But here is something different — here is a lock which is not at all like any you have seen before. You examine it carefully, and you try and try to get it to work. Finally, you become impatient, or annoyed, or out of sorts. You are not enjoying this experience of being unsuccessful.

Did you ever see a small boy playing with his big brother's electric trains? When a complicated procedure interferes with the youngster's efforts at making the trains switch properly, what does he do? Generally, he gives up after a period of time. He may just walk off in disgust, or he may hurl the train from him in his keen disappointment. But he is very happy with his wind-up trains, because he can manipulate them successfully.

### Success Brings Self-Satisfaction

When you attempt to complete an assignment in translating a passage in French, you are dissatisfied and perhaps greatly disturbed if you cannot put the subject matter into clear, understandable English. If you are able to work out the meaning of the French translation correctly, you experience a feeling of satisfaction. Therefore, you experience pleasure at your success in this undertaking.



Perhaps you have wondered at the persistence of laboratory workers in their research projects, or of artists in their particular fields of activity. Perhaps you have been amazed at the years of study and experimentation that have been consumed in perfecting great scientific discoveries, in the completion of great symphonies and works of art, or the construction of a bridge or skyscraper. The satisfaction of work successfully accomplished, whether in actual construction or in abstract thought, is a powerful motivating factor back of the endeavor each represents.

It really does not matter whether we are concerned with placing a drop kick, playing a violin concerto, designing a bookplate, or trimming a hat, the significant factor is the joy of successful achievement. It represents one of the social needs felt by all of us.







## Our Desire to be Like Others:

### A Third Social Need

There is still a third social need of human personality which we must consider. This concerns itself to some extent with both of the factors we have just discussed — the desire for the approval of others and the urge to be successful in whatever we undertake. This third social need is expressed by a tendency to conformity — to be like others.

Of course, to recognize the force of this motive does not mean that we should try to dissolve the individual differences which we know exist, nor does recognizing this motive suggest that we need be unduly concerned or distressed over the existence of individual differences. Only when differences are manifested in extreme degrees do we find them a matter for concern. Recognition of the human tendency to conformity with one's group of associates will help us to understand the reactions of others as well as to explain our own susceptibility to fads and fashions.

#### Why We Like to be in Style

Why do you suppose that most of the girls wear their hair in a particular fashion each season? One year they wear little curls all over their heads, another season they slick back their locks, and another year they wear long, wavy bobs.

Why is it that the boys seem to buy the same kind of clothes to wear to school? One year, you may remember, mackinaws were the thing; another year, it was leather wind-breakers. One year coats and trousers have to match



or the boys are mildly uncomfortable; another season, unless the material of each is different in weave and color they feel "out of style."

Why is it that when fashion decrees long skirts, practically all girls and women wear long skirts, but when short skirts are "the thing," up they go on all femininity? Last year's dresses and coats are made longer or shorter, in order to conform with this year's styles, and they seem strange when they are worn at last year's popular length!

We can find many other examples of the common tendency to conform, to do what others are doing: current dance steps, widespread use of slang, collections and hobbies. All of these furnish further evidence of the constant demand for individual adjustment. How absurd we would feel on a dance floor today if we knew only the minuet, or the polka, or the gavotte. How ridiculous our friends would think us if we spoke in the slang and colloquialisms of our grandmother's day. How scornful we would be today of the once popular collecting of cigar bands to be made into ash trays and lamp shades. Today, we do the shag, the rhumba, or that new step you learned only last week. Today, instead of saying, "Skidoo," we shout, "Scram"; instead of speaking of "bats in his belfry," we state tersely, "He's balmy." Today, we seek match-pack covers or some other currently popular article, but few think of looking for cigar bands.

### Most of Us Want to be Like Our Group

All of these everyday bits of human behavior illustrate the ever-present human tendency to be like one's fellows. And this urge to conformity goes even deeper than when shown in clothing, dance steps, or collecting fads. It appears, also, in more meaningful social behavior that involves us every day of our lives. Think how abused you felt when your parents refused you permission to join that excursion. That was because it made you seem different



from the others who were going. Remember how annoyed your whole class was when your faculty advisors would not sanction a dance in a downtown hotel. The seniors had enjoyed one off-campus, and you younger students wanted to be like them.

This urge to be like others is not present in the same degree in all individuals, any more than are other characteristics. So we always find some people — usually only a few — who glory in being as different as possible from all others. We also find a few folks who are frankly miserable unless they can do just what others are doing, and who follow sheeplike the formula of the majority. Extremes are rarely to be desired. Not that we would seek to make all boys and girls alike! But to be radically different from all others seldom makes for happy adjustment in living, and is therefore not advisable.

### Is it Sometimes Wise to be Different?

You may ask, what of the expressions which seem so complimentary to a person: "He had the courage to be different," and "He had the courage of his convictions"? Is it always right to conform? Is it not sometimes wise to be different? Of course the answer to the last question is yes. The problem lies in knowing when to insist upon being individualistic in your reaction. Of course, progress in any field lies in the courage to experiment, in the imagination which suggests experimentation. The first man who conceived of a train, of a steamboat, of an automobile, of an airplane — was he not laughed at in scorn by his contemporaries? Had each one not had the "courage of his convictions," our means of transportation would be very different today and would lack the speed and safety which we accept so casually.

It is not easy to ignore the basic tendencies of human nature. It takes courage to be different. And, obviously, we



must be very sure of the wisdom of insisting upon certain differences.

Had Louis Pasteur not had the courage to go contrary to the opinion of his day, science would have been impeded in its advance and mankind would have continued to suffer ills which had been misunderstood until Pasteur's research. Had Marie Curie not had the tenacity to carry on in the face of contrary convictions, the same results would have followed. These scientists were not merely objecting; rather, they were attempting to establish truths which they were convinced were indisputable. Their conviction was based upon the evidence of scientific laboratory investigations.

In such individuals it is highly laudatory to be different, and to be different in the extreme. Of course, most of us are not Pasteurs or Curies. Most of us follow the underlying human tendency to conform. We lack the reasons for nonconformity which these and similar outstanding individuals have had. That does not mean that we are all just alike. There are always differences, but not always are there *marked* differences.

### It is Not Always Easy to be Different

There are many occasions when we are disinclined to follow a certain activity because others we know are not active in that particular direction. We do many things which we hate to admit, because we know others do them differently.

Do you remember, when you were much younger, how careful you were not to let your friends know that you went to bed at night almost an hour earlier than they did? Not that it made any difference to them at what time you retired. But you felt more comfortable about it if they didn't know.

Do you recall the time your parents would not permit you to join a group of your acquaintances in an evening jaunt? The next day you said, casually, that you had not



felt like going, or that some guests dropped in and you had to stay at home. Either of those statements might of course have been quite true. You were more comfortable offering such reasons than you would have been in saying that you were "different" from the others in that your parents had not agreed with the group plan.

Whether or not it is wise or desirable to "conform," to follow group inclinations, depends upon so many circumstances that each instance must be considered apart in order to be judged.

We should recognize the tendency to be like others as an urge that motivates much of our behavior and the behavior of our friends. It may explain your resentment at a parental or school regulation which seems to make you or your group "different." It underlies your reluctance to look, to plan, or to think in ways which vary from those of your friends and acquaintances.

However, the desirability of following blindly the driving force of *any* of our social needs is not our immediate problem. *What interests us here is the existence of these needs and the explanation they provide for human behavior.* They are the reason, in some measure, for the conduct of your school group and of any other group. They are the answer when we look for an explanation for the reactions of children and of adults. For we are all human personalities and hence are all motivated by similar forces.





Y. W. C. A. Photo



## Why We May Fail to Satisfy Our Social Needs

We have discussed some of the most important basic needs of the human organism. We have mentioned briefly the *organic needs*, which must be satisfied if life is to be maintained, and we have considered at greater length the *social needs*, which must be fulfilled if that life is to be happy and well adjusted. Suppose one or more of these important needs remains unsatisfied. Then what happens?

You have read of great famines of long ago when many people died of hunger. If the organic need of hunger is not satisfied over a period of time, the body becomes weakened, the individual falls ill, and finally, life ends. There are other organic needs which must be satisfied if life is to be maintained. You perhaps have heard about the Black Hole of Calcutta and know that suffocation may cause death. Suffocation results when the organic need of air remains unsatisfied. Admiral Byrd took careful precautions against the excessive cold of the arctic regions which he explored. This was because the organic need of temperature regulation must be satisfied if one is to keep alive. When you go away from home on vacation, you are careful to leave your dog, bird, goldfish, or plants with someone who will see that they have the necessary food, water and air to keep them alive until you return.

What of the important social needs in which we are so interested? It is obvious that if one of the social needs remains unsatisfied, we do not die. We can live even though everyone disapproves of us, even though we differ in



thought and action from everyone else and fail to succeed in anything we undertake. The failure to satisfy the social need of approval, of success, or of conformity does not result in death. But certainly the failure to satisfy to some degree the social needs which we all experience, means that we are far from happy or contented. Our adjustment is not adequate, and our mental health is poor.

### Interference with the Satisfaction of Needs

Because of the results of failure to satisfy our social needs, it is clearly important for us to realize what factors or influences might keep these needs from being satisfied. There are a number of causes for failure. There may be something about the person himself or something in his surroundings. Either factor might prevent satisfactions from being achieved.

One boy in high school was very anxious to play football. His interest in playing arose partly from a liking for active games and partly as a result of the motive that impels us to seek the approval of our companions. We all know that football-team-worship is a most extravagant kind of approval! However, he was very nearsighted and always wore glasses. Poor vision may be a handicap which becomes an obstacle in attempting to satisfy a social need. The necessity for wearing glasses meant that this boy could not play football. To him it meant that he could not win the social approval that is showered on the members of a football team.

Another student was prevented by a heart condition from going out for the team; another was lame and was unable to play. In these examples the social need of approval could not be gained through playing football. The preventing conditions were *personal factors* which were obstacles in the way of obtaining satisfaction.

Even though a chap has good vision, is strong and heavy, and has no physical defect of any kind, he may still



be prevented from playing football. Perhaps there is no field on which to play. Or there may be no other boys with whom to play. Or it may be necessary for him to work after school and on Saturdays so that he has no time to play. Such conditions are *environmental factors* which may be obstacles in the way of obtaining satisfaction of the need of social approval, sought through playing football.

Imagine a young man greatly interested in farming. He reads everything he can find which relates to the scientific control of crops. His greatest desire is to experiment in certain ways to improve plant-growing conditions. He wishes to master problems of crop cultivation, to be successful in the field of agriculture.

If he lives in the city and there is no opportunity to cultivate the soil, an *environmental* handicap exists which he may or may not be able to overcome. The result will depend on whether he can leave the city. If, however, he is free to stay in the city or to move from it, but is crippled or blind, he must recognize a *personal* handicap which interferes with his desires. That obstacle will prevent him from achieving the success he wants; it is an obstacle which he can not overcome.

### Interference Through Personal Factors

It is not always easy to satisfy the needs which we all feel. The obstacles in our paths are greater at some times than at others. At times it is possible to overcome the difficulty; but at other times it is not.

Thus, if you are very eager to play football, and your school has no team, you can get some of the fellows together and organize a team. No matter how eager you are to play, if you have some physical defect which prohibits so strenuous a sport, you will have to make up your mind that football is not for you.

In the same way, a girl may enjoy dancing and want very much to be invited to parties. But she may be con-



siderably overweight and know that she is handicapped in her desire to dance well and gracefully. She can follow certain procedures, recommended by her physician, which will result in a loss of excess weight, and thus be helped to attain her goal. If she is handicapped by being crippled, then she must recognize her limitations as insurmountable. These are all examples of personal factors, which may be great or small obstacles to the attainment of particular satisfactions.

### Interference Through Environmental Factors

Perhaps a girl is light and willowy and is an excellent dancer and enjoys dancing very much. If she happens to live in an isolated spot where there are no young people, she is prevented from dancing because of an environmental factor which becomes an obstacle for her.

Did you ever have to get to a railroad station by a certain hour to meet a train? You left home in plenty of time and fully expected to be waiting on the platform when the train pulled into the station. But while you were driving downtown your car had a puncture. That incident prevented your carrying out your plan, and you were annoyed and disappointed. Not only were you unable to meet the person you expected, thus perhaps upsetting another's plans, but you were failing in a particular undertaking. You were not having the experience of success in what you had planned to do. Your feeling of frustration was due to the fact that one of the important social needs was not being satisfied.

Do you remember the time that there was just one girl at a party who was not wearing a long formal? She was not very comfortable, was she? She felt ill at ease and conspicuous, for she was conscious of being dressed differently from the other girls. She could dance just as well whether or not she wore a formal. She could talk and laugh and take part in the games arranged. Her dress did not



really interfere with her doing what the others did. But because she was so unlike the others in her appearance, she felt disturbed. The tendency to conform with the group was not being satisfied, and so she was ill at ease.

### Interference Through Conflicting Motives

There may be personal factors, then, or environmental factors which interfere with the successful fulfillment of a social need. It may be that you want very much to do two different things but find it impossible to do both. You must decide between the two, and you are disturbed at your problem. There is a conflict between your desires, and you are made uncomfortable by it. *Conflicting motives* often interfere with the satisfaction of needs.

