

PSYCHIATRY

Therapy for World's Terrors

Children bewildered by their present day complex environment receive reassurance coupled with love in the University of Chicago school.

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

► TELEVISION and radio scare stories, crowded apartment life and a succession of new gadgets which put mortal danger within the reach of baby fingers make it more and more difficult to be a good parent.

"Love is not enough," says Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, Vienna-born psychiatrist. It must be supplemented by deliberate efforts on the part of the parent to raise children successfully in our present-day complex environment.

The tired parent finds it much harder to put breakable or dangerous things out of the child's reach than to say "No!" or to slap his hands. The result is that frequent and often angry "nos" convince the child this is a world full of incomprehensible dangers where the only safe thing to do is to do nothing, and that to try to find out things for oneself is something bad.

Parents can get many good ideas on how to make the environment of their own home more favorable for mental health in their children from the experience of a special school where emotionally disturbed and mentally ill children are being brought back to health.

In the attempt to bring these sick children back to normal, much is being learned about the situations which have made these little boys and girls feel that life is just too difficult or unhappy to be endured. The school, which is called the University of Chicago Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, is under the direction of Dr. Bettelheim.

What is done for children in the school and much of what has been learned from the children is reported in a new book by Dr. Bettelheim, "Love Is Not Enough," (The Free Press).

Psychiatric treatment is given to the mentally sick children at the school, but not just in the detached situation of the treatment room. Their problems are handled as they arise in the same situations that produced them.

Bathroom a Battleground

One such charged situation is in the bathroom. The American family bath is apparently a battleground between mothers and children in which the child is often the eventual loser.

Children arrive at the school often the victim either of a compulsive need to be clean so that they are driven into a panic

by the thought of getting so much as a speck on a dainty little white dress, or else a hostility produced by painful scrubblings that makes them ready to scream at the thought of washing behind the ears.

No child is forced to wash at the school. They learn first to enjoy sitting in the tub in pleasantly warm water playing with toys. Gradually the idea of washing is introduced as the child is ready not to be disturbed by it.

"What happens around here if you don't brush your teeth?" one child asked seriously, evidently expecting that some disaster or drastic punishment would result. He was told that no one would be much concerned about it but that his teeth might get dirty.

The boy thought that one over and then said, "That's right, they might."

Waking Made Pleasant

Waking up in the morning is a very important moment, it was found at the school. These children have passed a restless night filled with nightmares and terrors. They are not eager to begin a day charged with fears and possible disaster.

So there are no clanging bells to start

the day here, a child is usually awakened by having a candy or a cookie popped into his mouth or placed in his hand. This is a reassurance that the day can bring pleasures as well as disagreeable events and struggles.

Then the children are gently lured into joining in play, at first with little toys placed right on the bed, later with the other children on the floor. Gradually they are fully awake and ready to dress.

Food as a Symbol

The dining table is another "charged" situation. To some children, food is more than just nourishment but a symbol of all pleasures and security.

In addition to three main meals, there are two regular snacks—one at about three o'clock, the other at bedtime. And then there is an endless supply of cookies and candies. Every child is made to feel that he is entitled to bread and butter and milk whenever he wants it, and all he wants, day or night.

Some children want to eat unbelievable amounts of food and hoard secret stores for "emergencies." For others eating is such a misery that they have to learn how to enjoy food.

These children are given whatever they want whenever they want it. If they don't enjoy drinking milk from a glass, they may suck it through a straw or even, in



DESPAIR NOT TABOO—Two boys give up in despair during a class at this unusual school at the University of Chicago. They do not have to pretend to be attentive but can openly show how they feel. The teacher does not chide, but tries always to give the children understanding.



DEFENSE FOR NOCTURNAL TERRORS—Terrors of night haunt all anxious children. They feel better if they have their prized possessions at hand. The boy's animals will keep watch for him during the night.

some cases, take it from a nursing bottle.

Bedtime is one of the most important parts of the day. When it is possible to restore the ability to enjoy ten or more hours of unbroken sleep a long step has been taken toward calming the children's nervous strain, making them less anxious and less tense. For most of the children enter the school with a long history of insomnia and night terrors.

A bedtime snack helps to quiet the children down for the night. Then comes a story, during which some of the children drop off to sleep. But later there is a ritual which must be gone through by many of the youngsters. Some must arrange their clothing, some must count their animals, some must be tucked in in a special way. Nearly all have a special toy with which they must sleep, even the bigger boys and girls. No one laughs at them for it.

Learning Ability Necessary

The treatment of a child is not considered completed until he can learn. He must be able, not only to succeed in the classroom, but to really want to learn on his own and to enjoy the classroom.

Most children enter the school with an active aversion to learning. This may be because of a fear of acquiring knowledge or a fear of competition and of being with other children. At the school, lessons are limited to not more than three and one-half hours in the classroom. There is no homework, no letter-writing or other outside assignments.

On the other hand much of the class time is spent in painting or drawing, in taking care of animals in the schoolrooms, and

playing games when an assignment is finished. Every attempt is made to make learning pleasant and a satisfying experience to the child. He is permitted a good deal of choice in what he will learn, what books he will read.

Once the barriers against learning are overcome, the teachers at the school do not need to worry about the children. On the contrary, they have to be careful that they do not make too rapid progress and leave children of their age behind.

With small classes, individual attention and learning geared to the child's inclinations and abilities, most children easily make two or more years' academic progress in a single year's time.

Science News Letter, August 12, 1950

AGRICULTURE

South's Land Will Rival Midwest's Loam

► THE Deep South, land of cotton and tobacco, will some day be a competitor of the black loam belt of the Midwest in growing corn, hogs and cattle, a Department of Agriculture official predicted in Raleigh, N.C.

New knowledge of pasture crops and soils has brought profitable livestock enterprises to many areas of the South, Dr. Robert M. Salter, chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils and Agricultural Engineering, said at North Carolina College of Agriculture's annual farm and home week.

Boosts in the amount of feed crops able to be grown on Southern soils through scientific management, Dr. Salter reported, make feasible a livestock industry in the South three times its present size. This would mean the conversion to forage crops—clovers, grasses and legumes—of millions of acres of non-productive land, he said.

Science News Letter, August 12, 1950

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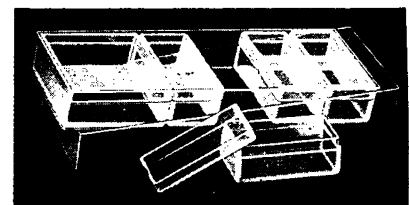
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