

A New Approach to Remedial Instruction

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Tutoring has failed notoriously to solve the problems of the child who habitually fails in school. Numberless so-called backward children have had endless man hours of teaching and tutoring devoted to them with no appreciable change in their situation. For many years such children were considered stupid and incapable of learning; they were believed to have brains that could not encompass the knowledge. This belief went unchallenged until intelligence tests were invented when it was found that many, if not all of these children, were undoubtedly intelligent and that their failure to learn could not be blamed on a lack of capacity.

At this point it was assumed that those who did not learn and who scored a low I.Q. were failing because of a lack of intelligence and that the others were failing to learn because of an "emotional block." Parents and teachers were alarmed at the mention of an emotional block and often the child was taken to a psychologist for study. Usually, however, the "emotional block" proved stronger than the charms used to rout it and the child went along without progressing.

At length old fashioned drill (tutoring) got a new name: "Remedial Instruction." But except that it cost more, it was not much changed. No one had troubled to investigate the hypothesis on which it was based, and its results were seldom better than ordinary individual instruction or group instruction.

It remained for Alfred Adler and his pupils to bring a new hypothesis to bear on the problem. When this was done, the riddle of non-learning fell apart. If this new hypothesis is taught and understood by teachers and parents alike, there need be no more trouble in this area. Unfortunately until the present time, this hypothesis has for the most part been understood only by Adler's pupils. But those who understand it accomplish results that are undreamed of under the old approach. If the proper conditions are set up around the child, the new hypothesis brings predictable results, in a matter of months—not years.

If we look at the hypothesis that underlies old-fashioned tutoring and most of the efforts at Remedial Instruction, we find that it is based on the assumption that the child *cannot* learn by ordinary class-

room instruction. His brain is visualized as being like an empty room with a closed door. The teacher believes that knowledge must be "atomized" into tiny fragments which by clever tricks must be slipped into the room at moments when the door happens to open. Words and number concepts are split into minute bits, and months are wasted in mathematics teaching the "concept" of a single number, as if a child does not quickly learn the difference between four and five cents when he wants a candy bar, or at any other time when it suits his purpose to have such knowledge.

All learning was considered as an "additive process." One little fact was laboriously hitched to another little fact, but unfortunately the child seemed unable to relate the facts or to deliver them when they were demanded of him. Despair has been the major reward for those who have followed this hypothesis. In most cases years of tutoring by this method accomplished little; it was largely sterile and could not be counted upon to deliver any uniform result.

Adler's hypothesis leads in a new direction. He maintained that such children *will not* learn rather than *cannot* learn. This means that the child is *opposing* and *sabotaging* efforts at instruction. It is his will and not his intelligence that is at fault, and efforts must be aimed at changing his unwillingness to learn rather than atomizing knowledge to slip into his "empty" head. In short, the mind of such a child is *full of resistance* and must first be *emptied*. This is quite different from believing that his mind is empty waiting only to be filled. As a result of this difference in hypothesis, all our methods and investigations must be reoriented. If we examine a case in the light of both hypotheses we may see how the approach and method of solution would differ depending on the hypothesis. Here is the story of Susan who was in the fifth grade in public school. The presenting problem was given by the mother somewhat in the following manner:

Susan has a sense of inferiority. The class is over-crowded this year but the mother had noticed as far back as third grade that Sue was not doing well. The teacher advised the mother at that time to do nothing about the matter—that Sue would catch up. But the teacher last year complained about her slowness and placed her in a slow group in the class. This year Sue finds school work very difficult and demands her mother's help in the homework. A year ago, Sue's dog was killed before her eyes in an accident. Since then, her insecurity has increased and she gave up piano practice as a "result." But she is taking ballet lessons and is doing well.

A nineteen year old brother has been away at college for three years, but Sue is certain her mother loves the brother more. He feels that the mother favors Sue. When she was seven and eight, Sue was sent to camp but has refused to return the last two years. The mother strongly stresses health problems and Sue frequently claims to "feel badly" and asks to be excused from going to school at such times. She has braces on her teeth. Formerly she was a good patient but now makes much trouble about wearing braces. She has no friends but the mother has tried to bring other children into the home for her. Sue, however, is bossy and the children do not enjoy being with her. Reports from camp stated that she had been bossy there, too. The most annoying symptom recently has been curious noises she makes in her throat that distract the mother unbearably.

