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## LOOK TOWARD TOMORROW

The Church, Parents, and Teachers  
Work for Mental Health of Children

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# LOOK TOWARD TOMORROW

## *The Emotional Needs of Children*

*by Ira Iscoe*

*Reprinted with permission from the  
International Journal of Religious Education, December 1965*

## *What Are The Parents Like?*

*by Bert Kruger Smith*

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## *The Teacher's Emotional Development*

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*The Emotional Needs of Children*  
*by Ira Iscoe*  
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More knowledge has been generated in the last fifty years than in the rest of recorded history. The extent of this "knowledge explosion" is difficult to comprehend fully. In a single day enough new knowledge is produced to fill a standard-sized encyclopedia. Conceptions of the physical world are rapidly changing. There are particles within particles of the atom. Even the old saying that "what goes up must come down" has to be qualified.

It is difficult for many adults to adjust to the impact of these changes. The opportunity to view the 1964 Olympics live from Tokyo amazed adults, but was accepted as a matter of fact by children. Many children confidently expect to land on the moon, and who can tell whether what was science fiction twenty-five years ago will not be a reality twenty years from now? The world to come promises untold advantages over the world as we know

it, yet it also brings with it tremendous responsibilities. It reminds one of a verse from Thomas Carlyle:

"Nature with an equal mind  
Sees all its sons at play  
Sees man control the wind,  
And sees winds sweep man away."

The greatest challenge to the world's peoples is not adapting to new technologies, automation, or the population explosion but finding the methods and the understanding whereby they may live together and not destroy themselves in a thermonuclear holocaust. Scientists worry about the problem, and the more responsible politicians recognize it. Mankind, as never before, is faced with a live-or-die decision.

Viewing the problem as one essentially of human relations, what can families and religious institutions do? Although advances in technology are changing the world, they do not by any means eliminate the need for families and religious organizations. Man is essentially an emotional creature. The term "emotional" is not used here in a derogatory sense. Concern for those in less fortunate circumstances and the qualities of understanding, love, and acceptance distinguish man from the other creatures on earth. The emotional needs of children will increase and not decrease as time goes on. These needs must be met, and the responsibility for meeting them cannot be passed on to government organizations or to "the man across the street."

#### THE MORE IMPORTANT NEEDS

In the emotional development of children there are several rather distinct stages. A child is born into the world the most helpless of all creatures. Despite his helplessness and dependency, the

child is not powerless to influence his immediate environment, especially his parents. His cries move them to action. His needs stir activities in the household. His wants are made known vociferously, and most of these are satisfied.

Along with these physical needs there is the need for security. In this stage the child is intrinsically valued, that is to say, valued for what he is, not for what he will be. He needs to be given the fundamentals of love and acceptance. This fits essentially with our Judeo-Christian orientation. The physically handicapped child, the retarded child, and the child of great promise are all valued and loved by their parents.

By the age of four or five most children have begun to understand and accept their dependence upon their families. They begin to learn elementary facts about getting along with other children. "The rules of the game" are gradually learned. The well-adjusted child accepts his dependent status.

A few years later, starting at about age six and until age twelve or thirteen, the child moves into a period commonly referred to as latency. This period encompasses the elementary school years. The child tests out his learning skills and his sociability with other children. The reasonable conditions of competition, of reward and punishment, also are, it is hoped, understood. The child begins to recognize that his status in many ways is derived from the security of his family, and he adopts the attitudes and emotional tone of his family.

Later on, the child moves into puberty, which means that the natural growth process of the body reaches a point where full maturation, including sexual maturation, begins to take place. Just as in other species, there begins a process of "learning to leave the nest." In lower organisms this may be rather sudden. In human beings it takes longer and differs according to various cultures and groups. Nonetheless, society has laid down certain

age expectancies and is prepared to grant privileges on the basis of age. For example, in most states children at sixteen are permitted to drive cars. At eighteen, in some states, they are permitted to vote and to drink alcoholic beverages. At twenty-one legal status is granted. There is, however, a vast difference between status granted on the basis of age and status granted on the basis of emotional maturity.