Perhaps you are in training for the team, and are invited to a late party. You cannot keep training, which you want to do, and still accept the invitation, which you also want very much to do. The conflict between the two desires is just as unsatisfying to you as the existence of a handicap in carrying out a particular plan. It represents an obstacle, just as do the personal and environmental factors we have been discussing.

Perhaps you have determined to lose ten pounds because you realize you are not slender enough for the new dresses, and you are eager to wear the latest models. You start on a strict, careful diet. Then you are invited to a party where delectable cakes and sandwiches are served. It is not easy to remember the one desire which you wish to fulfill and to refrain from satisfying the other, which you also find attractive. The conflict of your wish-to-lose-weight with your wish-to-enjoy-delicious-refreshments is very keen — and very uncomfortable. That, too, is an obstacle in the path of feeling satisfied and contented.

Another example of a conflict of motives is that of a young chap who lived in a rural community. He had an opportunity to move to a nearby town to finish his high



school course. His desire to further his education was certainly laudable. Yet it was a struggle for him to decide whether or not to move away from home. Leaving home would mean that he had to give up a job which paid fairly well and which helped him to buy clothes and take part in various activities that he enjoyed. In the tiny village he could keep up his end of simple social activities. In the larger town he would be able to enjoy only a small part of the social life of his group. If he stayed at home, however, where only a junior high school was available, he could not go on with his schooling. So there arose a conflict between his two inclinations.

Another story of conflicting desires is that of a girl who was planning to take her little sister on an excursion. The youngster had been looking forward to the event for some time. On the day the trip was to take place there was an opportunity for the big sister to join a group of her own classmates on an unexpected party. The conflict here involved not only the girl herself but her little sister as well. The conflict lay between fulfilling a promise and giving the child a real treat, and overlooking that plan in order to participate in another for her own pleasure. Conflicts are not always comfortable to face.

A similar but even more difficult situation confronted a high school graduate who was offered a scholarship in an out of town college. He wanted very much to take advantage of the educational opportunity it offered. But he knew that his leaving home would mean that his widowed mother would spend lonely and dull days all alone. Certainly he was to be admired for winning a scholarship and wishing to go to college. And certainly, too, it was admirable for him to give thought to his mother's pleasure and happiness.

Conflicts occur in all our lives. They may be simple kinds of situations, like that of a child seeing a piece of candy and wanting to eat it, but hesitating because he



knows that to eat candy before lunch will mean disapproval from his mother. They may be more complex, and involve the happiness of others as well as of ourselves. We become more capable of solving the more difficult situations when we have managed well with the simpler problems.

A problem is solved most readily when we understand what causes it. Let us keep in mind, then, that our social needs may remain unsatisfied because of a personal factor, an environmental factor, or a conflict of motives.

Any one of these factors, or any combination of them, may act as interference in our seeking to satisfy a social need. We are ill at ease when that happens. We feel balked, defeated. Such an experience is called frustration.

#### How to Meet Interference

If we can realize what the cause of the frustration is, then we are in a better position to plan our next step. If we are frustrated because of something which cannot be helped, then we must face facts and seek satisfaction in some other way. If, however, we are frustrated because of something which can be changed or overcome, then, facing facts, we can often manage to achieve the satisfaction we wish.

Remember that all of us meet with frustrations. They may seem hard to endure, but often they make life stimulating and interesting. For in adjusting to them, we have the thrill of success.





Y. W. C. A. Photo



## When We Fail to Satisfy Our Social Needs

In our discussion of the failure to satisfy certain basic human needs, you remember we said that some needs, unsatisfied for a long enough time, would result in death, or in profound unhappiness. Sometimes the need remains unsatisfied for only a short time. Then life is not endangered, and happiness may not be seriously affected. But there are certain results which are inevitable. These are important, even though of less grave consequence, and even though they are not long-lasting.

### Why We so Often Feel Restless

Suppose we think of a hungry baby. He is not very quiet and peaceful, is he? He squirms, he waves his arms, he kicks his legs, and he cries. He is very restless, and he goes through the only activities of which he is capable in order to find relief.

Now let us think of a worried high school boy. He is not very quiet or peaceful, either. He is apt to squirm in his chair, to walk back and forth, to fidget, to push things violently away, to complain loudly, or sometimes to use profanity. He, too, is very restless and he goes through one, or several, of such activities in order to find relief.

When the baby has been well fed, he relaxes and quiets down. When the boy's problem is solved, he, too, relaxes and quiets down.

When any need, whether organic or social, is unsatisfied, the individual is restless. The restlessness is an attempt to remedy matters. It is an effort to do away with the



disturbing situation and substitute for it a more satisfactory one. The baby makes his dissatisfaction known by his restlessness and crying; the school boy makes his discontent evident by his irritability and his language. An important difference lies in the fact that the baby is dependent entirely upon others to achieve satisfaction for his needs, while the school boy is capable of doing something for himself to remedy matters.

### Are You Really Growing Up?

One of the signs of growing up is being able to do things for yourself. The things that you do to satisfy a felt need are things that you have learned through experience. You have learned that they will bring you relaxation and satisfaction. You are apt to do much the same sort of thing each time you are restless and dissatisfied.

You must have noticed, for example, that when a little boy is teased, he reacts in a particular way. Perhaps he runs to his mother, crying. Perhaps he puts up his fists and tries through force to end the teasing. He may simply ignore it, or seek to do something which will annoy the person teasing him. It does not matter to us *what* he does in reaction to the teasing. The point is, he does it *because in some past experience he has found that response satisfying*.

Generally, the child who gets help and sympathy as soon as he bursts into tears will do a lot of crying, because he has learned through experience that crying will bring him relief. The child who puts up his fists to fight has had past experiences which have made him learn that force will bring satisfaction but that crying is of no value. The youngster who ignores a disagreeable stimulus has found that paying no attention to things makes them lose their annoying aspect. Every kind of behavior that is usual or habitual to a person has been learned through being used in the past.



All of us have some ways of behaving which are characteristic of us. You say of one girl, "Oh, she always sulks when she can't have her own way," and of another, "She argues and argues about the least little thing." You know some boys whose prompt response to any dissension is to shout, "Wanna fight about it?" But you know others who simply shrug their shoulders and walk away when there is friction.

### How Patterns of Behavior Develop

All of these kinds of behavior are patterns which have become part of the personality of the boys and girls concerned. We speak of them as patterns of behavior because the same conduct is repeated time and time again. It becomes a habit with the individual who uses it.

Because human behavior is so complex, there have been many attempts to list the kinds of behavior patterns which are most commonly followed. Realizing that particular patterns are learned as a result of past experiences, we are helped to *understand a person's conduct through understanding the reason for the conduct*. The more we know about the individual, the better able we are to understand him. And this is true of understanding ourselves as well as of understanding others.

Suppose a student comes to school and is conspicuous because of his noisy behavior and his aggressive way of trying to "run" all activities. You resent his manner and feel annoyed by his methods. You say bitterly that you will not have that boy telling you what to do. You feel irritated whenever you meet him.

Stop and think of two things when some such occurrence takes place. First, why are you so annoyed? Is it that someone else is trying to do what you would like to do? Is it that you are being made to feel less important because this chap assumes an air of such superiority?

Secondly, try to figure out why anyone should behave in such an extreme fashion. Has he found in the past that



unless he did behave so, no attention would be paid to his proposals? Does he feel that he must be very assertive in order to make an impression? Does he really feel somewhat ill at ease in a new place, where most of you are strangers to him, and where he is not sure of the reception he may get?

### Misunderstanding Behavior

Sometimes you may misinterpret the behavior of a classmate. You may think of one of the boys or girls as being quite different from what he actually is. That is, you do not understand the individual or his actions.

An example is the case of a girl who moved to the middle west from the far south during the middle of a semester. The girls in her new school felt that she acted in a superior manner. She did not join the groups as they walked through the corridors, but seemed to prefer being alone. She ate her luncheon with a book in one hand and a sandwich in the other. Her classmates thought her affected and conceited. They were highly critical of her dress, her speech, and her every move.

The girl, who was pretty and attractive, would have liked nothing better than to be taken in as one of the crowd. But during her first day or two at school there had been comments on her "southern accent," and these had sounded to her like ridicule. In addition, her clothes were just different enough to make her somewhat conspicuous among the group, all of whom seemed to do their shopping in one place and to make the same sort of selections. Self-conscious both because of her accent and because of her clothes, the newcomer pretended to be uninterested in her new surroundings. She had, however, a boy cousin in one of the upper classes, and through him she met one or two of the senior boys. They liked her at once and showed it, and so she felt free to talk and act in a friendly fashion with them.

The other girls actually admired the newcomer. They realized that her clothes were in excellent taste and very



becoming. They thought her accent "cute" and had not meant their comments and attempts at imitation as ridicule. But this new and attractive girl apparently did not care for their company. To make matters worse — much worse! — she quickly became popular with the senior boys. Her own classmates therefore decided that she thought herself too good for them, and their friendliness evaporated, to be replaced by a critical, resentful attitude.

Neither the new girl nor the other girls understood the situation. There were misinterpretation and misapprehension on both sides. The newcomer did not wish to be reserved and distant, but she felt uncomfortable and unwanted among her new classmates. The others did not want to be unneighborly, but the new girl, an attractive person, seemingly did not care for their society, and this made them feel somehow inferior. There were tension, restlessness and dissatisfaction on both sides.

### Interpreting Behavior

Lack of understanding of what makes people behave in certain ways can so often cause unhappiness. Once conduct is correctly interpreted, the basis for resentment and criticism often seems to dissolve and fade away.

Because your own underlying social needs are inadequately met, and because others have the same kind of difficulties, there frequently arises a situation which becomes needlessly complicated and confused.

Without understanding, but aware of dissatisfaction, we are as squirmy and ill at ease and restless as a hungry infant. Our restlessness is an expression of our need for some activity to relieve our tension. We are motivated to activity by the tension which disturbs us. Once we understand what makes us act and think in certain ways, and once we remember that all other people are motivated by the same needs, we are able to get along better with ourselves and with our friends.





H. Armstrong Roberts Photo



# 9

## Conscious and Not Conscious

Most of us are often aware of feeling frustrated. We have not received something we greatly desired, or we have failed in an undertaking, or we have felt ignored, even unwanted, in a group of acquaintances. In such situations we are conscious of a disturbing tension, and we understand why we have this unpleasant feeling.

We may, however, be tense, irritable, or unhappy without knowing why. The feeling perhaps is a vague dissatisfaction with the world in general, the sort of thing which makes us behave so that someone is apt to say, "Did you get out of bed this morning on the wrong side?"

Our nagging uneasiness *seems* to have no sense to it. But such feelings of discomfort have definite "sense" to them. As a rule they are the result of an earlier experience acting through the unconscious part of our minds.

We do not always recognize a relationship between the uneasiness of today and an event of a recent yesterday which distressed us. Many things happen in the course of a day which are not consciously remembered but which nevertheless remain in the mind to bring a puzzling discontent.

Someone passes by and ignores a greeting we call out; a long-cherished plan is finally seen as impossible of fulfillment; we are mortified at coming to a dinner party on the wrong night; we appear for a date dressed for dancing when the plan is for a moonlight sail.

So often there is something perplexing or awkward which ruins the day for us! If it were only that particular day, it would not matter so much. Unfortunately, when something of this sort occurs, it can interfere with that day



and with later days as well — interfere in ways which we do not consciously realize, but which nevertheless are troubling.

Of course not everyone lets such things worry him. People differ in the ways they react. One person will be disconcerted by an apparent snub. Another will simply repeat, "Hi!" in a louder tone, cheerily admonishing, "What's the matter, can't you hear?" with no feeling of having been disregarded. Disappointment leaves one person disheartened but spurs another to further effort. Some people can laugh off a blunder which causes others an agony of embarrassment.

### When Memories are Uncomfortable

The person who is not sure of himself but is sensitive and self-conscious is the one who is disturbed more than the occasion warrants. And his concern continues to harass him as an unconscious, repressed memory. Then, because he is miserable without realizing why, he does not adjust well to circumstances and his later behavior is affected. Unconscious memories — that is, memories not consciously recalled — of a past disquieting event can cause behavior which is hard to explain. They are uncomfortable to remember.

A common experience is to say something or do something for which we are promptly sorry. Immediately we feel disturbed and wonder unhappily, "What on earth made me talk like that?" or "Why did I slam that door?" Perhaps our regret is for a grumpy or whining tone of voice, or for a cross or frowning face. It may be for a cutting remark or an uncalled for criticism which we would take back if we could.

We can explain these ways that people feel and behave, but only if we know a good deal about what has gone before, about experiences which have already occurred.

Sometimes we are annoyed but try to conceal it. Sometimes we feel that we are being imposed upon but do not



voice our resentment. Or we are worried over a matter we are powerless to correct, or fearful of something we do not know how to prevent. We do not put these feelings into words or even consciously think about them. But they remain somewhere in our minds to plague us and so later affect our actions.

