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## SOME PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HYGIENE OF VALUE TO TEACHERS

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## PREFACE

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The writer has one main purpose in mind in writing these pages: to present briefly some of the main psychological principles of human behavior and mental hygiene that will aid in understanding and perhaps helping to solve some human problems. The writer is convinced that a teacher must first know his pupils and then know subject matter. When this goal is approximated, there will be a vast improvement in teaching and a marked alleviation of human misery.

The writer has made no effort to exhaust any subject presented nor the topic as a whole. This little volume is rather an index or an outline for reference and continued study.

This volume has grown out of the interest manifested by students, particularly teachers, in abnormal psychology and mental hygiene during the writer's teaching experience in this field. To these interested students and the fortunate pupils with whom they come in contact this effort is affectionately dedicated.

The writer is indebted particularly for principles included under headings I, III, VI, VII, and VIII to Reese's "The Health of the Mind," to Morgan's "Child Psychology", and to Morgan's "Psychology of Abnormal People." Permission from author and publisher has been obtained for the particular use herein of that material.

# Some Principles of Psychology and Mental Hygiene of Value to Teachers

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## I. SOME OF THE MORE COMMON MENTAL NORMAL MECHANISMS OF BEHAVIOR.

The thing that each individual is most interested in is himself; the next interest in order of importance to him is external environment in relation to him; and thirdly, his interest is why he does what he does. Our own acts are often more inexplicable to ourselves than to others. This perennial human interest in the abilities and capacities of the human race and the all-absorbing desire to know something about them is evidenced by the interest in phrenology, graphology, palmistry, fortune-telling, quackery, and charlatanism in psychology, which exists to an almost unbelievable extent at the present time.

In order that we may take an intelligent interest in the mental processes and behavior patterns of those with whom we come in contact, we must get clearly in mind some of the more common mental mechanisms motivating human behavior.

### A. Projection

An unwillingness to face our failure and to criticize ourselves often leads to a tendency to project our own unpleasant feelings on some other object or individual; this detachment from ourselves and attachment to other persons or things makes for our mental comfort. For example, a single unpleasant experience in a town may be projected on the town itself. Again, our annoyance growing out of a series of petty events may culminate in a venting of irritation on a perfectly innocent person. We momentarily and superficially save ourselves.

Very often pupils develop an intense dislike for a subject, so much so that they become problems of discipline. Really,

they dislike the teacher's methods, or personality, or attitude. This problem is one frequently met in supervision. When we have a number of cases like this, we take the cue offered by the child and change teachers.

### **B. Compensation**

Compensation is one of the most universal of human traits. It takes a variety of forms and is a way out of many types of emotional conflicts. Compensation is, in reality, fighting; fighting, we shall define as a natural response to opposition or apparent failure. One may compensate for any individual inadequacy as physical defect, social or economic status, intellectual inferiority, general feeling of inferiority, etc. The compensation may take the form of an over-emphasis on the desirable traits the individual possesses, phantasy in which the situation lacks the undesirable element, or a striving to overcome the inadequacy.

### **C. Transference**

The transference of an attitude from the individual actually involved to another who somehow reminds one of the situation or individual is a very common occurrence in mental life. This transference is usually of an emotional nature, and rather more unpleasant than pleasant. That which appears to be love and hate at first sight is usually a left-over of some unhappy or happy experience. The resemblance may be physical, or perhaps only one physical trait; again it may lie in the name. It is rather a common occurrence to hear a school-girl say, "I never could stand anyone named Gladys, anyway." The name may be any name. What the girl is really saying is that she once had an unpleasant experience with some one named Gladys; hence this name has unpleasant associations for her. Her whole emotional attitude is transferred from the original "Gladys" to any other "Gladys" with whom she comes in contact.

### **D. Identification**

This mechanism is particularly characteristic of child-

hood, though not at all rare in adulthood. The young child, with his limited experiences, identifies himself with the interests, emotions, and successes of his adult associates. This whim also describes the process of absorption of an individual in a particular object, hobby, or symptom. In childhood we find a physically small child who boasts of the physical prowess of his father or big brother; a child who feels economically inferior may boast about his possessions or those of his family, magnifying their number, size, or importance. In adulthood, the mother identifies herself with her child, experiencing its sorrows, joys, etc. This in a measure explains the trait labelled mother-love. The mother loves the child because she loves herself, and in the identification of self with child the love is fused. The basis of conflict between parent and child may be found in the refusal of a child to permit a parent to re-live the parent's thwarted ambitions and ideals in the child's life. In certain professions, as medicine and psychiatric social service work, in which one becomes intimately acquainted with the physical and mental sufferings of others, one cannot identify himself with the patient and be successful; he must have a broader perspective.