#### PARENTS AND CHURCH RESPONSIBLE

One can only sympathize with the parents and with the church in their efforts to meet the emotional needs of children. Have these needs changed in view of the changing world? Fundamentally, no. The feeling of one's worth as an individual, of competence to meet the challenges of a changing world, is still imparted by families. It is incumbent upon the family and the church to impart a sense of values. Whether these values are "right" is not the point of argument here. A child without a value system is like a ship without a compass, never sure of its direction, never confident of reaching any goal. A parent should be able with good conscience to adhere to a set of values, to admit that possibly these values may change in the future, but, nevertheless, to voice a belief that certain fundamentals in regard to morality and human relations will not change appreciably.

This is at once a simple, yet complicated, task. It requires that the family reassess and re-examine its own values. Required of religious institutions is a faith that what they teach is of value to the child as a guideline in his religious education. What a particular denomination believes is a matter for its own decision. Most important is for it to live in accordance with these beliefs.

Since World War II the United States has moved steadily toward a child-oriented culture. There was a time when child-

rearing was relatively simple. In the Victorian period it was said, somewhat facetiously, that there was no problem: Father was right, and Mother was good. In this period the child had the advantage of knowing where the father stood.

Parents in the modern world have understandably been assailed by a barrage of self-doubts and feelings of inadequacy. How can a parent best satisfy a child's emotional needs? Is there a prescription or a set of rules?

From this writer's point of view, fortunately not. Rules are always open to interpretation, and prescriptions are not necessarily followed. Mature and responsible parents have duties to their children. The most important of these and the most fundamental is parental example. Bruno Bettelheim, in a seminar which this writer was privileged to attend, pointed out that the one duty of a parent is to be a "decent human being."

Fulfilling this role goes a long way toward meeting the emotional needs of a child. It places the burden back where it should be—in the home.

The church, too, has its responsibilities. Will it, in its actions, embody its teachings? Will it set an example that the younger members can follow? Will it allow young people to take responsibilities appropriate to their skills? Will it make provision for them to plan functions on their own within the church setting? Will it furnish (especially to adolescents) an atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance? Will it help the child whose behavior is beginning to cause alarm to his parents? Will it go out of its way to recognize that adolescent peer groups are powerful instruments of socialization and learning that can be used for the benefit of the church? Will it grant respect for the judgment of adolescents? Above all, will it recognize that teenagers, in the course of learning, are bound to make mistakes and have a right to make mistakes?



It is only through failure that some of the most useful lessons are learned. It is when failure occurs, when things do not go well at school, when the child fractures certain social rules, or when he is having difficulty in recognizing his own worth as a human being that the family and the church have a most important role to play. If stringent regulations are set up and if children are denied the support that they so desperately need in times of failure, their emotional needs are not met and the consequences are alienation and rebellion.

The child learns to view the world through his parents' eyes. If the parents view the world narrowly, the child will also. If the parents view the world with hostility and resentment, very possibly so will the child. To approach the world with optimism, faith, and courage is, understandably, not easy for many persons, including some who are materially well off. Yet how else can children be expected to be optimistic and to participate fully in the world of the future?

Many parents are, perhaps, overwhelmed with what they perceive to be radical changes in moral standards and in value systems. Of some comfort may be the observation that the world has undergone such changes continuously, yet the family and the church have prevailed and grown stronger in many respects.

If families and churches have confidence in themselves, in what they teach and stand for, they will indeed be prepared to meet the emotional needs of children and adolescents in the present and in the brighter future to come. Such an approach is a direct contribution to the emotional health of children. It recognizes that many young people in various periods of their development will require some sort of help. This help can be given by the family and the church, and can act as a front-line defense in the prevention of serious disturbances.

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*What Are The Parents Like?*

*by Bert Kruger Smith*

*Assistant to the Director for Mental Health Education  
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“**S**he’s just like her mother. Listen to that high-pitched giggle,” or “He is the exact image of his father. That jutting chin and determined look—I’ve seen them a thousand times on his dad.”

Everyone has heard such expressions, or made them. These remarks are partially true and exactly wrong, for no generation is “just like” another, and no child is an exact replica of his father or mother. Yet, like the multitude of colors blended together in a rainbow, each generation brings to life both the past and the future—what a person’s parents and grandparents were and are, and what he may become.