To understand anyone's behavior we must know many things about him. A French proverb says, "To know all is to forgive all." That is, if we understand, we do not blame.

The kinds of things we must know include not only the experiences the person concerned has had throughout his life but also how he has felt about them. Family relationships are significant, too, and the influence of friends and teachers. If we have a picture of all happenings, disappointments and achievements, and also of all the personal relationships involved, we can begin to understand why the person feels and acts as he does.

Of course usually we do not know all such details about people. Nor do people have a ready memory of all such details about themselves.

### We Recall Some Things Readily

Happenings and the attitudes which accompanied them may not always be clearly remembered, but neither are they entirely forgotten. The fact is that we do not actually forget anything which we experience. Many things are recalled easily; many are extremely difficult to recall. And always there are some which under ordinary circumstances are not recalled. This is true of everyone.

Walking down the street, you see coming toward you a familiar figure. Immediately you smile, call out a greeting, using the name of your friend, and ask about an experience you have shared. You have no difficulty in saying your friend's name; you mention promptly the happening which was a joint experience. This you can do even if it is months or years since you have seen that person or given thought to that occurrence.



We all know that not having certain facts in mind does not mean that we are unable to recall them when we wish. We have not forgotten our knowledge. We just do not pay any attention to it until something turns our thoughts in that direction. Then it is brought, at will, to awareness, to consciousness.

Where was this information when you were not thinking of it? Obviously you had not forgotten it; it was easy to call to mind. It had continued as part of your store of information, but it was below the conscious level of mind, so that you were not always aware of it. In other words, many facts remain in the subconscious and are brought into consciousness when wanted.

Your address, your father's occupation, your sister's first name — you are able to mention these promptly. These facts are not actually in your thoughts, but if you are questioned about them you can answer promptly. There are many facts which may have been at the subconscious level for some time but which you have no trouble bringing into consciousness and expressing in words.

### Some Facts Remain Unreached by Memory

Such smooth and ready remembering does not always occur. Most people have had the discomfiting experience of meeting an acquaintance and recognizing his face but being unable to recall his name; or the annoying experience of having an errand to attend to but coming home without having taken care of it. There is probably no one who has not been distressed at a moment of introduction because he could not recall the name of the person he was introducing.

Apparently, then, not all facts which are not actually in consciousness, which are not being given continued attention, can be brought at will from the subconscious. Sometimes we feel a word "on the tip of our tongue." We are tantalized by the feeling, "I know it as well as I know my name, but I can't say it."



These things happen to all of us. They may be irritating or embarrassing at the moment, but they are not serious. They can be explained if we know all of the circumstances which in our minds are associated with the person or the happening which we find so elusive. For such "forgetting" is not like ordinary forgetting.

#### Repression is a Result of Distress

Why is it difficult, or even impossible, to bring to memory some fact? What circumstances must be known to explain our not remembering? The answer is that the unre-membered fact is connected with something distressing, often with a feeling of shame or guilt. Because of this unpleasantness, the memory has been repressed far below the conscious level, below even the subconscious level, from where, as we have seen, we are often able to bring long-unused knowledge readily to consciousness.

Because this fact — or incident — is so distressing to remember, we do not remember. But we do not forget. The troublesome memory continues to be part of our personality but is at the unconscious level, so deeply imbedded that we are not aware of it. Hence it no longer makes us feel uncomfortable or guilty even though it is not actually lost.

Submerged to the level of the unconscious, incidents, thoughts and attitudes continue to influence our behavior. We are not aware of their influence; that is, we are not conscious of it. But the influence is a powerful one nevertheless and explains many of the things we say and do which we wonder about and even consciously regret.

These hidden reactions have not gone. Their pressure, their influence, their control is still forceful, still powerful. They bring about present behavior because of past influences. They cause present problems because the past, though not consciously remembered, is unconsciously distressing. The repressed thoughts may cause behavior reactions which are not in any way unfortunate or signifi-



cant. On the other hand, the results of repression may be serious indeed.

### Repression is Not Necessarily Distressing

Tom claims that he has never liked chocolate, although he enjoys sweets. Now, that kind of reaction is of little consequence. It does not interfere with efficiency, with sociability, with success in life in any way. But Tom's distaste is a good example of the kind of carry-over which a long-past experience may have.

Questioning of Tom and his mother brought out the following story:

When Tom was only four years old he went visiting one afternoon with his father, having first been warned to be a good boy and remember his manners. The father, who was proud of his children and wanted them always to appear to advantage, was very strict and was severe in his punishments.

During the visit Tom tried to be a good boy and sit quietly in his chair. Candy was offered to him frequently and each time he took a piece. As he was about to take a fourth, his father, afraid their host would think his son greedy, stopped the boy with a sudden loud, harsh command and lectured him severely. Tom was frightened at his father's anger, and when the host suggested an errand to an upstairs room he was glad of the opportunity to get away.

Upstairs he accidentally came upon the half-filled box of chocolates from which the candy already eaten had come. Tempted, he helped himself—in fact, ate most of the remaining candy—although aware that he was both disobeying his father and taking something which was not his.

When he was called by his father to go home, Tom was relieved to find that his "bad manners" were apparently forgotten. At the same time, he was afraid some one would discover that he had taken the chocolates upstairs. In the midst of saying goodbye, he became suddenly ill. Now he



was ashamed at being the center of unwelcome attention and miserable because his father was again cold and disapproving. Above all, he was terrified at what his father would do when he discovered the taking of more chocolates. He felt very guilty.

When Tom reached home he was given disagreeable medicine, and for several days he was not allowed to eat the things he liked best. Nor was he allowed to forget that he had misbehaved and embarrassed his father. No one accused him of helping himself upstairs, and he was afraid to confess. The guilty memory weighed on his conscience until it was repressed into his unconscious mind. There this experience remained and it expressed itself through Tom's conviction that he had never liked chocolate. He had never stopped to wonder why.

### Repression can Cause Unhappiness

An unconscious influence may have a more important effect on the personality, as is demonstrated by the story of two sisters.

Dorothy, the younger, was friendly, dependable, and interested in people. Marjory, five years older, was irritable, irresponsible, and rarely inclined to seek company. Their family and friends recognized how different they were, and thought they were "born that way."

It was not heredity which brought about these differences, however. Environment was responsible. Consider their backgrounds, apparently alike but actually so different. When Dorothy was born, Marjory, five years old, was accustomed to being the only child in the home. Now she was placed in kindergarten with no more preparation for the new activity than for the changed home situation. She unhappily accepted the only explanation she could figure out: Mother was tired of her; she loved the new baby and wanted to get rid of her other little girl. Deprived of the attention which had been hers, she soon learned that she



could recapture at least a part of it by being naughty. When she was a good, quiet child, she was ignored by her mother who was busy with the demands of the baby sister. But when she was "bad" she was given her mother's attention quickly enough! She became impudent, forgetful, noisy, and a show-off, for she could stand being scolded better than being ignored.

Actually Marjory came to dislike her baby sister, who had, she thought, taken her place in her mother's heart, and she resented bitterly her mother's treatment. But she did not think about these feelings, because they are hard to recognize in oneself and because they are not socially acceptable reactions. They were repressed into her unconscious. They did not disappear but acted as a strong motivating force for the behavior which worried her parents and which they thought of as inborn.

### Understanding of Unconscious Forces Helps Adjustment

Only when Marjory was helped to gain understanding of the reasons for her attitude toward people and toward life did she achieve a change in her outlook and behavior. Then she learned to tolerate graciously attention given to others, to mingle pleasantly with people and to accept obligations and responsibilities as justified instead of feeling that they were unfair demands and evidence that she was disliked. She learned to understand and so was able to recognize consciously the long-repressed childhood memories of a once unhappy situation.

It is of tremendous importance not to jump to conclusions in judging either one's own behavior or that of others. Instead, due consideration should be given to possible unconscious motivation which, while it does not excuse undesirable attitudes or unwelcome behavior, does explain them. Only when the unconscious forces are understood, only when they become recognized consciously as factors influencing one's behavior, can that behavior be changed for the better.



## Solving Problems Versus Evading Problems

When we say that a person is "motivated to act," just what do we mean? We have been talking about the several needs which we all experience and which are basically responsible for our behavior. If we can describe certain needs as causing us to act, what is it that *starts* the actions?

It will be easier to find an answer if we refer again to the bodily needs which must be satisfied if we are to live. Hunger is an excellent example to consider, since we are all familiar with what that particular physical need means.

We have already read about the infant's reaction to the organic need, hunger. The state of being hungry causes certain inner feelings of muscular tenseness in the abdomen. These feelings of strain are called *tensions*. It is hunger tensions which we experience when we have missed regular meals over a period of time. Probably very few individuals whom you know have had actual "hunger" pangs, or tensions. Since we are accustomed to eating at regular intervals, omitting a meal or two gives us an appetite, but not real hunger. However, since we speak so generally of feeling hungry, or of being hungry, that word seems permissible even though we realize that it is appetite which is really meant.

These hunger tensions result in the stomach mechanism's activity. This activity involves movements of the walls and muscles of the stomach. It is to relieve, or satisfy, the hunger tensions that the body is active.



### All Ages Know Tensions

In the small baby the activity involves crying and restlessness, because those are the only possible reactions which he can make in response to the tensions he feels.

The older child, who has had many experiences with such feelings and who has learned through them how to relieve the tensions, has several possibilities of action. Perhaps he will call his mother and ask for a piece of bread and jelly. Or perhaps he will go to the icebox and help himself to something to eat. He may go to the dining room and climb up in his chair, because it was there that his hunger had previously been satisfied. He may clutch some pennies in his hand and go to the corner store for some candy. Any of these activities, or other activities, may be followed. What is done will be that which has in some past experience relieved the tensions caused by hunger.

An adult who experiences hunger tensions may look at his watch and start for a near by restaurant for lunch. He may call to his wife and ask when dinner will be ready. He may build a campfire and prepare food. His action will be influenced by what he has done in a similar situation.

A specific unsatisfied need results in tensions. These may be described as feelings which are unsatisfying and which cause restlessness. Before satisfaction can be brought about, there is some activity. The activity is followed in order to relieve the tensions. Once these are relieved, restlessness and activity cease.

You have seen a hungry baby crying for his bottle. And you have seen that same baby after his bottle has been emptied. Now he no longer cries; he no longer waves his arms and kicks his legs. He is relaxed; his tensions have been relieved. He lies quietly and usually drops off to sleep. He presents a very different picture from the wailing infant of just a few moments before.

You recognize the reaction which you have when you



need food, and the very different feeling you have after you have finished a hearty meal.

### Problems Related to Social Needs

In much the same fashion the other needs of the human being cause very much the same result. That is, whenever there is an unsatisfied need, whether a physical need or a social need, there arise tensions. These tensions are responsible for the activity which takes place. It is to relieve the tensions that you do something.

The activity which takes place to satisfy tensions aroused by the desire to succeed may be of different kinds. If you have an algebra assignment which you find difficult, you may do one of several things to succeed in that assignment. You may turn back to a previous chapter and review some process which you think will aid in the present problems. Perhaps you will not use that kind of initiative, but will go up to your teacher and ask for help, insisting that you cannot complete your task alone. You may wait until your father gets home, and coax him to do your "math" for you. Or there may be a friend in a higher grade who has obliged in the past when you have had difficulty with your algebra, so that you go to him for aid. Or perhaps you shrug your shoulders and decide the assignment was unfair and you just won't even try any more. Or you may console yourself that your English composition is excellently done, and your French is accurately translated, and nobody can be perfect in everything.

### Meeting Problems Always Means Activity

There are all sorts of other possible activities which you and your classmates might carry on in order to relieve the tensions aroused by the desire to succeed. Whatever each one of you does in response to a difficult mathematics assignment is due in large part to what you have done at previous times under similar circumstances.



If we find that our behavior serves to relieve tensions which disturb us, we are very apt to repeat that kind of behavior whenever we have similar tensions. We learn through experience in this respect, much as we learn through experience to do other things.

Does this explanation seem quite simple? Sometimes it is a simple matter to satisfy a need. But not all needs are easily fulfilled. Often we meet with an obstacle and are frustrated in our attempt to satisfy needs and relieve tensions.

To meet such situations we must do something anyway, even in the face of obstacles. We engage in some action, though the action may not be directly related to our problem.

We behave in the particular fashion which has been comfortable and satisfying in the past, under similar circumstances. Whatever the need which we are striving to satisfy, we have some habitual way in which we will behave to relieve the tensions which the need has aroused.

Interestingly enough, it is quite possible to satisfy the existing tensions and yet leave the need unsatisfied. It is possible to bring about a feeling of relaxation, of satisfaction, even though we have not really been successful in satisfying the need which originally started our activity.

### The Activity Sometimes Evades the Problem

Tensions are often relieved by evasion of an existing problem, as is the case when we ask Dad for help, or go to another student for aid, or assure ourselves that to do good work in composition will make up for poor work in "math." We do something — but the activity which we engage in does not solve a problem; it merely relieves the tension which the problem aroused.