### E. Rationalization

Rationalization is another mental mechanism as old as man and as universal as mental processes. Reality is always with us and often too much for us; hence we are continually called upon to justify our behavior. We assign motives for our behavior that are both personal and subjective, and which may not be the true motives at all. Such motives are always socially acceptable and usually emotional in tone. They usually have a basis in fact in that they are only a misplaced emphasis, over-evaluating trivial, but existing, causal factors.

### F. Suggestibility

There are two phases of this mental tendency: over-suggestibility and the opposite, negativism. Either is bad and a balance is desirable. A more complete discussion will be given later under VI C.

### G. Sublimation or Substituted Activities

The mechanism of sublimation has been one of the saving factors of mankind. By this term we would indicate the turning of natural impulses aside from their original fulfillments into more socially acceptable channels. It is one of most concern in educational psychology. It becomes more and more necessary in our increasingly complex social, economic, and political organizations of modern life to release these fundamental, normal drives in human behavior into other than original outlets. Our whole basis of a "do" rather than a "don't" psychology has arisen out of the recognition of this particular phase of mental life.

### H. Forgetting

Forgetting is a universal characteristic of human mental processes. There are so many things one does not need to remember, things which are of no value if recalled, things semi-unpleasant, that forgetting is necessary for an uncluttered mental life; otherwise, finding in our mental processes things valuable and needed might be like sorting through an attic accumulation of years.

Forgetting may have one of three back-grounds: (1) insufficient impression, or poor retentivity; (2) emotional blocking; (3) a way out of an unpleasant situation, or a situation it is desirable to forget. In the first instance the teacher should be painstaking in presentation and repetition. In the second instance there may be an overwhelming of detail that hinders recall, an emotional situation of fear, inadequacy, etc. We are more concerned here with the last possibility. Forgetfulness of an event which was painful but is now past and about which nothing can be done is a good way out. However, forgetfulness as an alibi, an ever-ready excuse, is dangerous.

The above psychological principles of human behavior are normal and well-nigh universal, yet any one of them may be so exaggerated as to become abnormal. Abnormality is only



an extreme normality or an overbalancing of normal with abnormal traits.

Facing reality is the most important mental attitude an individual can develop, as well as the most difficult problem a human being faces. Reality is often most unpleasant. Facing reality is an attitude we most often shun from early childhood to old-age. Our youthful tendencies are to face the future; our old-age ones are to live in the past, evading the ever-present now with its train of petty cares and annoyances. But we well know that "what we now are we are becoming", and it behooves us to have a care, educationally, for the child as he now is in order that his development may be desirable.

## II. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO MALADJUSTMENT

### A. Physical Conditions

#### 1. Adenoids and diseased and enlarged tonsils

- (1) Adenoids and diseased and enlarged tonsils are usually found together; perhaps a causal relation exists and the former is caused by the latter.

Children who have adenoids are usually listless, often have defective hearing, and hence present an appearance of stupidity. They are often retarded, since they are more susceptible to childhood diseases and present an irregular attendance record.

#### 2. Anemia

The anemic child is always tired, presents listless appearance, and is often judged subnormal mentally.

#### 3. Deformity

Children, probably even more than adults, ostracize the individual who is different. They do not have a philosophical background based on experience to make for a sympathetic attitude in this situation. The child who has a physical deformity usually feels it very keenly, and is most likely to

develop undesirable personality traits. His feeling of inadequacy may take the form of resentment and be manifest in hatred, rages, cruelty, etc. Again, it may take the form of compensation in phantasying, day-dreaming, and other introvertive tendencies.

#### 4. Physical defects

##### a. Defective hearing

The child who is handicapped by defective hearing lives in partial isolation as compared with his companions. He is likely to be morose, suspicious, and misunderstanding as well as being misunderstood. He is particularly liable to be misjudged by the teacher if his deafness is slight enough as not to be readily apparent. He understands enough probably for his handicap to escape detection, yet does not escape ridicule because of his "fitting in" what he does not hear.

##### b. Defective vision

There are four common eye defects, three of which any teacher should rather easily detect, or at least suspect sufficiently to have an examination. Myopia, or near-sightedness, is manifested in the child's holding his book or other material near the eyes.

Strabismus, or crossed-eyes, is another eye defect that is rather obvious.

Hyperopia, (hypermetropia) or far-sightedness, is less easy to detect. The child does not hold his book or material at arm's length in order to produce a correct focus. The symptoms are fatigue, irritability, and frequent headaches.

Closely associated with hyperopia and usually accompanying it is astigmatism. This eye defect results from unequal radii of curvature of the lens of the eye. It is not easy to detect and usually is not found except as a result of examination when general symptoms have been noted. The general symptoms are much the same as those of hyperopia.

The usual corrections of the above eye defects are through correctly-fitted lens. The routine examination for the discovery of these defects is simple enough to be mastered by any teacher in a system which has no school nurse, and the necessary material is inexpensive. The fitting of correcting lens should always, of course, be done by a reputable specialist.