The parental influence is generally the greatest because of its immediacy and constancy, so that the child often projects the image of the parents. Therefore, the emotional maturity (or immaturity) of the parents can be expected to affect the child.

## FRANCIE AND KEITH

One psychiatrist tells about a four-year-old girl, Francie, who was in a very expensive institution when the psychiatrist first saw her. She looked like an oversized model of a baby doll—the same blonde ringlets, the same pink complexion, the same blank eyes. The little girl's mother was filled with bitterness toward her husband and had been about to leave him when she discovered she was pregnant. Francie came into a home where the emotional temperature was either overheated with the angry words of parents or frigid from their rejection of one another. Francie retreated, in the only way she knew, by removing herself emotionally from the charged environment. She lived in isolation, speaking to no one. Finally, she was taken to the institution.

When the psychiatrist walked into the room, Francie was sitting all alone on a straight chair. A record was playing, and Francie swayed to the music of the record. The psychiatrist took her clue. She went up to her, saying nothing but swaying in unison with her. Finally, the psychiatrist put out her hands, and she and Francie “danced” together. No words passed between them; there was only the communion of feeling. The psychiatrist sat next to Francie at lunch; and when she finally said goodbye, Francie put up her arms and said the first words she had uttered in months, “Take me home with you.”

Another psychiatrist tells of Keith, two years old, and terrified. He was first seen by his family doctor, who was called to set a broken leg. Further examinations revealed that Keith had multiple bruises and contusions, that his arm had been, at some time previously, severely sprained, and that he undoubtedly had been the victim of numerous beatings.

Keith was but one of a dozen battered children whom the psychiatrist had seen in recent years. It was no surprise to the doctor to discover that both parents were young, immature, and

self-concerned. It was also no surprise to find that Keith was tortured by his own hostility and anger.

These two stories illustrate how the immaturity of the parents, their frustrations and failures, smolder in the child, either covertly or openly, and become destructive fires unless there is help for both child and parents.

The trend toward early marriages and the increasing complexities of life in the modern world form an explosive mixture for many young people. It may be a trial by fire, from which some parents emerge strong and whole. For example, a doctor who comes in contact with many young parents has stated that sometimes they develop emotionally because they cannot retreat; others fail for the same reason. He stated that teen-age mothers who have lived irresponsibly and done very little maturing in their growing-up years marry and soon find themselves responsible for almost total care of a helpless, perhaps an ill, infant. Many of these young parents are able to rally their own strengths and become mature, almost immediately, because they are needed by someone helpless.

#### A FAMILY TODAY

What are the ingredients which make for good family life today? Are there special strengths which parents can develop, and are there definite ways in which the church can help?

Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs has pointed out that we are living in a transition period between two phases of mankind, from an autocratic into a democratic culture. We have moved from a rural to an urban society, and many individuals exist in islands of suburbia, far removed from other relatives. All of these changes pose new problems and new challenges. A pamphlet entitled "What Makes for Strong Family Life" puts it thus: ". . . in

general, we can say that a sound family is one that lives in a reasonably effective, useful, and satisfying way, and, in the long run, sends its members out into the world equipped to be or to become loving, understanding, and socially useful adults."<sup>1</sup> This definition is excellent, its standards are high. What are some guidelines which help put it into action?

As the family changes in this complex and mobile society, it develops new functions. It is not needed to maintain actual existence (as in tilling of the soil or cooking of the food), but it is needed as a cohesive unit, as a haven for its members. Dr. Henry A. Bowman has stated it thus: "When the family is held together today, it is less by coercion from without and more by cohesion from within."<sup>2</sup>

Are parents as important as they once were? Does their emotional development affect the children? Again, the experts respond. Dr. Lois B. Murphy says, "Most children are . . . exposed to periods of acute stress associated with illness of a parent or of the child himself, death of a relative or other loss, unemployment or other work-stress of the father."<sup>3</sup>

Anyone who has seen children in orphans' homes, children almost lost to the world of loving associations knows that emotionally mature parents can and do give to their offspring a sense of self and of worthwhileness.