The evasions in which we all engage are numerous and varied. They cover many kinds of behavior — from being shy to being extremely aggressive; from being hesi-



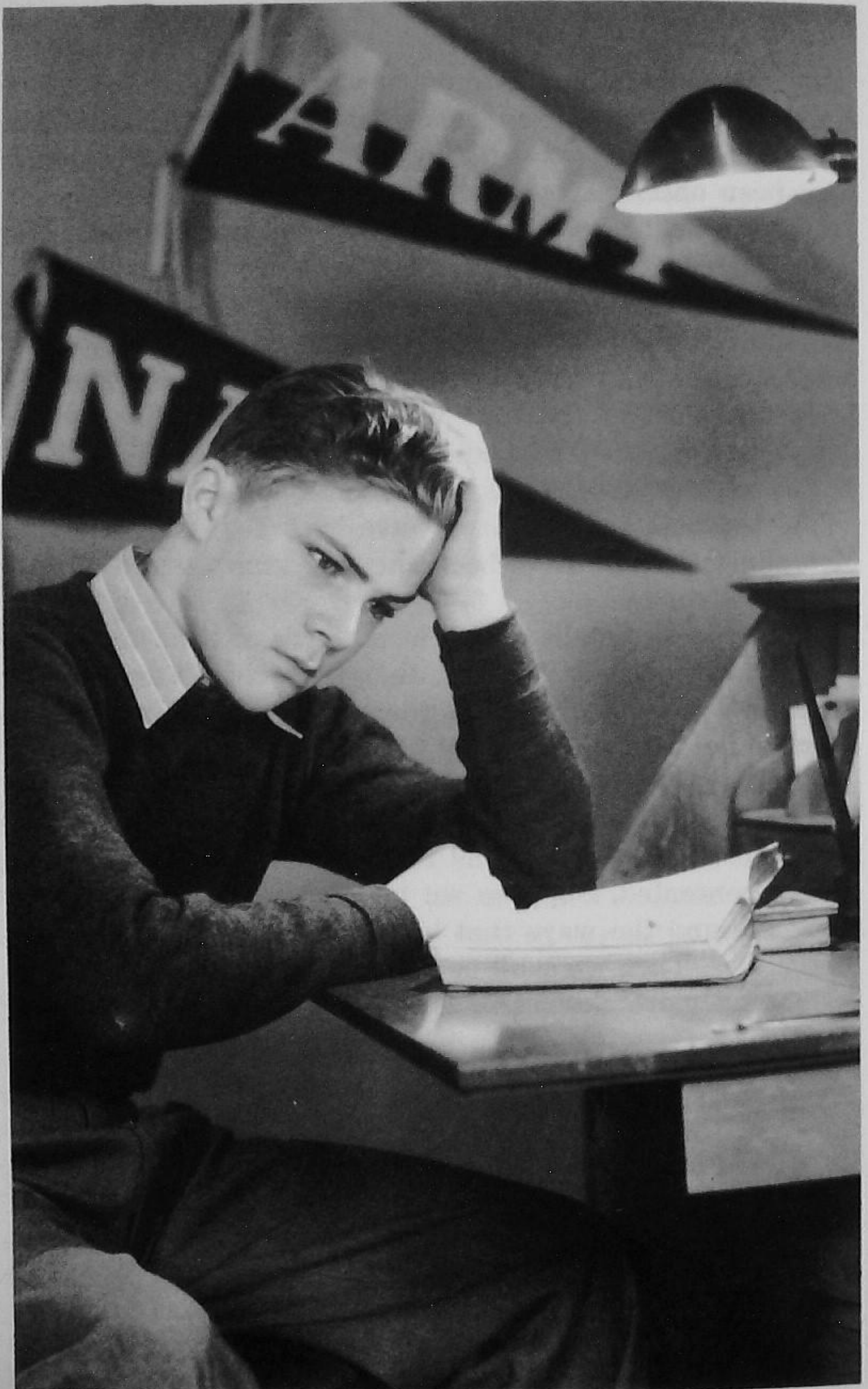
tant in action to being impulsive; from being depressed and sad to being gay and cheerful. All kinds of extremes are represented in the different behavior patterns which have been observed by students of personality.

In the next several chapters we shall describe many of these patterns of behavior. They are not unusual or abnormal ways of reacting. They are the kinds of things which you and I and our friends and relations do every day of our lives. Most of the time we do not realize that we are evading problems. Most of the time we are not aware that we are only relieving tensions and not achieving real satisfaction of an existing need. Like a well fed baby, we relax. But, unlike the well fed baby, we have been fooled by a sham. Metaphorically, we have been chewing gum instead of eating a sandwich.

There are so many different patterns of behavior which people use to relieve tensions that it would be too great a task for us to consider all of them. But we can understand about many of the commonly used ones.

Probably the most interesting approach will be to tell you about individuals like yourself. All people have, at times, feelings of strain and tension. They are dissatisfied and discontented. Suppose we try to understand some experiences and the ways that have been tried to solve these difficulties. Then we shall be better able to understand ourselves and more skillful in meeting our own problems.





*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



## Evading Problems by Justifying Our Actions

Our discussions so far have given us some notion as to how we are like others and yet different from others. We have learned, also, what characterizes the ways in which we, as human beings, behave in social situations. That is, we have learned what motivating factors start us in a particular activity which we continue until some need is satisfied.

Remember that our needs are not always easily satisfied. And when a need exists and arouses certain tensions, we are discontented, restless and ill at ease. Recall, too, that frequently we do something which does not satisfy the need but does help to do away with the uncomfortable feeling of tension.

### Unconscious Effort to Avoid Failure

There are a good many things which we do to make us feel a bit more pleasant and comfortable in the face of disappointment or failure. These things may not make us successful where formerly we have failed, but they certainly cheer us and make things more bearable. We do many such things without realizing why we do them, or how we are helped by them. We do them unconsciously.

For example, Marion had been invited to a party. She was a newcomer in the town and was not sure of the customs of the place. She was flattered by the invitation and really wanted to accept it, but she was uneasy because she did not know what to wear. She did not know whether to



wear a formal or just look a little "dressed up." She did not know about getting home and wondered whether she should ask her father to call for her, or whether the hostess would suggest that one of the young men at the party escort her home. She hesitated to ask any of the other girls. She was not sure who had been invited, and she did not feel that she knew any of the possible guests well enough to ask such questions. In fact, she felt that she should know the answers and that it would be humiliating to ask anyone.

For a day and most of that night she turned these questions over and over in her mind. It was the first invitation to a party she had received since moving to that town. She was eager to make friends with the young people in her new home. She could not bear the thought of having anyone laugh at her for not knowing what to wear or what to do. She could ask her mother about the invitation, but her mother had not been feeling well lately, and she did not like to worry her. She was restless and irritable in her indecision. Finally, she made up her mind.

What do you think she did? How do you think she settled her problem?

She explained to her hostess that she was very sorry to have to refuse the invitation, but her mother had not been feeling well. She went on to explain that it did not seem right to leave her mother alone, as her father would be away that night.

Having settled the matter, she felt relaxed and at ease. While she knew, of course, that she would miss the fun of the party, she felt rather good about cheering up her mother. She knew that no one who heard of her giving up the affair to stay home with her mother could do anything but think well of her for her thoughtfulness. She came to the final conclusion that she was doing the right thing, the daughterly thing. She slept much better that night than she had the night before.



## Rationalization — What is It?

Now just what had happened to Marion that she became so solicitous of her mother for that night? Had she had a change of heart? Had her conscience been pricking her for neglect?

Not at all. She was disturbed over the possible blunders she might make at the party if she went to it. Much as she wanted to accept the invitation, she wanted still more to save herself from any critical remarks from the other girls and boys who would be there. Her need of being successful in anything she undertook made her think uncomfortably of *faux pas* she might make. Her need of keeping the approval of her companions at school made her hesitate to risk their judgment because she was unsure of herself.

Do you see the problem that she had to solve? She had to reach some decision which would ease the tension that arose while she thought and thought about that invitation. What possible reason — not excuse — could she offer herself and her family and her friends? She certainly did not care to admit her feeling of uncertainty. She surely did not want anyone to know about the questions she kept asking herself.

Giving the perfectly plausible explanation of not leaving her mother alone not only gave her a feeling of a good deed done nobly but also made a good impression upon those who heard it.

Not that Marion thought all this through as we are analyzing it; not at all. Marion, instead, used a way of adjusting to her difficulty, a way of settling her problem, a way of relieving her tension, which we all have used many times.

Marion *rationalized*. She found a very fine reason for doing exactly what her innermost self really wanted to do.

Marion defended herself against the discomfort of possible criticism. She did not, however, face the facts of the



situation squarely. She did not actually solve her problem, because at the next invitation she would have no positive way of meeting the same situation. She would have to find another excuse for refusing, because she had not found the way to accept comfortably.

### Rationalization Justifies Our Actions

Sometimes rationalizing is done deliberately in order to make an awkward situation acceptable. In the majority of instances we are not even aware of how we are side-stepping something which worries us. When this is the case, we are not facing facts honestly and fully. We are getting a distorted view of whatever is involved. At the expense of neglecting some of the details, we give undue emphasis to others.

Marion did not face the fact of feeling socially unsure of herself. Bothered by having to reach some decision, she hit upon the idea of being thoughtful of her mother. Now, actually, her mother was not really ill and would have been delighted to have Marion go to the party and enjoy herself. But Marion managed to "save face" by giving a praiseworthy reason for giving up a good time. She did not permit herself to give equal weight to all of the details of the situation she faced. Rather, she pushed back the thought of her own feeling of inadequacy, and she stressed the idea of being nice to her mother.

How chagrined she would have felt if her good deed had been questioned. She would have denied any such explanation as we have been outlining. And her denial would have been an honest one. However, our explanation would not have been disproved, because Marion was not aware of what was involved in her behavior.

We can all think of instances in which we have used this same device to edge our way out of a tight spot. The method is used by little children, by high school students, and by adults as well.



There was the little fellow who did not understand his arithmetic lesson, and who said his seat was so far from the board that he had not been able to see what his teacher had written.

And there was the girl who did not "make" a part in the operetta her school was planning, and who explained to her boy friend that on the day of the tryouts for the various roles she had had a cold.

A man who applied for a position assured himself and his family that the only reason another applicant was chosen was that the other man "knew someone higher up, with influence."

We could go on and on. Rationalization is one of the most frequently used defenses against feeling unsuccessful. The "reasons" given are all perfectly possible, for they might logically be the actual explanation. But the fact remains that they are more *excuses* than *reasons*.

### Conscious Effort to Avoid Failure

Rationalization is not something which should concern us particularly — unless we use it so often that we lose sight of what reality is. The best way to check on ourselves is to try sincerely to decide whether or not we have had underlying "reasons" for following a certain line of conduct. Have we reached for something which would excuse us or relieve us of some unpleasant, or painful, or unwished-for activity? We will not always be successful at this attempt. But if we make a habit of trying to face facts honestly and squarely, of meeting reality as it is, we shall understand ourselves and our friends much better than we now do.

### Projection Ignores Facts

Projection like rationalization is another device people



often use to make things easier for themselves. This, too, is an unconscious behavior response; people do not think it through and plan it, even when it is characteristic of them. When they have certain attitudes or ways of behaving which they know are undesirable, they continually note in others those very traits, even while evading their recognition in themselves.

A girl who went to a tea said later that she had not enjoyed herself that afternoon because "everyone there seemed so unfriendly." What more correctly described the situation was that she herself, uncertain of just how to act, felt shy. She gave the impression of being aloof as she stood looking at the groups about the room and wishing she found them more approachable. She projected her own manner to them; that is, she interpreted the impression they made on her in terms of how she herself was behaving.

### Be Discreet in Criticizing

Projection may also take the form of intense criticism of something in others which one really covets for oneself.

Ruth, who had been brought up to dress plainly, was severe in her criticism of the amount of jewelry and the "showy" clothes another girl habitually wore. Actually, Ruth would have liked to parade in equally extreme costumes and to flaunt just as gay bracelets and ear-rings. The influence of her early training, however, kept her from indulging in such display. By loudly criticizing what she could not enjoy herself, she found some relief from the tension caused by her envy.

This roundabout way of expressing a hidden desire is not unusual. It helps relieve tension, and so it is often soothing. It is something of which we are not usually aware, but we do manage to escape uncomfortable recognition of our short-comings or unacceptable wishes by such means.



When you realize that you feel intensely wrought up over something, stop to consider why such a strong reaction has occurred. When you are inclined to be excessively critical of someone, ask yourself what makes you so disapproving. You may discover the underlying reasons for your reaction. If you gain understanding, this can help you significantly in getting along with others. Try to justify the way you feel in terms of reality.





H. Armstrong Roberts Photo



## Daydreaming as an Evasion

At some time or other most people rationalize and most people project. These reactions are frequently used to achieve self-satisfaction and to insure approval from others. They are of course only two devices of the many used to gain some degree of comfort when we are not meeting with success. Another common response to a difficulty in living, a less active one, is withdrawal by the individual from the disturbing situation.

