

PSYCHOLOGY

Why Is Johnny Maladjusted?

From 7 to 14 per cent of school children each year develop a kind of learning behavior or emotional problem too difficult for the teacher to manage alone, Faye Marley reports.

► PSYCHOLOGISTS and social workers today are helping the harassed teacher understand why Johnny is maladjusted and are helping him toward a normal life instead of mental illness and possible delinquency.

The school has become one of the major employers of specialists in behavior in the early "preventive" years of childhood. From 7% to 14% of the record 51.3 million children attending school this year develop some kind of learning, behavior or emotional problem too difficult for the teacher to manage alone.

There are children in classrooms who cannot learn because they are spending most of their energy trying to get affection, recognition and security, Dr. William G. Hollister of the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Md., says.

Teacher a Powerful Tool

The most powerful tool in managing behavior problems, Dr. Hollister believes, is the teacher himself. The willingness to feel with a child can build a bridge of emotional relationship for teaching.

A teacher with a cold, dominant personality will only make a maladjusted child more of a problem, especially if he has conflicts at home with that kind of parent.

Studies have shown that hostile and aggressive reactions on the part of many adolescents are natural reactions to frustration. Frequently this type of pupil does not understand the purpose of the school program. Although the school should be preventing delinquency, it may actually contribute to it.

Dr. George N. Bouthilet, consultant in psychology of the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Oklahoma City, recently said that approximately 20% of American youth are expected to be brought to the attention of juvenile court judges.

"The school as a community agency," he pointed out, "can occupy a most strategic role in the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency and in the rehabilitation of youth who already have police or court contact."

Early diagnosis, case findings and early treatment are important. Prevention of delinquency can be achieved by effective planned curriculum and good relationships between teacher and pupil.

The National Education Association points out that the teacher should maintain an attitude toward all students that recognizes the dignity and worth of every individual, including that of the delinquent youth. Each pupil should be helped to achieve a level according to his ability. The curriculum should be elastic enough to ap-

peal to youngsters with special emotional and cultural needs.

Experienced teachers know how to set an emotional climate in their classrooms that can prevent many behavior problems. The tone of voice, expression and even manner of walking communicate important attitudes to sensitive children.

But the best of teachers may not be able to cope with severe problem children. A typical maladjusted boy sent to a New York school psychologist after two months in the first grade was described as follows:

He fought constantly, had frequent temper outbursts, did not take part in class activities, required constant attention and had no respect for adults. Home investigation showed that he was one of five children and slept with a brother two years older. They were in continual fights and the mother beat them both almost every night. The family of six lived in a four-room apartment with the mother's sister and brother-in-law.

The boy feared competition with children his own age, and was placed with younger children where he felt more encouragement and could be given extra jobs to do what he enjoyed. After a year of treatment he was showing improvement.

When is a child really maladjusted? A

study in Prince Georges County, Md., involving 50 teachers of grades four through eight with 22 mental hygienists, showed the following conditions indicate maladjustment:

When the child is regarded as a pest by other children; cannot be depended upon to complete a job; finds it hard to keep his mind on what goes on in class; is continually on the defensive; has trouble getting along; when others cannot work with him; when he is quarrelsome; is easily irritated, flustered or upset; irritates people; always seems to be stirred up; is always thinking up alibis; is easily confused; lacks confidence in himself; sulks if crossed; is resentful; cannot make up his mind until it is too late.

Causes for Maladjustment

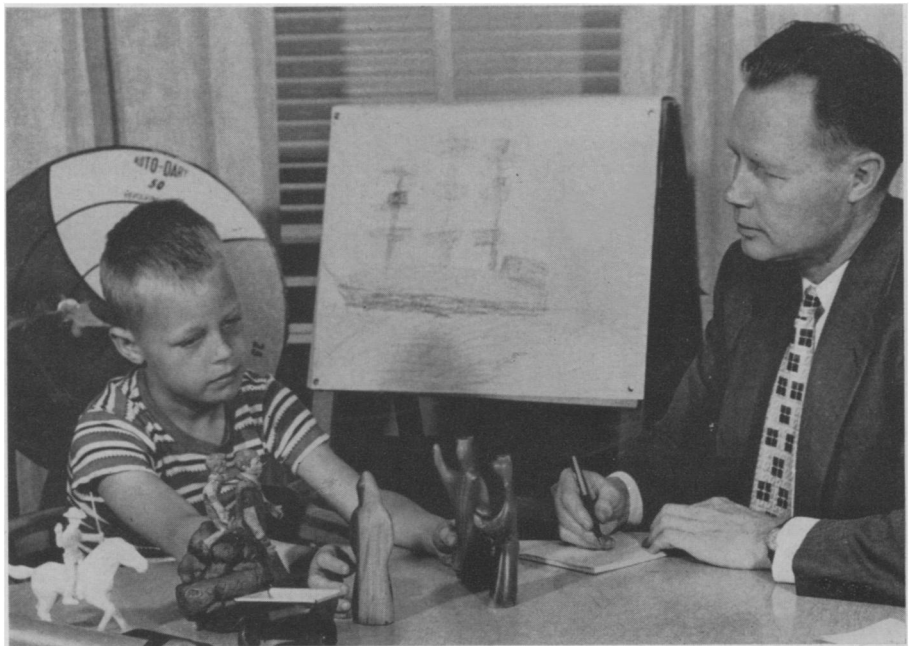
Possible causes for maladjustment, based on studies of fighting and other forms of hostility, include:

Many children in our American culture have too much done for them. Because of domination at home the individual child may become aggressive in his play group or at school.