The importance of the parents is seen, also, in the current effort to break the cycle of poverty among many families. As continued investigation is made of school dropouts, of disadvantaged children, of low-subsistence families, it becomes ap-

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<sup>1</sup> "What Makes for Strong Family Life," published by the Family Service Association of America, 1958, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Henry A. Bowman, "The Family: Its Roles and Functions," from the 53rd Annual Conference Proceedings of the Texas Social Welfare Association, November 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Lois B. Murphy, "Problems in Recognizing Emotional Disturbance in Children," *Child Welfare*, December 1963.



parent that the whole family needs to be enlisted in programs of improvement, for failure and poverty are self-perpetuating, even as success often follows generation after generation.

As the children are encouraged and trained in new skills, social caseworkers often go into the homes and work with the parents, too. For even if the parents cannot or will not change their out-dated or unsuccessful ways of working, they are helped to understand their children's needs and to encourage them to break out of the web of failure and poverty. Dr. Catherine S. Chilman of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, puts it this way: "Current trends in society clearly imply that family rehabilitation is a must. One of the possible ways of rehabilitating families may be through parents and family-life education programs which are particularly designed to reach the have-nots."<sup>4</sup>

#### STRENGTHS OF THE FAMILY

A more recent study by Maccoby, Sears, and Levin<sup>5</sup> on the mothers of five-year-olds showed that the warmth of the mother was found to be the most pervasive in influence of all material qualities measured. For example, they discovered that, in connection with severe toilet training, the amount of upset aroused in the child was more closely associated with the degree of coldness and undemonstrativeness of the mother than with the severity of toilet training as such. Coldness of the mother, they discovered, was also associated with feeding problems, persistence of bed-wetting, high aggression, and slow conscience development in children.

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from a speech to the 1963 Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>5</sup> Eleanor E. Maccoby, Robert R. Sears, Harry Levin, *Patterns of Child Rearing*. Row, Peterson and Company, 1957.

Still another authority, Dr. Anna Freud, stated in a recent paper, "Where the mother welcomes the child's first outflow of feeling toward her and responds to it, she favors his progress from self-centeredness to object love. Where she fails in her task on some point and thereby rejects his advances, she may destroy an all-important potentiality in her infant, with disastrous consequences for his future healthy development."<sup>6</sup>

Although these statements show the importance of material influences, the father's role in child-rearing is a major one. Many emotionally ill children or ones who commit delinquent acts have suffered from the lack of a father figure. The father, by his own strength and example and by his emotional support of the mother, helps to round out the cycle of strong and productive family life.

#### THE CHURCH AS A HELPER

Since the maturity or immaturity of parents affects children in significant ways, how can the church itself aid in strengthening family life? Although there are many ways in which the church serves as a family ally, three specific roles will be mentioned.

*Aid to the parents as individuals.* The church is in a good position to give assistance to young parents who are overwhelmed by their responsibilities and their anxieties and who often have not resolved many of the conflicts of their own childhood.

Perhaps one vital function of the church is picking up some of the characteristics of families of previous generations, where many members lived in closeness and served as friends and helpers to those with needs. An inexperienced mother, new in a community, is frightened and depressed over her overwhelm-

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<sup>6</sup> Anna Freud, "Safeguarding the Emotional Health of our Children: An Inquiry into the Concept of the Rejecting Mother," *Casework Papers*, 1954. Family Service Association of America, 1955.

ing responsibility. To whom can she turn? Her young neighbors may be as uncertain as she; her doctor is busy; her parents are in another state. Her acceptance by the church can lend her new strengths. One specific program which the church can undertake is sponsoring discussion classes for parents on family relations. These classes would not be morally directed, and they would be led by a knowledgeable leader. The discussion would help young parents to talk through many of their feelings and to share experiences with others.

Another way the church can serve parents is by letting them express feelings. A church counselor, an understanding teacher, the pastor, or some member of the congregation can be a friend to a bewildered parent. In our culture weeping is frowned upon as a sign of weakness; yet to withhold feeling often is to court illness. Clinically, it is therapeutic to think out loud and to admit things, to weep, and to spill out our feelings. The church can be of inestimable aid to parents in letting them talk, cry, and express their fears, knowing that they will be listened to and understood.

*Aid to the children.* The church can be a "second line of defense" for children from homes in which parents are immature, difficult, or unloving. It is to be hoped that children may find understanding and acceptance within the arms of the church. The church teacher can often be a parent-substitute and can help to give the child some strengths of his own for enduring difficult home situations.