Frequently, a boy or girl decides not to finish high school because work is not going well. He or she hesitates to seek aid and advice from the teachers. Exceedingly shy, the student prefers to leave school rather than make the personal contact which might help materially to solve the problem that exists.

When a student is not particularly sought after by the others at school and has practically no friends, he may retire into his shell, not making the necessary effort to attract friends. He is not daring enough to ask anyone to tell him what his difficulty may be.

In such a case it is not unusual to find that instead of searching for a way to remedy the circumstances, he evades their discomfort by thinking of them as he would like them to be.

Many people are unwilling, or perhaps unable, to make the effort to correct the lack of success of which they are aware. They console themselves by imagining a situation in which there are no difficulties. One may dream of ranking first in a large class and of having other students come



to him for aid and counsel. Another's daydream may be of things entirely apart from school, perhaps piloting a plane or writing a best-seller. Still a third may in dreams see himself a sought after, widely admired person, the kind of person he would like to be in real life, but isn't. Whatever the activity he is always successful.

Such daydreams are cheering. They often make up for the problems and difficulties of a real life situation where success cannot be so easily won.

### To Dream or Not to Dream

To some extent we all have our dreams. And to some extent daydreams should be encouraged. If in our daydreams we see things in so glorious a light that we are inspired to work harder in real life to achieve a greater measure of success, then certainly the dreaming is worth while. But if we daydream to get away from real life, if we daydream only as a relief from unpleasant reality, then the dreaming is unfortunate.

George was a young man who for some time had thought he would like to study law. He pictured himself as appearing in a crowded courtroom, swaying a jury by his eloquence and logic, and preserving the life and happiness of an innocent man.

Thus far George's daydreaming acted as a spur to activity. He read a good deal; he studied hard; he kept before him the goal of entrance to law school. But toward the end of high school he found it pleasanter to dream of being a successful trial lawyer than to do the work which would qualify him for the scholarship he needed to continue his education.

In the beginning of his daydreaming he had been spurred on to achievement because of what he dreamed. But as time went on he indulged in daydreams more and more to escape the effort which was necessary to make his dream come true.



There is a great difference between daydreaming as an *incentive to accomplishment* and daydreaming as a *substitute for accomplishment*.

### Daydreaming — An Incentive to Accomplishment

Ruth came from a home where life was very hard. Her parents were dead, and her grandmother had a struggle to provide for the three grandchildren whose care she had undertaken. Ruth appreciated her grandmother's kindness and realized the difficulties involved in bringing up three children on a limited income. She knew that her grandmother could have lived much more comfortably without the responsibility of her grandchildren. She knew that the worn household furnishings could be replaced easily with the funds needed for food and clothes. She determined that some day she would make up to her grandmother for the things she was missing. She spent many hours imagining how the simple rooms could be refinished and neatly furnished. In her imagination she planned unusual schemes of decorating. She sought library books which gave her more accurate ideas concerning home furnishing, and she visited shops and museums whenever she could.

She was eager to take additional art work at school, an ambition in which she received much encouragement and help from her teachers. She became so well informed on her favorite subject that in the dramatics club at school she was sought after to help with the stage settings. History became interesting as a background for home decorating; the differences in ways of living in ancient and modern times became of intense interest because of their reflection in the customs of her own time.

Her daydreams of refurnishing her grandmother's poor little home became the basis for thinking and planning far into the future. She determined on a career in home dec-



orating. Daydreaming for her was not a substitute for activity but an impetus to activity.

### Daydreaming — A Substitute for Accomplishment

Very different indeed were the attitude and behavior of Ruth's sister, another of the three children whose care the grandmother had assumed. Janet realized, too, the burden she and her sisters placed on their grandmother. While she felt grateful, she also felt ashamed of the poor home in which they lived. She hesitated to invite any of her school friends, feeling that she could not bear to have them laugh or criticize.

Janet had her own daydreams, started by the situation in which the three girls lived after their parents' death. Her daydreams, like Ruth's, concerned furniture, draperies, and ornaments. In them she, too, imagined beautifully decorated rooms. They became so much a part of her thinking that she often realized with something of surprise that, actually, her home was small, poor, and not at all artistic. Her dreams became so real to her that she often described a new decorating scheme to a classmate as having just been completed at her home. She even told one of her teachers of the lovely new furniture which she had received for a birthday gift, and she was uncomfortable at some specific questions the teacher asked.

She was unable to admit that her stories had been made up, and she was unhappy in the thought of being doubted by the girls at school. She spent most of her time dreaming how she would like to be living. Unlike Ruth, she did nothing to make her dreams come true. She was happiest when she was lost in her dreams of the way she would like things to be. She could not bear thinking about things as they were, but she never tried to change them in any way.

For Ruth, daydreaming had been the basis for planning and accomplishing. For Janet, daydreaming had been



a substitute for things as they actually were, an escape from the real world into a world of imagination.

### Are Your Daydreams Worth While?

Daydreaming may be constructive and worth while, but it may also ruin ambition and bring real unhappiness. We should not decide that all daydreaming should be encouraged or that it should all be discouraged. Rather, we should try to distinguish between daydreaming which is productive of something in the future and daydreaming which simply helps evade a difficult present.

Again, an important thing to remember is to face reality. If we face facts as they actually are, the rationalizing and the daydreaming we do as normal personalities may be helpful in aiding us to adjust to everyday living. We must be careful to avoid exaggerated excusing of ourselves, and daydreaming which takes the place of experiencing.





*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



## Some Other Ways of Evading Difficulties

Although daydreaming is not unusual or always desirable, it is only one of the ways people have of retiring from disturbing situations. Let us consider some of the other means of avoiding unpleasantness by withdrawing from difficulties.

One method is called *regression*. To regress means to go back. Regression is not an actual stepping back, but a stepping back to one's thoughts and behavior to a former more successful way of meeting difficulties. Little children, young people, and adults behave in this way.

### Reaching for Yesterday

One little girl who did not get along well in first grade began to go to the kindergarten room each morning instead of to the first grade room. While at first this might have been accidental, it became clear that she preferred to go there. In kindergarten she had been happy and successful. She preferred to be with the kindergarteners because she had enjoyed her pre-school experiences of the past year more than her present first grade experiences.

A much bigger girl went to boarding school one fall, having looked forward to going with much pleasure. But she was very homesick, and insisted upon going home every week end. In the new situation away from home, she found herself unable to adjust to a way of living changed in even the most ordinary details. She kept thinking about how things were done at home, regressing in her thoughts. She



could be comforted only by actually returning home to experience again the old familiar ways.

A boy whose family moved from one part of the city to another, transferred to a school in the new neighborhood. He continually referred to the old school in glowing terms, compared it to the new one to the latter's distinct disadvantage, and in other ways was outspoken in criticism of the new.

"I never realized," his mother said one day, "that you liked Central High so much. You never used to be so enthusiastic about it when you went there."

Ted's enthusiasm for Central High was not due to any special fondness for it. He was not making a good adjustment at the new school, and to recall the old one gave him a feeling of having once been successful in school. In his enthusiasm for the old school, too, he was attempting to impress his new companions with the idea that he was in a position to judge this school of which they were so proud. It was not so wonderful; he knew, for he had been to a better one.

Both aims gratified by Ted's enthusiasm for his old school arose from the fact that he felt apart from the crowd in the new school and insecure in the new environment. By constantly referring to a time when he had really been accepted and had been more successful in his work, he made himself feel more adequate and better able to accept the difficult status of a "transfer."

Sometimes we hear old people assure us that things were better and much pleasanter when they were young. In some ways, of course, things were pleasanter in the days of which they tell us; but in other ways they were less pleasant. We may well wonder whether these old people are not just thinking longingly of days past, because of difficulties in the present.

How much better to think of ways of improving the present than to depend upon our memories of the past!



### Keeping Apart Socially

Occasionally we find that someone who is having difficulty making adjustments, retires from the difficulty in another fashion. It may not be a daydream that is used as the way out of his trouble; it may not be recalling longingly things of the past. There are a number of other possibilities of achieving the same result.

A person may become so seclusive that practically all contacts with other people are avoided. At the extreme of such behavior is the occasional person living as a hermit, never taking part in family or community activities. This solitary way of living is certainly not usual. Sometimes we see a boy or a girl who seems to be heading in this direction, although his conduct is less extreme.

Richard, for example, was always alone. Between classes he never walked through the corridors with another boy. He seemed always lost in his own thoughts. After school he did not stay to play ball. He did not participate in any school activities. He had no association with any group which was following with interest and enthusiasm a common activity. He did not ask other boys to come to his home, nor was he invited to the homes of the others. He said he preferred to read or to study and seemed to find pleasure in being alone.

Actually, Richard was not very skillful at games and felt at a conspicuous disadvantage with other boys of his own age. Before entering high school he had played occasionally with other boys, but they had always been several years younger. With them he could feel successful. With them he was not "shown up" as awkward and slow. At high school, however, he was in the freshman class and so there were no boys from lower grades for companionship. His feeling of being unable to meet his classmates on a par in athletic games made him ill at ease. This feeling was so strong that soon even in situations in which muscular strength and skill were not involved he shrank from being



with the boys. He was always fearful that they might tease him or refer tauntingly to him. He came to prefer his own company and avoided other boys even when walking through the corridors or passing them on the street.

How much better if Richard had understood the human tendencies which caused his odd behavior. He might have seen that what he needed was practice in playing games, exercises to develop his muscle and improve his wind. He might have been given help had he thought of seeking the advice of the physical education teacher. Once he was more at ease with the other boys in playing, he would not have been so inclined to avoid them elsewhere.

He avoided them because he could not feel successful with them or be sure of their approval. So in order not to frustrate these important needs which we all have, he shunned companionship. He became a lonesome, solitary, unhappy boy.

### Feelings of Inferiority Prevent Social Progress

Another student who was lonesome and yet evaded social contacts was a girl, a second year high school student. But Laura's story is a quite different one. It is interesting that often the same kind of behavior is brought about by far different causes. It is important to understand this point, or we may be too ready to try to explain the ways in which our friends and acquaintances behave.

Laura never seemed to have time to take part in the many activities which went on in her school. She did well in her studies and spent most of her time in the library or studying at home. Like Richard, she walked alone both to and from school and stayed by herself between classes and during the lunch hour. She had the feeling of being unsuccessful and so kept away from her classmates to escape their criticism.

The interesting thing in Laura's case is that she had no real basis for her feeling of being inferior to the other



students. She did acceptable work in her studies; she was a nice looking girl and well dressed. She danced well, although few knew that she danced at all. She could skate as well as most of the other students. She had no real reason to be uncertain of herself. But she was convinced that she was not clever, graceful, or skillful in anything she tried to do.

It happened that Laura had twin sisters, two years older. Now twins always attract a certain amount of attention just because they are twins. This pair happened to be unusual. They were particularly pretty, clever and friendly. Therefore, they soon became the center of interest at home.

That is stiff competition for a little sister. Laura felt that her sisters outshone her on every occasion and in every way. True, her school report showed good work; but the twins' reports said "excellent." Laura's straight dark bob was trim and smart, but the twins had gorgeous wavy red hair which completely eclipsed Laura's. To make things more difficult for Laura, the twins' pleasing manners and air of assurance in any situation made her by contrast feel clumsy and ill at ease. While they chattered gaily, she stayed quiet. While they laughed and dimpled at their companions, Laura had a sober and discontented face which did not help the situation.

This went on for so many years that by the time she entered high school Laura was convinced of her own drabness and dullness. Unfortunately, no one ever told her that she really had charm and that if she would stop thinking one must be like the twins to be attractive, and be content to be herself, she would be much happier.

So deep-seated was Laura's feeling of her own lack of attraction that she shunned people, carefully avoiding any situation which involved others. She could have been much more successful and content had she understood the total situation. It would have helped her if she had realized that



all individuals are different and that all have their good points.

### Successful Living is Social Living

It is natural for people to like to be with other people. It is normal for them to enjoy social activities. The person who persists in being alone is indicating a real problem of adjustment and showing good evidence of not being particularly happy or contented.

No rule can be stated which will serve to make everybody popular, well liked, and successful in social affairs. However, it is possible to suggest a point or two which may help.

Probably the most important is one we have already mentioned — the necessity of facing facts. In Laura's case the facts were rather encouraging. Her trouble was that she had never given any attention to her own particular assets, because she was so disgruntled by her sisters' outstanding qualities. In Richard's case, too, corrections could have been made and he could have enjoyed a normal school experience if he had understood his problems and faced them courageously.

In either case, and in many similar ones, it is helpful to think less about oneself and more about others. For example, at a party we may be conscious of wondering how we look and anxious about saying and doing the right thing. If all of our thoughts are turned toward ourselves, we are self-conscious and apt to appear awkward. But if we think about the others present and perhaps tell others how nice they look, we can forget ourselves. If we try to find what another guest is interested in, and talk to him, or listen to him talk about that subject, leaving for the moment our own pet interest, we forget ourselves. We are more likely to gain poise, feel at ease, and have a good time if we do forget ourselves. We will be so occupied in having a good time that



we will not stop to wonder whether we look all right and whether we are doing the proper thing.