Fighting often results when a child is hungry, tired or is exposed to other physical stress.

Aggressive or hostile behavior may arise when he has met repeated failure in a situation in which he had reasonable hope of succeeding.

Hostility tends to develop when a child



PSYCHOLOGICAL TEST—A staff psychologist at the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Md., shows in a posed photograph how small figures can be used to help determine the basic problems of maladjusted children.

is forced to live in a home in which he is not wanted.

Some children are growing up in homes and neighborhoods where aggressive behavior is considered the approved way of solving a difficulty.

There is a wide difference between temporary maladjustments, however, and those that have been allowed to develop into permanent problems.

Hostility can be reduced by helping a person gain some insight into the situation and into the behavior both of himself and others.

The National Education Association recently completed a broad, nationwide study that centered around the role of the school in the prevention, correction and treatment of delinquent youth. Under the direction of Dr. William C. Kvaraceus, the project staff included a psychologist, cultural anthropologist, sociologist, psychiatrist, pediatrician and criminologist.

The study showed that:

The majority of delinquent behavior problems stemmed from cultural rather than emotional factors, mainly in lower-class groups.

The emotionally disturbed child who becomes a delinquent is more likely to be from a middle-class family.

Some lower-class youngsters may be disturbed but the majority are essentially normal.

The National Education Association proj-

ect staff recommended that schools conduct a preventive program in which potential delinquents are identified, work with the families of disturbed or delinquent youth as well as with law-enforcement and court personnel, provide leadership in community efforts for the prevention and control of delinquent behavior.

Dr. Romaine P. Mackie, chief, Exceptional Children and Youth, U.S. Office of Education, points out that there is a critical shortage of professionally qualified special educators.

It is estimated that 200,000 are needed and only about 50,000 are available, she said, to give special help to the 6 million school-age exceptional children in this country.

Exceptional children include the gifted along with the mentally retarded, those with serious social or emotional problems, or with sight, hearing, speech, crippling or other health handicaps.

For some, special education means having school brought to them in a hospital, convalescent home, in their own home or in an institution where they receive 24-hour education and care. For others, it means going to a special school or to a special classroom in a regular school building.

But for most of the exceptional children, Dr. Mackie says, probably three out of every four, opportunity to enroll in a program of special education is not available.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

News From Science Clubs

► SCIENCE CLUBS beginning their activities for the 1962-63 school year have sent the following reports to Science Clubs of America.

The J.M.H.S. SCIENCE CLUB, James Madison High School, Vienna, Va., sent a memo to all science teachers about club activities planned for the 1962-63 school year. The memo expressed the need for the science department and science club to be more closely associated and asks for the support of all science teachers. The club has expanded its program to interest all students who enjoy science and will hold a scheduled meeting every two weeks.

THE JUNIOR STARWATCHERS of Orangeburg, S. C., are emphasizing wide reading in astronomy and have professional scientists of the area as guest speakers at their monthly meetings.

The members of the J.J.H.S. SCIENCE CLUB, Jackson Junior High School, Louisville, Ky., co-sponsor a Science Careers Day for seventh grade students and the adult consultants become "Dutch Uncles and Aunts" of the students.

The SCIENCE CLUB of Rittenhouse School, Norristown, Pa., has a club project to classify the trees and shrubs around their school.

The BI-PHY-CHEM SCIENCE CLUB, Edgewater High School, Orlando, Fla., holds a three-week slide rule course for the chemistry, physics and mathematics students of the school. Last year the club initiated the formation of an Orange County Science Council.

The most effective programs of the P.S.J.A. CONSERVATION CLUB, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo High School, Pharr, Texas, are field trips, movies from the Texas State Department on Game and Fish, and sponsoring a botanical garden on the school campus.

THE ROUND VALLEY SCI-MATH CLUB, Round Valley High School, Springerville, Ariz., schedule displays of information about science materials available to students at county and regional science fairs. One of their club projects is to select and sponsor a group of members on a field trip of scientific importance. Last year five seniors and their sponsor attended the annual AAAS meeting in Denver during the Christmas vacation.

Discussions of possible and completed projects are most effective as programs for the PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL CLUB of Resurrection School, Los Angeles, Calif.

The purpose of the BIOLOGY CLUB at Oak Park-Forest River High School, Oak Park, Ill., is to introduce members to biologists actively engaged in public health, applied and research biology.

ECHOES OF EINSTEIN from the Sarah Scott Junior High School, Terre Haute, Ind., report that their most effective programs are demonstration-lectures and field trips.

Affiliate your clubs with Science Clubs of America and send reports on club activities to the national headquarters at 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

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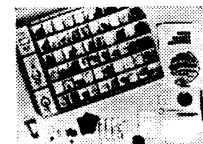
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