The child's needs for "ventilation" are as great as the parents', and the church can serve in nonthreatening ways to let the child express his needs and fears. Dr. Lois Murphy has said, "If we had a more understanding culture, the clinics might not have such long waiting lists. By 'understanding,' I mean accepting, and helping the child to accept, times when crying is natural; times of loss and grief; times of realistic fear, such as when ap-

proaching an operation; times of jealousy of new siblings, who take his mother away from him.”<sup>7</sup>

*Aid to the family.* Ultimately, however, the church serves best when it strengthens the family unit. Emotional support of all family members is vital. When the church is too rigid and judgmental, it may frighten away the very people who need its strength most and who could draw sustenance from it. One prime responsibility which the church might consider is in maintaining a helpful attitude toward young people who have made missteps. If the church, instead of trying to penalize them, can accept them back into its fold, it may be making a major contribution to the emotional stability of future parents.

When people can communicate their fears, emotional development continues. Thus, the church has a major responsibility in providing avenues for communication by parents, by children, and by family units.

The church may be the first and only resource to which some parents may turn. This responsibility rests heavily in a twofold manner: for the church to be a loving and thorough resource of its own and for it to know of resources for those whose problems are too great to be alleviated by other than professional care.

Teachers and leaders should try to recognize trouble signs in a family by quiet observation of its members. Young persons may react in a number of ways—by flailing out at the world in destructive behavior, or by going into quiet depression. Older members may, by their psychological withdrawal, telecast their difficulties. A watchful eye and a listening ear on the part of the church worker may help families see the need for help in solving their problems.

The church which helps to restore troubled families, to gird the ones having minor difficulties, to strengthen the ones which are healthy—this is the church alive. Strong families, just as strong oaks in good soil, flourish and shade the beginning growths of the weaker plants and new life.

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<sup>7</sup> Murphy, *op. cit.*

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*The Teacher's Emotional Development*  
by Frances F. Fuller and Oliver H. Bown  
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JIMMIE WAS LUCKY WITH HIS TEACHERS

*He was a frightening child, too big for first grade, with hobnail sturdiness and Bronx-cheer defiance, who could panic his church school teacher. They'd had a showdown and she'd won, but she knew the class came second to her anticipation of his unpredictable outbursts and her pre-occupation with controlling him.*

*She sought advice. She tried to find out how the world looked from behind his eyes. Finally, she guessed his desperation. When the class studied life's beginnings, she asked them all to write about "If I were a seed. . . ." Jimmie said, "I am a watermelon. I am going to be eaten. I am cut. I am screaming. All my pink is running out. Even if they cut me I am not good. I am calling, calling good-by."*

*His teacher told me, "Why he feels that he's coming apart." She cupped her hands as though to scoop him up. "He needs me,*



*to hold him together. I'm not afraid of him any more." Later she said, "I don't know if he's any better, but I know I am, and so is the rest of the class."*

*That year his troubled mother helped a little. His day school teacher helped a lot; a layman acting as consultant helped even more. They found ways to use his strengths, to map his reefs and shoals. Without hostility, but with unrelenting firmness, they prevented his transgressions in the literal sense of the word: they went before, anticipating him. If he tried to hurt someone, his teacher restrained him with her own two hands. She devised tasks he could do. When the class painted a mural, Jimmie, with swooping strokes, filled in the sky, ominous and overpowering, but his own. In the Lincoln's birthday play, he was the most defiant Booth in first-grade annals. Finally, she conned him into kneading putty instead of banging a ruler, and his fate was sealed. He had begun to join the human race.*

*Four years later Jimmie still stands out. His church school teacher says, "I know his secret but he has his power, too. He knows I know. We both pretend he fits in just for kicks. Sometimes he forgets to fight and helps because it's fun. I let that pass. Once he looked to see if I'd noticed. I can tell you I was oblivious. Oh, he's still fascinated by Nazi death camps, but I'd no longer nominate him as the rapist most likely to succeed. At least he's drained a lot of mad before adolescence boosts the thrust."*

Jimmie was lucky to have known a fortuitous—an improbably fortuitous—succession of adults who were just right for him. In what ways were they right?