The person who is avoiding a difficulty of adjustment by staying away from people is clearly showing a lack of understanding of other people and of himself. Being solitary as a habit is just another way of retiring from a disturbing situation. Faced with an unpleasant situation, one person will turn to daydreaming and another to thoughts of what once happened, while others are inclined to evade the problem by keeping to themselves. Whatever method is followed, the object is relief from the tensions that arise because we are uncomfortable in the presence of others. The thing to do is to find out why we are ill at ease, and correct the causes. Then we will no longer need daydreaming, regression, or isolation. We will be too busy enjoying living to have time for evasions.





Y. W. C. A. Photo



## When Illness is a Way Out

Several kinds of reactions to problems have been suggested in the stories of boys and girls which have been sketched thus far. Perhaps you have found that some of the illustrations had a familiar sound. You may have known people who behave in similar ways. You may even have recognized in one of the stories your own typical way of behaving.

There is no mystery as to why the same kind of problem will be met by one person in a manner entirely different from the way in which another person faces it. We have all had many experiences, and they have left us contented or discontented, cheery or discouraged. We have all reacted to those experiences in ways which for us managed to ease the feeling of tension which the difficulty brought about. Having reacted once or many times in similar fashion, we learned that special way of reacting as the most useful for us.

We have mentioned a few of the commonly recognized adjustment patterns. There are a number of others which are often used. Sometimes the troubled person does not seem to follow any of the patterns suggested by the cases we have been reading. He behaves in a very different way. Whatever the way of behaving he follows, he has learned it through past experiences and past situations.

### Aches and Pains are Sometimes Convenient

Occasionally, we see a person who manages to evade difficulties in a fashion different from those just con-



sidered. There are cases of severe headaches, backaches, or other kinds of aches which are not caused by any physical condition. A careful and thorough examination shows absolutely nothing physically wrong to explain the suffering. Yet the pain or discomfort seems to continue. Careful study of such cases has shown that the pain or illness appears to come at special times. It can sometimes even be predicted.

It will often appear at a time which permits the person to avoid unpleasant duties or allows him to stay home instead of keeping an unwelcome engagement. Again, the pain or illness may cause a change in some other person's plans which the sufferer really wants to bring about. It would seem to be something of a convenience, or help, to the one who is ill. It would seem to serve a purpose.

### The Headache Which Conceals Discontent

Tommy is a little boy who was ill at the beginning of the school year and so missed the first several weeks of school. When he was well enough to go to school, the other children, with their many days' experience, knew just what to do, whereas he felt strange and uncertain. His first day was hard. The others had made necessary adjustments to classroom routine. They knew just how the teacher wanted them to take care of their wraps, crayons and papers. They knew each other's names. Tommy did not know any of these things.

He was ill at ease and felt helpless. He had not played with children very much and was shy about joining in their games. He had seen few grown-ups other than his parents and was timid about asking his teacher for help. Besides, she seemed busy with so many children. When his mother asked him how he liked school, he had little to say.

A few days later, he started to complain of severe headaches. Every morning, shortly after he had dressed and had



his breakfast, he would tell his mother that his head hurt very much. His mother would suggest that he lie down for a little while, and Tommy would do as she said. Then, after an hour or so, he would get up and cheerily announce that he felt all right again. Of course it was too late to go to school, and so he would play happily about while his mother would think to herself that the next day he would really start to school.

But that "next day" was a long time coming. It was so much pleasanter to stay in his own familiar back yard and play. It was so much nicer to know just what to do instead of feeling uncertain and like an outsider. His headaches were a great convenience. They permitted Tommy to keep from feeling different from the other children, and they permitted him to have his mother's sympathy and attention. Of course, after a few days of this Tommy's family became anxious. But the doctor assured them he could find no reason for the headaches, and they began to realize that the strange pain always seemed to disappear in the middle of the morning. So finally, very wisely, his mother told Tommy that the next day he would go to school even if his head did ache.

Once he realized that complaining would not change his mother's decision, he trotted off to school. Things soon straightened out satisfactorily. He learned to feel as much at ease with the children as he did at home alone. He learned to take his place as one of the class. His headaches had not been due to too much sun, candy, poor eyes, or anything else which often causes such discomfort. His headaches had been a way of avoiding doing something which he did not want to do.

### Ailments can Evade Problems

A girl of sixteen once did just about the same kind of thing as Tommy, only under quite different circumstances.



Dorothy had been invited to a swimming party. There was to be an hour at a pool with refreshments and dancing to follow. The party was given by a girl older than Dorothy, a senior whom Dorothy greatly admired. She was flattered and delighted at the invitation and accepted it.

Then she began to think about the event. Was her swimming suit as nice as those the other girls would wear? Hadn't she gained some weight, so that it would not be as becoming? And when her hair was wet, it was hard to arrange becomingly. For a few days she spent more time thinking about the swimming party than about anything else. Then she told her mother that she had decided not to accept the invitation after all.

But Dorothy's mother pointed out that an equal number of girls and boys had been invited, and that to refuse now, the day before the gathering, would not be courteous or thoughtful. Reluctantly Dorothy agreed, but she still felt concerned about her appearance.

Late in the afternoon of the scheduled date, Dorothy complained of a sore throat. Of course, with a sore throat it was not wise to go swimming. Dorothy stayed at home.

The sore throat was better the next day. Dorothy said conscientiously to her mother that she was glad she had not gone swimming, because she might have given all the others colds.

Dorothy had evaded a situation about which she felt ill at ease. She had managed to keep from feeling uncomfortable, and she had not run the risk of losing the admiration of the group. She did not plan this consciously. She did not sit down and figure out, "Now if I have a cold, I won't be able to go swimming. And so I won't have to wear that old suit in which I look so fat. And my wave won't be ruined by the water." Of course not! But that was the result, was it not?



## How Dread of Failure can be Painful

Ralph was eager to play his trombone in the school orchestra. He practiced diligently and watched the bulletin board for an announcement of the next trials for new members. Finally the notice appeared, and he looked forward to his audition, talked about it, and assured his folks at home that he had a good chance of being chosen.

When the trials were under way, he was surprised that a boy he had thought an excellent violinist was not given a place, and he was dumbfounded when a favorite drummer lost out to a chap who had not seemed nearly so skillful. The day before the brass instruments were to be heard he was definitely worried about his own chance. But he had signed up. Everyone knew he was scheduled for an audition. There was nothing to do but go ahead with it.

Ralph spent a restless night, insisting to himself that he would not mind being turned down but nevertheless greatly distressed at the prospect.

He awoke with a pain in his side so severe that he not only missed his breakfast but was unable to go to school. His frightened family was convinced that he had appendicitis, and called the doctor. It became obvious that Ralph would have to miss his audition.

Although Ralph and his parents were soon assured by the doctor that he did not have appendicitis, he was ordered to remain in bed until he had fully recovered from the pain and illness. A few days later, when Ralph returned to school, he learned that the vacant chairs had now been assigned and the orchestra was again full size. His friends were understanding. "Tough you were sick," was the general opinion.

It was pleasant to have their attention, and to know that they sympathized. No one even hinted that he might not have been chosen anyway. How difficult it would have been had Ralph tried out for the orchestra and not won a place!



## Do You Understand Your Ailments?

The apparent physical ailment which is actually the result of an emotional problem is an important "way out" that is often unrecognized. It seems strange that anyone should ever prefer an ache or pain to freedom from such discomfort. Yet, as we have seen, the physical ailment may be less distressing than the situation from which it provides an escape.

Illness of this sort, without physical basis, is a device used to get one out of difficulties, just as daydreaming is such a device, or rationalizing, or keeping to oneself. It is a way to relieve the tensions caused by the unsatisfied social needs which we all experience. It is not consciously planned.

It is much better to think things through clearly and frankly. It is much healthier, in the long run, to be honest with ourselves. Our health, in this sense, includes more than our physical condition, more than our physical well-being. It includes, in addition, our mental health, our feeling of emotional well-being. And it has a direct effect upon our success and happiness in fulfilling our social needs.



## Fears—Recognized and Unrecognized

All of the patterns of behavior that we have been considering are easy to recognize. The girl who gazes out of the window, sitting idle and disinterested in everything but her own thoughts, is readily seen to be lost in a daydream. The chap who goes about playing pranks and making puns and cracking jokes, can be spotted promptly in his particular way of achieving satisfaction. The conduct of the individual who keeps to himself exclusively, never joining in the social activities of any group, is readily recognized, as are the other varieties of conduct that have been mentioned.

### Using One Way Out Does Not Exclude Another

This would seem to be a good place to mention that these patterns of behavior do not necessarily appear alone. That is, because a person uses one of them does not exclude the possibility of his using another. For instance, he may daydream and avoid association with others; he may be both a braggart and a bully; he may find excellent reasons for explaining why he does just what he really wants to do and at the same time be homesick or babyish in his behavior. We have treated each kind of behavior separately because it would have been confusing to get involved with too many patterns all at once. A person who uses one of these ways of adjusting may also use one or more of the others. Often, if we are familiar with human behavior, we can recognize what pattern he has learned. But generally we will not know why he has learned that particular pattern.



Occasionally, however, we are aware that a person is acting somewhat peculiarly, yet his special way of behaving is not easy to describe. It is not as clear-cut as the ways with which we are now a little familiar. Perhaps he is irritated tremendously by something which seems to us of little consequence. Perhaps a dread or fear is expressed which surprises us by its very unreasonableness.

### Some Ways Out Have a Long History

A little girl who had been very willing to run errands for her mother suddenly became reluctant to go to the corner grocery. This occurred shortly after the family had moved and when her mother was particularly busy getting settled. Therefore, Barbara's "unexplainable" behavior was especially bothersome to her mother. Barbara would go to a store a block and a half away, but she begged not to be made to go to the corner grocery. That certainly seemed odd, and her mother gave the matter a good deal of thought. It was not until sometime later that the real reason was discovered.

The clerk in the corner grocery was a large, heavy-set quiet and businesslike man. His speech had a peculiar slur. It was a great surprise to Barbara's mother to find that it was because of him that her little girl objected to going there. The following information explains the situation. The grocery clerk looked and talked much like the janitor in the neighborhood in which Barbara had previously lived. That particular janitor had disliked children. Most of the youngsters, including Barbara, avoided him because of his gruffness and unfriendliness.

This attitude Barbara transferred to the innocent grocery clerk, because each time she saw him she was reminded of her former fear. There was what is called a "spread" of her reaction. First attached to one particular man, it next included another man as well. In such cases, it often happens that the person himself is not consciously aware of the



basis of his fear. His behavior is often difficult to understand without careful study, because the particular fear reaction seems so illogical. This explains the fact that often it is easy to recognize that an individual is using an adjustive device, but more difficult to understand why he is using it.

Here is another story which illustrates the same point. A young man who went to business every day never took a bus, although the bus line was at the corner of his block. Instead, he walked two blocks to take a street car. That seemed a little strange. It was even more peculiar when he continued to ride the street car rather than join friends on the bus.

Several years before this peculiarity was noticed by his friends, Jack had been in a bus accident. He was bruised only slightly, but a man had been killed, and several other passengers had been seriously injured. Since that incident Jack had avoided using a bus for transportation. He dreaded using a bus, but when his friends asked him why he did not seem able to give a reason.

Yet there was a reason for his apparently strange refusal to ride on a bus. It was a kind of behavior which was not as readily recognized as were the other kinds we have listed. Even Jack did not recognize it.

### The History may be a Forgotten Story

In both of these cases an interesting thing can be pointed out. Barbara did not see promptly the resemblance between the grocery clerk and the janitor. She had avoided the janitor as much as possible, but she did not realize that she was repressing her fear of him. It had not been a conscious fear that she herself recognized, and was aware of, and spoke about. Rather, it had been kept in her unconscious mind. She had not forgotten the several occasions on which the janitor had frightened her. But she did not let herself think about those incidents. And so when the



peculiar feeling for the grocery clerk made her hesitate to enter the store, she did not associate her dread with her former fear of the janitor. That was why she found it difficult to explain to her mother her willingness to trudge three blocks for a loaf of bread exactly like one she could have bought at the corner.

And the same thing was true of the man who preferred street cars to buses. The accident had been a harrowing experience. He had been badly frightened and upset by it. He was disturbed even in thinking of it, and so that thought was kept in the back of his mind. It was repressed just as the recollection of the janitor had been repressed by Barbara.

In neither instance was there complete forgetting. That is what happens when something has occurred which frightens us or of which we are ashamed. We "forget" it in a sense, but only to the extent that we keep it far back in our minds, in the unconscious, as we have learned. The memory does not entirely disappear, and it crops up sometimes in most peculiar ways.

Very often repressions of this kind are the explanation of the apparently queer, strange conduct we note in others — or in ourselves. The reason for the repression lies in the attempt to meet the social needs which are so important. The repressing of a particular memory is in some way an aid in satisfying our desire for approval, or for a feeling of success, or for being like others.