### 5. General physical condition

In addition to the above mentioned physical conditions, there may be a background of general physical insufficiency. This may have a basis in malnutrition, lack of sleep, and other contributory factors. The child either tires too easily or is always tired; this over-fatigue is expressed in irritability, lack of attention, and various other ways.

## B. Environmental Factors

### 1. The family is "different"

- a. Socially
- b. Financially
- c. Religiously
- d. Racially

It makes little difference in what way the family offends by being "different", since the child suffers just as acutely in being an outcast from the group. His resentment may be manifest in ways mentioned above when he is physically different. If the teacher can capitalize his "difference" turning it from a liability into an asset by making him proud of his difference, many of his difficulties will be solved; this solution will make for the development of more wholesome personality traits.

### 2. Poverty of possessions

The attitudes of jealousy, envy, and hatred may develop in the child who has no possessions, or only a few, in comparison with his associates. This is one background for stealing, which almost always is correlated with lying. He who steals must lie later on, which in turn breeds more lies.

### 3. Too many possessions

The child who is surfeited with too many possessions is bored and unhappy and enjoys nothing. He is the other type that is most likely to steal. He steals, not because he wants the article, but in order to get attention. This is a sure way to get immediate attention of high emotional value when he is not being particularly noticed. He gets not only the attention of the teacher, but also that of the supervisor, principal, parents, and probably many others.

It were better, of course, to give the child a satisfying amount of attention without his resorting to such drastic measures to obtain it.

### 4. Poverty of interests

The child whose environment is emotionally or economically poor cannot develop a well-rounded personality. Recently, there came to the writer's attention twin boys almost ten years of age who did not know the four colors: red, yellow, blue, green, which Binet puts at the five-year level of intelligence. It had so happened that these youngsters had never had colorful objects nor seen other than drab colors in their entire experience. The school must, in so far as possible, enrich the experiences of such individuals and often furnish affection as well as food in addition to instruction in the three R's.

## C. Mental status of the individual

The child may belong to either one of the three general divisions on the basis of intelligence: superior, inferior, normal. The two first named are abnormal in that they deviate from the normal. The "bad" boy in school is likely to be either inferior or superior. In the former case he can not succeed in getting his share of attention from the teacher because of success in class work. But he can command most of her attention by being a "disturbing" element, and he can become, to some extent at least, a hero in the eyes of his fellows. If he can be given posts of responsibility that other

students know about, his behavior problems may be largely solved.

The superior child may also be the problem child in school. He probably gets his lesson in a very short time, if he is not already ahead of the class (and sometimes the teacher), leaving ample time for other things. If his energy and interests are not directed during this leisure time, he is likely to come in conflict with school standards of conduct. Again, he may be very superior and yet receive poor marks in school achievement, since he is bored and develops undesirable mental habits. The author has in mind two boys in the sixth grade of a small town school whose achievement on a standardized test ranged from second year high school to second year college, with an intelligence rating that put them in the genius class (the upper  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1% of the total population). The teacher was considering retaining them in history and geography and asked for advice. These boys knew more history and geography by actual measure than the teacher did, yet they refused to bother about getting the specific facts of each day's lesson. Such as these are indeed problem cases.

In the big group of averages, we may find a child whose ambitions far exceed his capabilities. Continued strivings and repeated failures or near-failures produce a feeling of inadequacy and inferiority which mars personality development. If the teacher can bring such a child to realize that it is ever the lot of humanity to strive and fall somewhat short of the goal and that if the goal is worthy, it is better than wholly succeeding in a situation in which the goal is less worthy.

#### D. Family relationships

Scientific psychology as a basis for a safe and sound mental hygiene program neither takes a sentimental point of view as regards the home and family relationships nor discards the home as of pernicious influence. It is not concerned with either traditions or social reform, but seeks to see things as they are.

## 1. Relation of parent and child

### a. An only child

The only child runs a great risk of being, and almost invariably is, the center of too much adult attention. Things are centered about him and his interests, and he develops the belief that they always will be subservient to his wishes. The later the disillusionment is, the more emotionally disturbing it is; the child's world collapses about him and he has nothing left on which to build anew. Perhaps the parents are very wise and determine not to pamper him, yet the situation is not wholly safeguarded since give-and-take relations must be on his level; for example, an adult does not snatch a cherished toy at the most inopportune moment; in other words parents do not furnish social competition. It is here that the nursery school contributes most to personality development that the home cannot furnish. In later school life it is secured through team games, classroom projects, school museums, school plays, choral clubs, orchestra, and other extra-curricula activities.

### b. Over-solicitous parent

If one of the parents is dead, the other is liable to be over-solicitous or affectionate toward the child. Again, if the parents are not in harmony, each may focus his attention on the child in order to hold its affection. The child may come to regard it as unnecessary, grow more irritated, and revolt. This so often happens when the mother transfers her affection from the father to the son, and leads to mother-in-law-daughter-in-law problems. It is based on the mother's jealousy of the son's wife. Such a child will be maladjusted, probably domineering, and lacking in initiative. The school situation must in a measure furnish a balance, a situation of wholesome relationships with adult as well as the child's own age group.