Jimmie's needs were overwhelmingly interpersonal rather than intellectual or physical; his teachers were interested in relationships. Jimmie's behavior was unpredictable; his teachers recognized unpredictability as a sign of troubled feelings rather than of willfulness. His methods of communicating his needs

were demanding; his teachers could read his desperate message and admit their inadequacy to meet his impossible demands. He needed more help than any one person could give; his teachers could ask for help from others. His preferred medicine was activity; his teachers were ingenious enough to devise useful tasks that he could do. He tested everyone to see how far he could go; his teachers could set reasonable, consistent limits for him without feeling angry or guilty. Jimmie could express no gratitude or liking; his teachers required none from him.

#### TEACHERS NEED HELP BEFORE PROBLEMS ARISE

The notion that some magically “mature” teachers produce across-the-board improvement in the mental health of students is at best too simple. The same teachers who helped Jimmie might not have helped a different student. Rick’s scholarly father provides such stimulating intellectual fare at home that Rick is barely tolerant of his relationship-oriented teacher. The brilliant but impersonal university professor who will someday fire Rick’s imagination would be indifferent to Jimmie. Different teachers are “good” for different students in different situations, and different teaching styles can accomplish different purposes in different circumstances.

Understanding this, supervisors can help teachers to accept and develop their individual styles. A “motor mouth” teacher, for example, might be helped to make both her talking and her listening more effective rather than to be told to quit talking, which she probably can’t do even if she tries. More important than calling attention to her excessive talking would be someone’s attempt to improve, rather than eliminate, this part of her. Having experienced this herself, she may be better able to feel it toward her students: to enjoy rather than eliminate their differences, to desire “not the death of a sinner,” (or the death of

any part of him) "but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live."

Recurrent needs of students, concerns of teachers, and crisis points for both can be listed and means devised to help teachers cope with them. At The University of Texas, for example, a series of confidential seminars for prospective teachers was conducted by a psychological consultant and tape recorded. Tapes were analyzed to discover teachers' developing concerns. New teachers were found to be preoccupied with self-protecting worries like their ability to control a class, their subject-matter adequacy, whether students liked them, and how supervisors would evaluate them. Down-to-earth help like role playing of discipline problems helped teachers to learn to cope with problems before they arose.

#### SOME TEACHER BEHAVIOR CAN BE DAMAGING

Some teacher behavior is damaging to children. Sarcasm, scaring children, shaming them, increasing frustration beyond the necessary minimum, presenting tasks which are too difficult, belittling children before others, and refusing them release of insistent natural physical needs—such behavior is upsetting even to normally developing children. To children already troubled, it causes much suffering. Research now indicates that psychological blows can have physiological effects. Environment changes the body, not just some vague "self." Contrary to the old adage, words can hurt. To say "Thou fool" truly is to kill. Often without realizing it, teachers subtly reward unhealthy behavior, punish healthy behavior, or simply fail to see contagiously unhealthy behavior.

A teacher, for example, can contribute to later problems like impotence, scholastic and vocational failure, social isolation, and a host of other kinds of underachievement either by demanding what the child can't do, and so punish his trying at all, or by

not permitting him to do what he can do, because she needs to be needed herself.

*First-grade Lonnie stared out the window most of the time. His teacher had been a timid child herself and knew how he felt. She gave him a lot of help, and when he cried piteously, she excused him from class. She and Lonnie's mother had discussed him and had decided that since he was so shy he needed them more than other children did.*

*His second-grade teacher reversed this trend. She correctly estimated what he could do, and gave him, for once, opportunity to experience success.*

*She let him be George Washington in the play because the part involved just one line and a long, handshaded look across the Delaware. Lonnie's mother came to see the play. His teacher reported, "At first, he just looked down, but then he said his line just as we had practiced it. His mother cried! The better he did, the more she cried." Pause. "They weren't tears of joy either. I think she must need him to need her." I asked the teacher what she planned to do. "Don't know what I'll do. But he's going to have at least one woman in his life who doesn't need him to be a baby. Me."*

Using a child to fill an empty adult life in the way in which only an adult can, may hurt the child.