If something has happened which has made us fearful or ashamed, we are uncomfortable in our own lowered estimation of ourselves. We try to keep others from finding out about it lest they lose their good opinion of us, disapprove of us. We have a feeling of failure which is unpleasant. And we have, too, a feeling of being different from others, which is also unpleasant. Any one of those reasons would be enough to explain the repression of certain thoughts.



## Reconstructing the Story

It is a very good plan to try to talk things through with someone in whom you have confidence. To be fearful of something or someone, and to keep that fear to yourself, often magnifies it. You are much more disturbed by it than you would be if you talked it through with another person. Air it; hear another opinion besides your own concerning it. Such frank facing of a fear helps tremendously to overcome it. It is chiefly when fears are repressed that they interfere with happy and successful adjustment in living.

The same thing applies if there is something of which we are ashamed, whether it is an action or a thought which mortifies us. To keep it hidden in our innermost thoughts and mull over it, makes it loom large in importance. Unable to satisfy ourselves about it, we try to settle our problem by repressing all thought of it. That may serve to lessen the tension we feel over our difficulty, but it certainly does not solve the difficulty. The problem is not forgotten. It crops up at some later time, disguised in some fashion, and is the cause of more trouble. Talk it through with someone. Get advice and counsel. See how airing a grievance or a problem makes it lessen in significance, and makes us feel better about it. It is certainly worth a trial, don't you think?

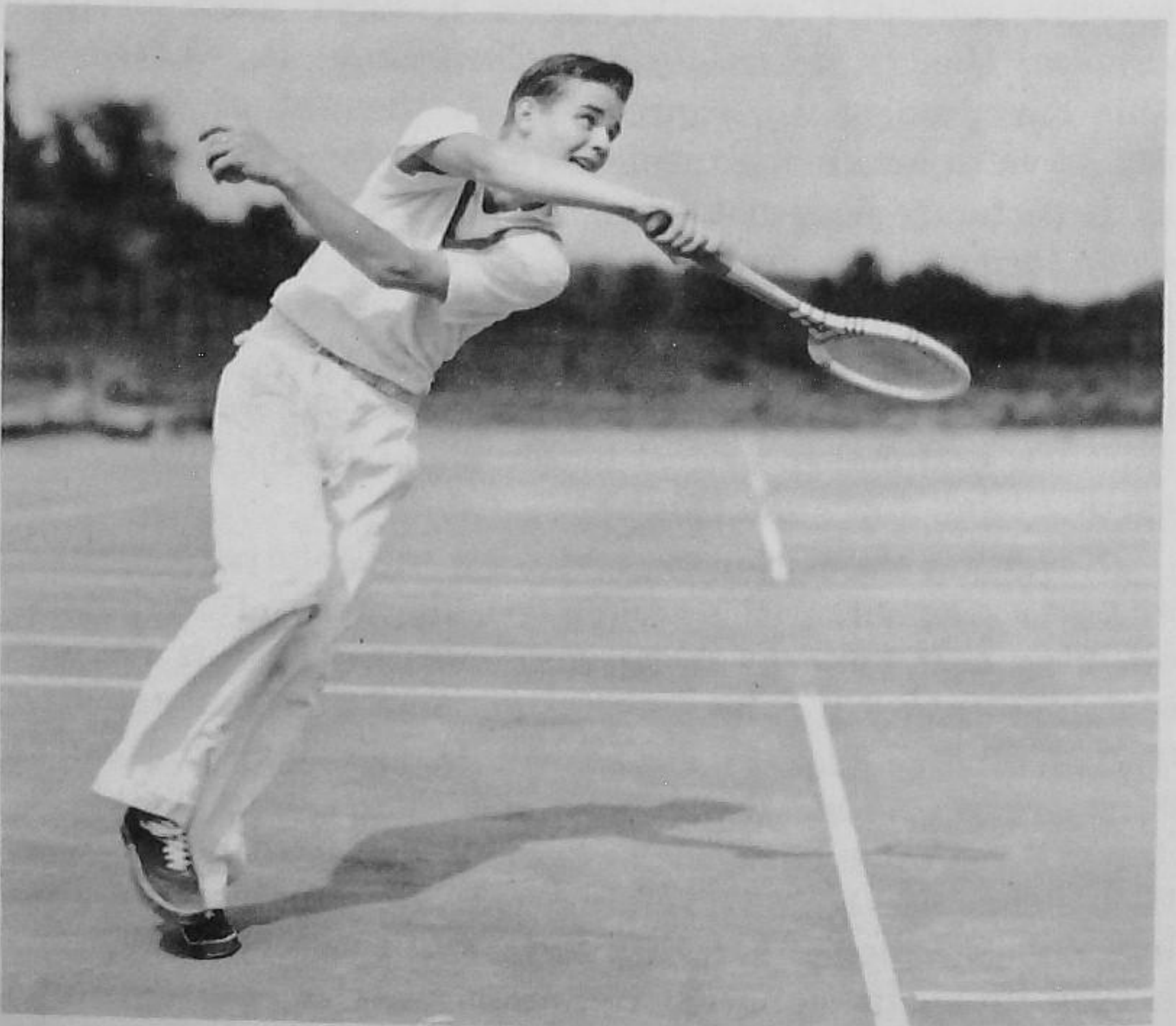
Never get the notion that you are the only person alive who ever was bothered by the particular fearful or shameful thing that happens to be your worry. There is not an experience you can think of that at some time has not distressed others. Just as all human beings have the same basic organic needs which must be satisfied to maintain life, and the same basic social needs which must be fulfilled to live that life happily and contentedly, so all human beings have problems in trying to satisfy those needs. There is such similarity apparent in human worries and troubles,



that it is possible to make general suggestions about overcoming them.

You are an individual and of course different in many ways from anyone else. But at the same time, you are a human personality and share with others similar needs, similar difficulties, and similar ways of meeting problems.

This thought should take a load from your shoulders if you have been secretly distressed over what you have been considering lack of success, difficulty of social adjustment, a mortifying desire, or a shameful experience. To have been in error, to have used poor judgment, is a common human failing. You need be disturbed by your failing only if you refrain from attempting to improve matters. It is not failure itself that is so important, but contentment with failure should give you concern.



*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*



## Evasions That Are Aggressive

All the ways that we have been describing of meeting unpleasant or difficult situations have been concerned with the individual who withdraws from the problem. He finds a good logical reason to avoid something, or to explain doing it; or he forgets about reality by dreaming about something; or he uses one of the other ways out that we have discussed.

Not all difficulties receive such retiring responses from the person who experiences them. Sometimes the individual, instead of retiring or withdrawing in some way, will behave in a manner which is more aggressive, and which attacks the problem more actively.

It has been pointed out that the same behavior may be brought about by different causes. It is just as true that the same underlying cause may result in very different behavior reactions. The people we have been discussing have been real people, but that does not mean that everyone will behave like them. Not all little children who find first grade difficult will try to return to kindergarten. Not all girls who think their way of living hard to accept will lose themselves in daydreams. Not all boys who consider themselves less able than their classmates will become shy, and seclusive and solitary. Sometimes these same situations will be the cause of very different patterns of behavior.

### Do You Lose Your Temper?

Many people lose their tempers very easily. True, some of our friends get cross and sulk when things go wrong;



others perhaps burst into tears; still others find excuses to explain away facts that are disturbing; others lose their tempers. Do you?

Tempers are short under some circumstances. Do you raise your voice, and become quarrelsome if you are aware of being unsuccessful? How do you accept criticism of something you have done, or left undone?

Now consider this: you have felt inefficient and inadequate when you knew you were not doing very well, or when you were criticized for carelessness. It made no difference whether you were trying to fix an electric bell and the wiring was too intricate for you; or if you neglected to take care of the errand your father requested; or if you handed in an English paper which was untidy and poorly prepared. The fact was that you had fallen down on the job in some way.

Shouting and blustering may be your way of doing something to relieve the tensions which unsatisfied needs of success and approval arouse. You know perfectly well that you have been doing nothing that solved your problem. You do not improve your efficiency by yelling and striking out, although you do feel better for a few moments after you have so relieved those tensions. But next time try to do something more worth while.

Face the fact that you have not been very skillful, whether in helping out at home, or doing a school assignment, or playing on the team. Once you have been honest with yourself and have faced the real situation, you can plan better ways of acting. Then there will be fewer and fewer occasions when you will feel inclined to lose control of yourself and indulge in a temper tantrum. You will build up more efficient ways of doing things, more agreeable ways of living with others, and will not be exposing yourself to disapproval. You will be satisfying needs which always influence you and everyone you know.



### What About Bragging?

Loss of temper is not only the direct response made. There was once a second year girl who was not particularly popular with the other students. Frances was disliked largely because she talked too loudly, bragged, and was extremely critical of others. Her behavior was really an attempt to cover up the fact that she did not feel that she was as clever or as capable as her schoolmates. She managed to bolster up her own opinion of herself by telling of things she had never accomplished, and by discrediting things which she knew others had accomplished.

By her behavior Frances called attention to herself, which she enjoyed. Also, she was so intent upon talking about herself and her exploits that she had little time to do anything. This saved her, for a time at least, from having her classmates find out that she was not nearly as clever and efficient as she boasted. She was evading real facts, just as the others we have told about evaded reality. But she was being more active in her way of escaping from her feeling of being inferior.

### And Then There's Clowning

Another student, a boy who had just entered high school, became very conspicuous by his clowning. Jerry had a quick wit and did say funny things. He thought up one joke after another to play, always at someone else's expense. His antics went on in the classroom and out. He delighted in the attention he attracted. He seemed pleased even when his teachers noticed him just enough to tell him to stop.

Jerry, too, was using a kind of active attack in trying to meet his feeling of not being adequate. He was not at all sure of his ability to do good school work; certainly he had never won any very favorable notice through his studies. He was quite certain that he could not make any athletic team; he had always been rather a dub on the ball



field and the track. He felt sure he would not be a star in dramatics or in debating; he had never been able to see how those who appeared before an audience could remember what they were supposed to say.

Jerry wanted to feel successful, and he wanted the attention and approval of his fellow students, just as we all do. Since he was sure that he could not gain notice by the more acceptable ways of showing ability, he found another way. By constant punning and jesting, by "acting up" in a conspicuous fashion, he gained for himself the recognition that he needed to feel successful. He did not sit down and think this through, step by step. But his actions indicated what was back of his clowning.

He had not chosen a very wise way of becoming recognized by his classmates, although he was sure of not being ignored. Furthermore, by planning his practical jokes at the expense of others, he himself was for the moment placed in a superior position. He could laugh at someone else. He could look down at someone else. By contrast he had a feeling of importance.

Of course, it did not last very long. Jerry became boring to the other boys and girls, because he felt it necessary to keep up the clowning in order to keep up the recognition it gained for him. They wearied of his foolishness, but he never tired trying to attract their attention.

### No One Likes a Bully

Sometimes the aggressive behavior that is noticed is of greater consequence than the boastfulness and cutting-up of Frances and Jerry. Sometimes it disturbs others, or even injures them. That happens when bullying is tried instead of trying to attract attention by the comparatively harmless ways used by the two students we have been mentioning.

John was such a boy. He had entered high school with a fairly good scholastic record, and was not at all worried about his studies. His past experiences with other boys



and girls had not been very fortunate. His family had moved many times, going from one city to another. Their traveling often was in the middle of a school term. So John was frequently forced to enter a new school, a stranger to his classmates and to the routine of the school.

It was not easy for John to make adjustments to these frequent new situations. Each time he heard that his family was about to move he dreaded a repetition of the changing of friends, of schools, of familiar routines.

The first few times he was placed in a strange school a few new classmates tried to make friends with him. But he was left completely alone by most of them, since they had already formed groups and established their "crowds." He did not know how to go about showing the others that he wanted them to like him. He felt left out of things much of the time. He grew more and more resentful of the way he was treated. He found that the only ones who gave him any attention were the smaller children, and while he felt grateful in a way, nevertheless he resented them. He felt that they must realize that he was being slighted by the older boys and girls — and that hurt.

In order to make them realize how important he was, he began to order them about. They obeyed, since he was bigger and stronger. The more commands he gave them, the better he felt. His domineering ways provided him with a sense of importance. Here at least he amounted to something — even if it was only younger children who recognized the fact!

His family moved so frequently that it was difficult for any school to give him much help. And he did not realize why he generally felt out of sorts and mistreated. He only knew he was not very happy, and that he felt better when he had "the little kids" doing as he directed.

It was not surprising that when he entered high school, in a strange town, he started in with the same old "bossy" attitude and pose. Since he was a big, husky chap, it was not difficult for him to find a few smaller boys who



were fearful of ignoring his commands. He soon had them lined up as he wanted them, and found his chief pleasure in giving them orders which would put them in a ridiculous position.

Furthermore, an elementary school just a short distance from the high school gave him an added opportunity to satisfy his feeling of importance. This he managed by teasing the youngsters, interfering in their games, snatching hats, or books, or anything he could grab from them. He became more and more scorned by his classmates.

### Aggressive People Need Help, Too

Frequently we find that the individual who is a braggart or a bully is really a mild and often timid sort. He has managed to build for himself a reputation of defiance of rules and regulations. But his reputation is founded on his deep feeling of not being accepted by his fellows and of not being their equal in ways that really matter.