The over-solicitous parent visits the school three times a week, has lunch at the school cafeteria with the child, and appears at the school-room door with galoshes and raincoat when it rains, etc. She destroys the child's opportunity to ad-

just himself to his environment independently of her. He becomes a "sissy" in the eyes of his fellows. She interrupts school routine. One mother came to school every day and stayed for a week because the child cried when she left her. Finally the teacher asked her please not to come to the room and to permit the child to adjust herself to teacher and pupils. Consequently there was no more difficulty.

#### c. Jealousy of parents

One parent may be jealous of the child. This is usually the father, since the mother is with the child more and has more intimate care of the child. It results in the parents' attempting to hurt each other through dominating the child's affection.

#### d. Divorced parents

In the case of the child being given to either parent, that one is likely to pour out on the child all the affections that might have been given to the other parent. The child is kept too dependent.

In the case in which the child falls to the lot of the one that does not love him nor want him except to make the other suffer, he feels lonely and neglected, and often develops an intense hatred for both who have caused him so much unhappiness. A tendency to extreme cruelty may develop out of this situation, an attempt to wreck his vengeance on humanity in general.

#### e. Ambitious parent

One of the most deleterious situations is that in which a parent seeks to dominate the life of the child by forcing him into a career in which the parent might have delighted in his youth. No effort is made to determine the child's fitness for the profession, nor his inclination toward it.

#### f. The slow child of bright parents

The writer has in mind now a youngster whose father is an "A" graduate of the University of Chicago. His mother is very bright and clever. A younger brother is exceptionally

bright. Milton, the slow child, whom the writer has known since the third grade, has failed or has been passed conditionally year after year. A wise and frank principal finally led the parents to accept the fact of their son's dullness and stop harassing him. Yet, they continue to make him attend high school and suffer repeated failure. Why not a trade school?

## 2. Rivalry between siblings

Rivalry and jealousy between siblings (brothers and sisters) is likely to appear and increase in situations where one child is praised to the disadvantage of the other. Life-long hatred may result from constantly showing preference for one. In the nursery school a small boy of four and a sister of two were in attendance. The boy screamed if interrupted and was generally judged both at home and at school as obstinate. The father called his attention constantly to the fact that he was very "pig-headed", while "little sister" was docile, pretty, and had all desirable traits which he did not. His most recent revenge was to get "little sister" in a bedroom and cut off all her golden curls of which the father was very proud. The situation here is such that the boy cannot but grow up hating his sister.

An attitude of intolerance and hatred for one's brothers and sisters may readily be transferred to other children in school. Instead of having learned the value of social relationships at home, such an individual has only learned the irksome phases of association with others. The teacher's obligation is to see that he develops an understanding of others and has opportunities to rejoice in friendship's joys and to learn that living with people is a give-and-take relationship, both phases of which may be equally pleasant.

## III. RE-EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AIMS OF EDUCATION

It seems in the light of recent psychological trends and mental hygiene developments that a re-evaluation of the general aim of education has become necessary. It can broadly be said to be the complete development of the child so that



he may function adequately and dynamically in the social organization of which he is a part. In order to develop such an individual, four lines of endeavor should predominate.

- A. Develop in the child a feeling of adequacy
- B. Give the child a basis for adjusting his unattainable ideals to reality as it is.
- C. Develop the emotional background of the child so that he may grow mentally and spiritually by discarding inexpedient beliefs.
- D. Encourage the child to face reality.

Only one who has suffered the mental torture of feeling inferior or inadequate can know the black abyss of despair and hopelessness such a state often brings. The attitude or habit of failure may apparently have a very insignificant beginning in getting a lower mark than a friend, failing of promotion, getting lower marks than brothers or sisters, or having a feeling of family inferiority. This may be intensified by another disappointment or lack of success. Each succeeding event intensifies the preceding until the individual can easily come to believe that he never succeeded in his life.

Human beings are constantly confronted with a conflict between ideals and attainments. Ideals cease to be ideals if reached, while standards are what we live by. Ideals are patterns to approximate and standards are mileposts along the way. A child with high ideals and lofty ambitions may develop a feeling of unworthiness and failure, when his attainments often fall far short of his goal. He often feels that he is the only individual who suffers such disappointments. If he can be made to feel that his experiences, except in intensity, probably are paralleled by innumerable others.

Most of our beliefs are emotionally arrived at and likewise emotionally retained. The child may and does cling to his beliefs long after they have outlived their usefulness and timeliness. For example, a belief in fairies is rather the usual thing with children of a certain age; however, one does not advocate such a belief for older children or adults. The un-

willingness to discard beliefs lies in the feeling of security those beliefs give and a fear of loss of that feeling if beliefs are relinquished. The clinging to erroneous beliefs is the background and beginning of the development of delusions, a common symptom of insanity. An individual cannot grow mentally nor can he grow spiritually without a lobster-like shedding of inexpedient, irrational beliefs; continuous adequate adjustment is impossible.