Some upsetting teacher behavior is related to attitudes toward sex. A precociously mature girl may try to use her body to secure from boys the affection she is denied because she is no longer cute or childlike. She may desperately need and, in a self-defeating, backward way, be asking for a wise woman's guidance. But to her teacher, she may be just an irritating show-off or, worse, a bad influence. She may especially aggravate the teacher whose own sexual fulfillment is unsatisfying.

The "old maid" of other decades who offered boys only the alternatives of being rebels or sissies is rarer today than then, but

she is often replaced by a more efficient demasculinizer who shames instead of spansks. Sexually unsure men may favor girls, or fearful women favor boys, in order to build, without realizing why, relationships with the only females or males to whom they can relate, the young.

Some upsetting teacher behavior is related to social class and social values. Prejudice against what a child cannot help—his color, nose, or accent—is psychological cannibalism. It takes from the child what is rightly his, his dignity, so that the teacher may rise above him by disdaining him. Middle-class teachers may punish honest efforts of lower-class children because such efforts are couched in language unacceptable in the middle class. Teachers who have risen from lower-class backgrounds through their own hard work may, like Rick's teacher, resent the ease with which bright, advantaged children learn and the refusal of such children to submit to the lockstep their teachers require.

A teacher's attitudes can distort or limit what she sees. For example, many teachers feel embarrassed if they see masturbation. Their preferring not to perceive it may be one reason why classmates sometimes notice it before the teacher does.

#### COLLEAGUES CAN HELP EACH OTHER

Supervisors can give teachers support of a practical nature by anticipating problems before they occur.

Some contact with professional persons, at least for emergency consultation, should be provided teachers. Laymen often can serve as consultants.

Teachers who are obviously depressed, punitive, morbid, cold, or who impress others as "strange" or unable to feel guilt or affection should not teach. The probability of basic changes in such persons in a short time is small. Supervisors have to trust



their feelings in such cases and be open with consultants on whom they call for help.

A supervisor or teacher can contribute to the emotional health of his charges by living a healthy personal life. It need not be a trouble-free or even happy life, but it should be minimally satisfying to *him*.

Each can come to understand himself more deeply, especially how he interacts with different students or teachers. He can listen to tape recordings of his conferences and classes, and frankly ask perceptive colleagues about his blind spots. If he wants to change, even a little, or wonders what the signs are that indicate change is possible or needed, the booklet *Can An Adult Change?*<sup>1</sup> may be helpful.

Teachers can educate themselves to their tasks. They can learn to listen attentively, to respond sensitively without exhortation, to relieve tension at times of crisis like the beginning of school, to reduce irrelevant frustration, to restrict unruly behavior and protect students from disturbed classmates, to recognize emotional problems, and especially to help children acquire the skills, information, and attitudes that enable them to cope with life.

Grade-level meetings of church school teachers or case conferences to discuss problem situations can support a teacher even if she only concludes afterward that she is doing all that can be done.

A smile each time a shy child looks your way assures him you are in contact with him even though he gives no sign he sees it. Smiles may also help a child who is new to the class to feel more at home.

For an overconscientious student heading for an ulcer, casually shrugging off his errors can be a little healing. When he is

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Sutherland, *Can An Adult Change?* The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas, 1957.

really crushed, a teacher can say, "You got a C on your work, but you're still an A person." He may translate, without the words, "A child of God."

Being a fallible, feeling adult is important every day. Instead of saying, "That's not at all like you," when the youth group leader bursts into tears or pounds the desk, the sponsor can think, and maybe say, "Just what I did last Thursday. Made me feel so good."

Classmates are more important to an older child or an adolescent than his teacher is. If a teacher has ten students in a class, he has nine helpers with each one of them. Pairing or grouping children for their mutual support or challenge can be more effective than a teacher's own best efforts.

Being a popular teacher, while pleasant, is not essential. Those who bestow the gift of humanity are required, like Helen Keller's great teacher, to be neither compliant nor well-liked.

In a class, as in a family, everyone is, in a sense, emotionally equal. A cry of pain, a hating look, or a gentle touch is as moving from a child as from a minister. Each one is both able to give help to others and needful of help from others. Independence without fear and dependence without guilt are desirable for all persons. They enable teacher, supervisor, parent, child, and congregation to give support when able and ask support when needed. It is this interdependence which can make the strength more equal to the task.