Such a person can be helped. There must be a careful plan which will permit him to feel successful and important in ways which are more desirable than his swaggering and blustering. He must be convinced that he has possibilities of being more like other boys and girls and better liked by them. He must have the reassurance that only a sensed success in an activity can provide.

For such a plan teachers can help, but there must be understanding of the aggressive person by his companions, and he must have some understanding of himself. If there is no knowledge of why he acts as he does, only scolding and criticism are offered. An understanding of human nature, with certain needs to be satisfied, will further the understanding of an individual whose needs are not being satisfied.

Not only the conduct of a person must be considered, but also the reasons for his conduct. If you can explain why you do certain things which you vaguely regret doing, you will be helped to substitute other actions for them.



## The Game of Living

In every game that is played, there are certain rules which must be followed. It does not matter whether the game is on a tennis court or a baseball diamond, at a skating rink or a bridge table, there are rules to be observed. Those who are playing know what they may do and what they may not do.

Nearly all people enjoy most the games which they play best. It is no particular fun to try table tennis, for example, and see an opponent roll up a high score, while all you seem able to do is chase the balls that you miss. But it is a great deal of fun to play when you feel that you have an even chance. Then, whether you win or lose a particular game, you enjoy playing because you are playing well and playing effectively.

### The Players and the Game

In the game of living, you play with any number of others. It is true that occasionally you play alone. But most of the time you are with at least a few others, and often you are with a large number of others. It happens to most of us, at some time or other, that we are a little uncertain as to just what our next move should be. Often, after we have made a move, we realize that we might have made a wiser one.

One difficulty is that situations change, and so it is not merely a routine move which is necessary. Rather, we must move in the light of our past plays, and in accordance with new conditions. That is, we must adjust to changes. Everyday living provides constant change.



The requirements which direct the playing of the game of living are about the same for all of us. They involve the needs which are common to all human beings. You remember that we mentioned two groups of needs: physical needs, which must be satisfied for us to live, and social needs, which must be satisfied if we are to live happily.

While our particular interest here concerns the social needs, our adjustment as whole personalities is greatly dependent upon physical health. If physical needs are well cared for, physical health is more likely to be satisfactory. And because the human organism operates as a whole, as a totality, when physical health is satisfactory, emotional adjustment is more likely to be achieved.

You know how a minor physical ill can affect you. A toothache, a cold in your nose, a muscular cramp can make you feel out of sorts, and prevent you from doing your best in any activity. A more serious physical difficulty affects you just so much more. It is an excellent plan, if you are working under par, to be sure of your physical well-being, to check on any possible physical handicap. Sometimes a physical factor may not be the *direct* cause of a difficulty, but it may be a *contributing* cause. A thorough physical examination is, therefore, of first importance.

If no physical factor is at the basis of working below par, the next step is to consider the social factors which might be involved.

Checking on social factors can be accomplished only if the social needs which underlie all behavior are recognized. Loss of weight, tiring quickly, or definite pain, would be promptly recognized as a symptom suggesting a physical basis for a difficulty. Such symptoms are given attention more often than are the symptoms suggesting a social basis for a difficulty.

Interestingly, these same symptoms are sometimes troublesome even when no physical basis can be found. For loss of weight may result from loss of appetite, which can



be caused by worry, excitement, or fear. Fatigue can come as a result of our being tired of doing something as much as from our actually being tired because of the energy used. And a backache may be caused by the burden of anxiety as much as by our actually carrying a heavy load.

Thus apparent physical symptoms may result from definite emotional problems, which of course cause emotional symptoms as well.

Losing your temper is such a symptom. So are too much daydreaming, too much fighting, or the over-use of any of the other devices already described. These symptoms need recognition and understanding as emotional problems, even as fever and chills need to be known as evidence of physical problems which interfere with efficient living. If such emotional symptoms are noticeable we are hampered by them in playing the most important game of all — the game of living.

### Do You Like to Play?

You know that we enjoy most the things which we do best. If we are not hampered in our playing, we are more apt to play well and successfully. Then we are apt to like to play.

Living is activity. We are active during all of our waking moments. Can we think over the ways in which we have been active — that is, the ways in which we have been living — and decide whether we have been efficient and successful in them? We find that if we have been reasonably efficient, we have been enjoying what we have been doing. That means that we have probably been cheerful and happy in doing it.

That will be true even if one aspect of our activity does not seem to measure up to the general level of the others. We rarely find things perfectly and completely satisfying. If we did, we would miss some of the thrill of



making things better, of improving and developing our ideas.

Whatever may be less satisfactory in the game we are all playing, should certainly be recognized. For only if we are conscious of what is open to improvement, can we set about making plans to improve it. If we refuse to face facts, if we insist upon remaining blind to what is really true, then we do nothing but continue in the particular kind of evasion-of-reality which we have been using. A straight-from-the-shoulder kind of playing is so much more fun than the kind of playing which brings evasions into the game. What is your game like?

### Do You Understand the Rules?

Suppose you daydream to substitute what you would like to have happen for what is actually happening, and rest content with only a dream. You obviously remain on an inefficient plane of living. And you miss some of the joy of living. But suppose you daydream to *plan what you can do* about changing what is actually happening into what you would like to have happen, *and then set about doing it!* It is equally obvious that then you can expect to raise the level of your efficiency in living. And through it, you will increase your joy in the game of life.

Suppose you are having a hard time getting along in a new neighborhood or a new school. If you spend your time remembering how much more fun it was on your old block, in your old school, your memories may be pleasant, but they will not help the present situation very much. But suppose you think back and try to figure out just why you managed to get along better in the old way of doing things, and just why you are failing today. That can be the beginning of a plan to improve the way you are tackling the problem of adjusting to the new situation.

Suppose you have been in the habit of boasting of your accomplishments and ability. It would be a good idea to



stop and ask yourself if you are really as good as you are telling everybody you are. Face the fact that you have been trying to show off and impress people because down deep you have not been very certain of yourself and your chance of being given any notice. You have been trying to impress yourself, too, to reassure yourself that you are getting along all right. Instead, plan to improve your ability to *do* things, and do not rest content with just *talking* about doing them.

Whatever the way you have been meeting your problems in living (and remember that there is no person who is without difficulties and problems), it is both interesting and worthwhile to recognize your way for what it is. The kind of evasion you have been using is not the important thing. There are many kinds and we all use at least some of them. *To know that you were evading is what is important.*

If we will accept a clear-cut approach in the job of living, we will find that we can list our assets and liabilities just as a business house does. We cannot measure our success in living in the same specific way that a business measures its success. We cannot talk in terms of income and exact profits within a limited period of time. But we can judge our success comparatively, and we can judge ourselves correspondingly. We can compare our behavior patterns with the patterns that seem to most people a highly desirable design of living.

Designs for complete living have interesting possibilities. Do you remember when you were very young, how fascinated you were with your first kaleidoscope — that long tube into which you peered, and saw a pretty design at the other end? With every move you gave the tube, a different design appeared, and rarely did you see two designs that were alike.

Like a kaleidoscope, the design of living shows constant change. We can always make the pattern different. We can always reshape the arrangement which we find unsatis-



factory — which is not pleasing. And in the new design we attempt in living, we can be more definite than we could when we were reshaping the pattern of the kaleidoscope. For when we shook the tube just a little, the bits of glass fell into combinations we had not foreseen and which we could not predict. But when we shake ourselves up just a little, the change can be organized and planned. We can start with a concrete idea of what bits of our pattern of living we would like changed, and just how we would like them changed.

The first necessity is to take stock of ourselves. In taking stock of ourselves, we can hardly place real objects on a counter and count up what is at hand and what must be ordered. But we can ask ourselves certain questions, and answer them honestly. In the answers we give, we can see some indication of what is satisfactory in our patterns of behavior, and what is unsatisfactory. This gives us a basis for planning changes for improvement.

### Have You Been Enjoying Life?

To ask yourself if you have been enjoying life may seem a rather selfish question. But it is an important one. For, analyzing it, we can see how it affects not only ourselves, but all with whom we come in contact.

If you ask yourself, "Have I been enjoying life?" you are simply taking a short-cut to the question, "Have my social needs been well satisfied?" If they have been, then you have been living happily. If you have been living happily, you have been cheerful, and probably you have been obliging, and most likely folks have enjoyed having you around. If days have seemed dreary and luck seems to have been turned against you, you certainly cannot say that you have been enjoying life. Then your needs have not been well satisfied. You have not been happy. You have not been very good company because you have not been in good spirits.

Normally, happiness is evidence of the satisfaction of



important needs. Therefore, it is a significant sign of your well-being. If you make successful adjustments to your everyday experiences, you enjoy the activity which adjusting involves. If your adjustment has not been satisfying, then you rarely enjoy what you are doing. You do not enjoy life.

### Do You Know Why?

Being aware that you are or are not enjoying life is probably easier to recognize than to know why it is so.

Such understanding enables you to see whether you have been following desirable or undesirable ways of living. If all is well, if you have been sincerely able to say that you have been enjoying life, then this second question will help you continue in your fortunate path. If you have had to say "no" to the first question, then answering this second one can help you to change your reply to "yes."

It may not be easy to make the adjustments that you know should be made. It surely will not be quick. But if you can understand *why* you have not been pleasantly relaxed, comfortable, and happy about things in general, you have made the first step toward changing.

The chapters which have come before should help you toward such understanding. They should help you to realize what all human beings are like in general, and what you are like in particular. That knowledge should help you to see what has interfered with your being happy in the game of living.

Perhaps you have recognized that you have a quick temper, a bothersome fear, or a tendency to daydream — and you cannot seem to change. It is not always easy to see into your own problem and its cause.

If that is the case, then your best plan is to talk things through with someone in whom you have confidence, and who, you feel, will listen with sympathy and understanding. People who have had training in psychology are generally most helpful. Often, just talking matters over will help you.



You see, the talking itself is an activity, and as such, it helps to reduce the tensions which are bothering you.

Talking matters over will also provide you with another opinion and point of view, And, too, it will help you organize and understand your problem a little better. For the procedure of putting into words what you have been worrying and fretting over, frequently makes clearer that which has seemed confusing and bewildering.

### You Can Improve Your Game

If you have completed taking stock, either with or without another's viewpoint, then what? Suppose you find that you are short in self confidence, and so boast a good deal to make yourself feel more adequate? Suppose you find that you are fearful of something which makes others laugh at you, and so you are inclined to keep to yourself most of the time? Suppose that any of the various "ways out" of problem-situations happens to be the way you yourself have been acting!

You have made the important beginning of recognizing your shortcoming. Perhaps you have been fortunate enough to have found the reason back of it, too. You have accomplished a none-too-easy thing: *you have faced facts* as they are. Now for a positive approach. Now for a plan of changing that pattern you find unsatisfactory.

It must have occurred to you as you have been reading about the many people mentioned in this book, that usually the underlying difficulty has included a feeling of not being capable or competent. If that is true of you, as it is of so many people, here is a suggestion.

All of us have some activity in which we can improve ourselves. We can always find at least one thing in which we really take an interest and feel fairly successful. Let's concentrate on that for a while. Whether it is making things with tools, writing stories, playing the piano, boxing,



designing dresses, or taking pictures, does not matter.

Whatever it is that especially interests you and for which you feel you have some knack, improve yourself in that particular thing. Try it and see what happens. Most folks find that they not only have more fun, but also that they get more attention from others. We have long ago agreed that to do something well, and have someone comment upon it, will satisfy fundamental and important human needs. Added success in *any* worthwhile activity will give you added incentive to try other things. The more things you try, the more chance you have of adding to the list of things that you do well. It is like rolling a snowball down a hill. The bigger it gets, the bigger you would like to see it get. It is such fun you want to repeat it.

The experience of success is one of the greatest incentives to further effort.

And having the experience of success helps tremendously to improve your opinion of yourself. Thinking well of yourself gives you more all-around confidence. Before long other people react to that confidence you feel in yourself, and they, too, change their estimate of you. This makes you feel all the better, since in addition to the pleasure you have from being successful, you have the further pleasure of winning approval.

As you think over your own behavior patterns, and they please or displease you, keep your sense of humor. It is true that life is a serious matter, but that does not mean that you must be without a laugh now and then. In fact, the more you can manage to laugh, the better you are going to feel — and probably the easier you are going to find your job of changing life patterns.

Playing Now — Next Week — And Next Year

Even if you should find that after you have changed a pattern the new design is not working out very well, don't



be downhearted. Try another. The kaleidoscope had countless designs possible with just a twist of the wrist. Life has almost as many, even if it does take more effort to shape them.

An unsatisfied social need offers a problem for immediate solution. It may have been unsatisfied for some time, but concentrate on it right now. Regret for something that is over and done with is of little value. Worry over something that is yet to come interferes with present activity.

Use the past experiences you have had to suggest better ways of meeting the present. Use the present for a sound basis to meet the future. That kind of interlocking of experiences will be your soundest insurance for successful living — today, next week, and in all the years to come.



*H. Armstrong Roberts Photo*