Facing reality is the sum and substance of real adjustment. As we have said before, it is very difficult because it is unpleasant. But the ability to take stock of one's self, frankly facing assets and liabilities, is the only safe way out of conflict.

#### IV. CONFLICTS A CHILD NATURALLY EXPERIENCES

There is nothing abnormal in experiencing emotional conflicts. Human beings are at all times surrounded by a multiplicity of stimuli, which often arouse antagonistic impulses and desires. If these desires and impulses are unequal in strength, the stronger one dominates and the problem is solved. If, on the other hand, the opposing impulses are approximately equal in strength, a state of mental unrest results. Life, then, is conflict, a continuous series characterized by the resolution of problems and the presentation of still other problems. The psychological emphasis is not on an escape from conflict, but on the best solution for each problem as it arises. Conflict may arise because of external and internal conditions.

##### A. Conflict with external conditions.

###### 1. With society

- a. Submission to others
- b. Give-and-take of social relationships
- c. Social non-conformity

A certain amount of submission to others is necessary for a child, yet one would not wish him to develop into a docile individual wholly lacking in initiative. A mid-ground between out-and-out revolt and total docility is desirable. The

"good" child is either mentally sick or is in grave danger of becoming so. The same principle holds in the give-and-take relations demanded by society; the child who, balancing his giving-and-taking, maintains a balance is adjusting adequately. He is neither a door-mat in giving everything, nor is he domineering in demanding everything. In like manner, we have a few in society who rationally maintain their own individualities; even though they are partially unconventional, they manage not to offend society in so doing.

## 2. With external circumstances

Environment is rarely so propitious as to permit the realization of many of our impulses. Many of our strongest emotional desires are thwarted by the force of circumstances in the environment.

### B. Internal Conflict

Simultaneous opposing desires of approximately equal intensity give rise to internal war. The desire "to eat our cake and have it too" is another ever-present source of conflict. Usually the internal conflicts are the more serious, since they may pass unrecognized. Outward serenity is no evidence of inward serenity, though it is a measure we too frequently apply. An individual may be on the verge of suicide, yet present an appearance of enviable poise. A child of this type may develop introverted, regressive traits of personality from which he can never permanently recover.

## V. UNDESIRABLE ATTITUDES

### A. Regressive attitude

The tendency to regression is most often overlooked by adults dealing with children since the child exhibiting such tendencies is docile and quiet. Manifestations of a regressive tendency are found in a child's liking to be alone, in day-dreaming, in reading rather than playing, or in passive rather than active behavior. Regression is a surrendering rather than a dynamic resistant type of behavior. Excessive regression re-

sults in a very distorted personality, which is characterized in more extreme cases by the individual's entirely losing contact with reality. Such cases are classified as dementia praecox or schizophrenic insanity.

A child must experience the joy of doing something, of active social participation, rather than be permitted to live in an unreal world of imagined participation or activity. No imaginary victory can bring the satisfaction and comfort of active conquest.

#### B. Attitude of suspicion

A certain amount of suspicion is perhaps desirable and necessary; one would not advocate a child's being altogether gullible. Extreme suspiciousness and mistrust of people in general is a basis for developing delusions of persecutions, which are dominant symptoms of a type of mental disease known as paranoia. A child should be prepared for his inevitable experience of disappointment in someone he trusts, yet his background should be such that he will not immediately generalize that all persons are untrustworthy. The child should be taught to understand people, to recognize individual values, and to refrain from hasty judgment.

#### C. Attitude of shifting responsibility for behavior

There is a marked tendency for human beings to refuse to accept the responsibility for their own behavior, particularly failure, by blaming others or external circumstances over which they have no control. The child gets a bad mark because the teacher did not like him, the athlete fails because some one failed in teamwork, etc., are rather usual excuses. It is not a situation of culpability but of accepting responsibility for behavior. An individual may not be to "blame", but yet be responsible for failure. Blame has been made unduly important by the emphasis placed on it in dealing with problem situations. The child learns to use this reaction of blaming others in self-defense. Again, this is a basic trait in the development of paranoia. One thing a teacher can do is to meet problem situations with less emphasis on blame as being entirely on the one side and right on the other; again, the teach-

er can emphasize the child's achievements and call his attention to failure only in analyzing the situation so that the next time he may succeed.

#### D. Attitude of hate

An attitude of hate may be manifested in mean acts, apparently insignificant, or in enjoyment of some one's suffering. The child developing such an attitude may have suffered wrong, even unintentional, yet felt it very keenly. A quick, avenging hate that "clears the atmosphere" leaves few undesirable traces in personality, but the unforgiving, brooding hatred is of more serious import. Such a hatred may be general or specific, i. e., directed toward one person, one thing, one group of persons, one class of things, or toward society in general. Treatment should consist mainly in discovering the source of maladjustment and unobtrusively effecting a more rational attitude. No amount of moralizing on the wrong of hatred will do other than intensify the attitude. In general, an attitude of hatred is merely an overt symptom of maladjustment.

