

# Slow Growth

Home-linked emotional problems cause growth lag.

A poor homelife is apparently capable of stunting physical growth not traceable to any nutritional lacks. At least that seems to be the case with 13 Baltimore children who were half the height they should have been.

The 13, aged 3 to 11, showed all the signs of a pituitary deficiency—low stature, little or no release of growth hormones.

But bizarre eating habits in all 13 led a Johns Hopkins research team to look beyond the pituitary gland for causes. The children would eat double portions at mealtime, then raid the garbage can or eat a jar of mustard. They drank from anything—dishpan, toilet bowl or rain puddle.

Led by Dr. G. F. Powell of Duke University, the Baltimore doctors, J. A. Brasel and R. M. Blizzard, tested the children and put them in the hospital.

Suddenly, they began to shoot up at three times the normal rate—with no hormonal treatment whatsoever. But once the children were released and back at home, their growth dropped sharply and in one case halted altogether. The doctors brought two children back to the hospital where they resumed a catch-up rate of growth.

Such sudden changes without hormonal treatment indicate a direct psychic impact on growth, says Dr. Powell. He compares the condition to the "failure to thrive syndrome" in which infants suffer physically and sometimes die from lack of love—except these children were much older.

Possibly they were caught at an infantile, two-year-old developmental level, Dr. Powell explains. The period between one and two years is recognized as a critical time in child development. If family conditions are particularly bad then, the child may show effects his brothers and sisters escape.

Besides having strange food habits, the children spoke in garbled language.

The parents were bad, said Dr. Powell. How bad no one knows, since there is no standard by which to judge them. But alcoholism, physical violence, promiscuity and marital discord were common.

Poor growth may well be an early clue to such home conditions and a sign that medical intervention is necessary, says Dr. Powell. He believes the syndrome is more common than doctors have realized. Since he made his original report, several physicians have come forth with cases of their own.

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# THE CHANGING EARTH

By Judith Viorst of SCIENCE SERVICE

Introduction by Frank C. Whitmore, Jr., U. S. Geological Survey

Preface

The planet we live upon seems changeless and eternal, but it is neither. It was born some four or five billion years ago, and between that time and the present it has turned many very different faces to the sun. What is more, it continues to change even now, and will do so until it no longer spins in the sky.

This book describes the forces that mold the earth's changing face—water, wind, glaciers, vulcanism, diastrophism. It explains the making of our mountains and valleys and canyons, our beaches and caves and dunes, our waterfalls and geysers and springs. It also traces earth's history from its ambiguous beginnings through the shaping and reshaping of its continental features, telling—in rich detail—the awesome story of the evolution of life.

37 photographs and 30 drawings accompany the text, which is written for both the aspiring young geologist and anyone—of any age—curious about the planet on which he lives. The book abounds in facts about earth's past and present, but it also tempts the curious with the many unsolved questions that make geology a living, growing, ever-intriguing science.

By Watson Davis  
 Director Emeritus, SCIENCE SERVICE

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