#### E. Attitude of cruelty

A tendency to cruelty is closely related to an attitude of hatred both in causal background and in overt manifestation. It may be an expression of hatred, an attempt at active adjustment in a situation in which the child is the injured party. In an attitude of hatred if retaliation squares the account and settles the score, the effects are not permanent. If on the other hand, he learns to enjoy hurting others, a serious distortion of personality is developing. Treatment, as in hatred, should consist of determining the background of the attitude and of a reconstruction of the child's point of view.

#### F. Attitude of selfishness

Altruism, if existing, is an acquired characteristic in human behavior. The one thing each individual is most interested in is himself; the interest of next importance is things as they affect him. The tendency for a young child to expect everything he reaches out for must be re-directed. He must

learn that others have property, rights, and wishes which they want to maintain or realize. Social disapproval, if too abrupt or universal, may lead to a reaction of hate, cruelty, regression, or some other unfortunate tendency. The give-and-take must become balanced; he must experience the joy of giving and realize the joy of the giver when he is the recipient. A type of selfishness that is most undesirable is, however, the one most likely not to be recognized: that in which an individual feeds his ego in being apparently very unselfish. The person who receives a favor is indebted to the bestower; hence the gratitude of the recipient temporarily inflates the self-esteem of the giver. Such a situation may be compared to drug addiction in which the doses must be ever increased and the intervals between doses shortened. Much public charity and philanthropy have a background in this type of insidious selfishness.

#### G. Tendency to "sour grapes" defense

The two types of "sour grapes" mechanisms are manifest in various forms. A tendency on the part of human beings to depreciate things desired but not attained is one of these types. The child who does not get on the team says the team is composed of a bunch of crooks anyway; the child who does not get as high a mark as he covets says that those who did get an A are teacher's pets and a bunch of sissies. The opposing "sour grapes" tendency is to seek consolation in minimizing disappointments by magnifying attainments. In other words, the individual builds up a belief that the attainment actually reached is that which is the desired one after all. The child who tries for first team and makes second team says second will have less strict training rules, probably play more interesting games, etc.; in other words, second team is most desirable after all. In so far as those are temporary adjustments in solving conflicts, they are not undesirable; it is only of the permanence of this attitude that we are apprehensive. In the latter case one is developing a habit of evading reality in the development of an artificial pose. A child must learn to face facts, not distort them to his own advantage.

## H. Attitude of emphasis on illness

The parent's solicitousness concerning a child's physical condition expressed in general anxiety and in excusing the child's behavior or the child's performing his usual duties makes ill-health seem desirable. He is not punished if he is ill, he has unusual concession from the entire family, he is excused from school, etc., until illness begins to be a good excuse in an effort to avoid any unpleasantness or to get unusual amount of attention. The child must be made to realize that if he escapes unpleasant duties while ill, he also must forego a number of pleasures; he must also realize that his duties are only postponed, not permanently evaded. Again, the teacher and parents should see that the child has enough attention without resorting to illness to obtain it. The unconscious development of symptoms of physical illness as an escape mechanism is characteristic of hysteria.

## I. Attitude of self-pity.

The tendency to self-pity is closely related to the tendency to blame others or environmental forces for short-comings, and to the tendency to emphasize illnesses, in that they are essentially bids for sympathy. The individual to whom the world owes much and who has never been able to cash in on his dues is a most miserable person. He is a social misfit wherever he is: the individual who is quite superior to his job, the individual who is more sensitive than his fellows, the individual who is superior to his social environment,—all are very sorry for themselves. They also crave the sympathy of others and avidly feed upon it, developing that familiar "martyred-air" attitude. In childhood the symptoms are probably not so pronounced as in adulthood, yet the tendency is manifest in many ways, notably the two mentioned above. This more general tendency is best combatted in the remedial measures suggested above as well as in the development of desirable attitudes discussed later.

In general, the attitudes are mainly not altogether undesirable unless they have a tendency to permanency or exaggeration. In other words, our chief concern is with the quality

or intensity, and quantity or breadth of range, rather than in the mere fact of their existence.

## VI. ATTITUDES REQUIRING BALANCE

### A. Attitude of fear

Individuals are in the main afraid of the unknown, the element of newness in the situation; the unfamiliarity makes for lack of certainty in response, hence a feeling of anxiety and uneasiness. Building up certain rational fears is a vital part of constructive educational processes. The child should learn to fear things that are likely to cause him physical injury, as cars on a busy street, strange animals, and insects, etc., which fears can be displaced later by intelligent precautions. In other words, fear should be developed in the child in order to protect him in situations which he is unable to control. However, fear is unwisely used frequently as a means of control and discipline, and is unwisely developed through associations with adults who impress their abnormal fears on the child. Such fears are a drain on the emotional life of the child and at least constitute an unnecessary waste of time and energy. In dealing with fear, it is necessary to know the background for it and then the child may be made familiar with the object of his fear. Telling a child his fear is foolish and imaginary because it is irrational only serves to heighten emotional tension and intensifies the fear. Discovering the background of an irrational fear is difficult since very often an intense emotional situation which gave rise to the fear is entirely out of conscious memory. A word of warning: never force a child nor one's self into facing a fear hoping to overcome the fear; this only increases emotionality and may cause an immediate and serious mental upheaval. No mental or neural organization is so strong and perfect but that it can be disturbed; no iron rod is so strong but that sufficient force can be applied to bend it. A guiding principle of mental hygiene is to decrease mental stress and strain, not to focus it nor to intensify it.

### B. Attitude of compensation

Compensation is a perfectly normal mechanism of hu-



man behavior unless developed to an extreme. A thwarting of our interests and activities in a given direction is a source of mental and emotional conflict. A resolution of such a conflict may be found in stressing interests and activities in another direction which offers bigger possibilities for fulfillment. Such behavior may produce artificiality, which disturbs integration of personality. If a child is over-compensating, his attention should be directed to other lines of successful endeavor in order to avoid an undue emphasis in one particular field. His self-esteem should not be injured by direct attention to this over-emphasis, but an unobstrusive shift of interests will usually suffice for a younger child.

### C. Suggestibility

Suggestibility as compensation is a normal personality trait unless developed to the extreme. There are two dangers in suggestibility: one is the entirely gullible individual who questions nothing and nobody; the other is the negativistic individual who resists all suggestions from all persons. Negativism may be expressed in either of two ways: by doing the opposite suggested; and by doing nothing at all when a line of behavior is suggested. One way of getting desired behavior responses from the former type is to suggest the opposite of what one wishes the individual to do; this, however, does not modify personality. In either case, the better remedial treatment consists in making no demands and as few suggestions as possible as to behavior. The child will fall in line with the behavior of other pupils, particularly when he has had the unhappy experience of being left out of things.

Over-suggestibility robs the child of initiative, independence, and self-reliance. The adult who is habitually undecided and constantly weighing matters, who feels guilty if he attempts to carry out his own decisions is an individual whose thinking has been done for him until he is incapable of standing on his own feet.

Suggestibility is a learned attitude. Negativism may be over-compensation for a real or suspected tendency to gullibility. Over-suggestibility may simply have resulted from an

individual's early life having been arranged for him to such an extent he has never been required or allowed to make decisions and act on them. The child must learn to be amenable to suggestion, yet balance it with ability to think and act for himself. This attitude of balance is also acquired only through experiences, in a wide range of social contacts and by realizing individual differences so that he does not generalize on too few experiences of either desirable or undesirable tendencies so far as suggestibility is concerned.

#### D. Affectivity or emotionality

There is a tendency due partially to modern living conditions constantly to feed upon or live upon emotions. The moving pictures are such as to harrow unnecessarily emotional life; the effect of rapid transportation is to increase emotionality; the constant stimulation by radio programs makes for over-emotionality. This over-stimulation is expressed in the individual's constantly seeking a "thrill". As a result, the child is constantly "keyed up" and responds with frequent crying, temper tantrums, sulking, negativism, etc.

Emotional education is one of the biggest problems of modern life. Emotional responses or attitudes are a learned activity; a child can be made into a sulky, obstinate child, a temper-tantrum, crying child, or into a child of happy, joyous disposition through environmental influences. The child should not be encouraged to use his emotions to gain his end, i. e., as a means of social control. Crying is the best example of this type of social control. The child learns to cry, then to ask for what he wants, if he has gotten attention only by crying. Another social encouragement is to encourage misconduct by an elaborate discussion of it, or even a positive rewarding of it. A teacher does the latter when a "bad boy" succeeds in getting her attention and probably that of the principal by his behavior. He becomes something of a hero to the other pupils in his daring acts. An emotional discussion of misconduct may, and often does, lead the child to glory in confessing his misdeeds. One child, after such a discussion, later asked his mother to question him about his conduct.

The child should be encouraged to express his emotions, not superficially as crying, etc., but in a dynamic attempt to solve the perplexing problem. Emotional experiences are necessary in personality integration, but a constant emotional rather than rational approach to problems is one of the most undesirable and distorting personality traits one can develop. The child should not be unduly stimulated by the complexity of modern life.

## VII. DESIRABLE ATTITUDES

### A. Dynamic behavior

A "do" rather than a "don't" psychology is not of recent origin; theoretically it is shown in the adage, "An idle brain is the devil's workshop." The "don't" psychology has dominated child control in both home and school until quite recently. The old story of the mother who sent an older child "to see what Johnnie is doing and to tell him to stop" is an excellent example of home tendencies. The long list of "rules" the teacher used to read out on the first day of school is evidence of the type of psychology dominating the school. A "do" or positive psychology utilizes some of the important mechanisms of human behavior as compensation, sublimation or substitution, projection, and transference. The "good" child, the child who is docile and accedes to all demands of the adults with whom he comes in contact, is a "sick" child mentally. The aggressive individual is adjusting to his environment since adjusting is an active process and not a state of being. Life is a continuous process of adjustment, since environment is a constantly shifting scene, and hence one does not become adjusted but one is adjusting. A static personality is of no value in a dynamic situation. Hence if the school is a laboratory for developing personality to its highest degree of social usefulness, then the aggressive personality is the desirable aim. Again, the aggressive personality is least likely to develop such undesirable personality traits as excessive introversion, regression, and suspiciousness.

### B. Feeling of adequacy

The term "inadequacy" covers the field formerly covered

by the term "inferiority" and more. One may feel quite inadequate without feeling in the least inferior; he may know he is superior, yet be inadequate because of the peculiar twist of circumstances. The present-day unrest, partially due to economic instability, has brought on much emotional conflict due to a feeling of inadequacy.

The tendency for a child to develop a feeling of inadequacy may be most successfully met by seeing to it that he has opportunities for success and by emphasizing his adequate responses rather than his inadequate ones. A calm born of self-assurance is the only basis for a feeling of adequacy.

### C. An attitude of understanding others.

No one lives in isolation nor in a "social vacuum"; we cannot escape contact with our fellow man, try as we may. If living with and understanding one's fellows and one's self may be called a vocation, it is probably the most all-inclusive and widely-embraced of the vocations. The child should early be brought to recognize that individuals differ, that these differences must be respected, and that one must attempt to understand them. Sympathy will grow out of understanding, since it is essentially a recognition of the feelings and attitudes of someone else.

## VIII. RE-EVALUATION OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AS TO SERIOUSNESS.

A. Wickman\* made an elaborate study of the emphasis teachers placed on types of behavior problems. In general, teachers disagreed markedly in their estimation of problems, each probably presenting her own personal reaction rather than a standard of evaluation. They tended in general to stress non-conformity and aggressive behavior, which is more likely to upset school-room routine, as more serious.

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\*Wickman, E. K., "Children's Behavior and Teachers' Attitudes", The Commonwealth Fund Division of Publications, New York, 1928.

The following tabular summary gives the order of seriousness as judged by teachers:\*

Immoralities Dishonesties Transgressions against authority	More serious than	{ Violation of orderliness in classroom Application to school work }	More serious than	{ Extravagant, aggressive personality and behavior traits }	More serious than	{ Withdrawing, recessive personality and behavior traits }
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Thirty persons engaged in full-time mental hygiene work evaluated behavior problems which are presented briefly in the following summary:†

Withdrawing, regressive personality and behavior traits	More serious than	{ Dishonesties Cruelty Temper- tantrums Truancy }	More serious than	{ Immoralities Violations of school work requirements Extravagant behavior trait }	More serious than	{ Transgressions against authority Violations of orderliness in class }
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## IX. Re-statement of the aim of education from a mental hygiene point of view.

Integration of personality of the individual is a worthy educational aim, if integration of personality is defined as the satisfactory resolution of emotional conflicts into personal unity. Morgan‡ has summed up what an integrated personality is: "the integrated child should be adjusted to his material environment, to other persons, and to himself, and should have a perspective of life which will enable him to meet future crises."

## X. Summary

We have hurriedly glanced at some of the mental mechanisms motivating human behavior, some contributory factors to maladjustment, a re-evaluation of psychological aims in education, natural conflicts, attitudes to develop, attitudes to avoid, attitudes to balance, and a re-evaluation of the aim of education in the light of the seriousness of behavior traits.

The guiding principle in mental hygiene endeavor is prevention rather than cure. Since this is true, the proper place

\*Ibid., p. 116.

†Ibid., p. 130.

‡Morgan, John J. B., "Child Psychology," New York, Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931, pp. 474 & viii.

for the application of mental hygiene measures is in childhood, when the individual is yet plastic enough to be amenable to measures inaugurated to enable him to overcome undesirable tendencies he may manifest.

Mental hygiene began as a humanitarian movement to alleviate the sufferings of the insane by a more humane physical treatment. The interest of the medical world was later attracted. The present-day extent of the program in its comprehensiveness has grown out of the development of a more tolerant viewpoint on the part of the general public as a result of the humanitarian and medical interests and emphasis. Mental hygiene now is largely an educational problem. Mental disorders may be traced to the development of wrong habits of faulty, inadequate integration of apparently normal habits. Mental re-adjustment involves a substitution of better mental habits or correct emphasis on normal habits for faulty, incorrect ones. This can be brought about through educational guidance.

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