Mother makes a conscious effort to be at home when Sue is there. Although Sue has her own room, bed-time presents a critical situation. She refuses to go to bed unless her mother reads to her. She makes trouble about taking a bath, about eating. She sucks her thumb and bites her nails to the great distress of her parents and her dentist who is trying to straighten her teeth.

These were the statements of the mother at the first interview. Her main concern was about "school work"; something must be done about Sue's reading disability!

The traditional Remedial Reading approach would have been to give Sue a battery of reading tests "to find out where she is weak." She would be given an intelligence test and probably some personality tests to find out her "emotional structure." Then she would be given reading material on her "reading level" and part of each session would be devoted to games, painting, clay-modeling, etc. The mother would bring her to each session and call for her an hour later. Every variety of reading trick would be brought to bear and every effort made to get her to "like reading." But the efforts would begin and end with this concentration on the problem of reading *as if it were something apart* from Sue as a whole being living in a social context. Nothing would be made of the other information given by the mother about Sue's behavior. The reading problem would be handled as a "thing-in-itself."

In some cases, this approach gets results. But for the most part, from one to five years might be devoted to such effort and even then the results are often poor. Considering the hours of labor involved and the expense, the results are usually pathetic.

The whole picture is altered the moment we consider Sue's non-reading as just another symptom of poor social adjustment, no more nor less than her nail biting, thumb sucking, noise making, non-bathing, poor eating, bed resistance, and other ways of blocking the aims and purposes of those around her. Why should we expect her to give up one symptom if we allow her to retain all the others? We must see Sue as she really is—a child who is engaged in extensive sabotage of those around her. She burdens everyone unfairly and excludes all situations where she cannot be the boss. Her total behavior is her way of forcing those around her to give her a position of special privilege. She wants to be the center of attention all of the time—and manages to achieve her goal.

When we realize that each disturbing behavior trait is used for the purpose of obliging others to give her special attention, we can see why she holds on to her nonreading status. If she learns to read, she will lose her special distinction and all the special help it brings her. For the child who "*cannot*" read is not expected to do as much in school as other children. The teacher comes to him more often to render help. At night he has the whole family engaged at his side helping him with his lessons, and though these sessions may often be stormy ones, he is being fed the beloved special attention he craves so much.

If we look at the total situation of Sue—not just the reading symptom—we must see that the family situation as a whole is wrong. How did Sue get the idea that she should be the center of attention all of the time and why did the mother support her in this false ambition? Why did Sue not grow up as an equal member of a family of four instead of becoming the one who "makes the rules" as to what she will and will not do?

We see in this situation that the mother is admonishing her daughter constantly, trying to get her to "do this" or "do that" and to "stop doing" something else. But Sue does not change. The mother is reduced to the role of a "beggar" who alternately pleads and threatens in an effort to get "alms" from Sue. Or, we may regard it as a "tug of war" with Sue on one end of the rope and mother on the other end. The situation is one of stasis: the forces of Sue and the mother are "equal and opposite." Each cancels the other out. The mother believes she is in the position of authority but actually Sue has put her in a position of servitude: Mother has all the responsibility, Sue has all the authority. Her likes, dislikes, fears, and aspirations become

as "laws binding on the family." She likes ballet, so she does well in it; she dislikes reading and school so she feels privileged to neglect them. She likes hanging around her mother's neck, so she makes noises, bites her nails, and does similar things to keep her mother's attention centered on her. She dislikes going out with girls her own age, because they will not submit to the kind of domination that she exercises at home, so she does not make friends.

We find from this that Sue's refusals to co-operate at home and at school give her a position of tremendous power. Why should she learn to read or do school work? Why give up fighting the dentist? Why give up annoying her mother? Why should she learn to stand on her own feet when she has the power to hold adults in her service at her command? And why should we expect that tutoring in reading will succeed? If she learns to read, she will lose a large part of her kingdom and authority!

All of the above was pointed out to the mother. She had never realized that she was in the degrading position of a servant and a beggar. Nor did she realize the amount of time and attention that was consumed every day trying to "influence" her child. She had no trouble understanding how she had gotten into the trap. Shortly after the birth of her first child she had found it necessary to work in her husband's business and she felt she had neglected to give her son the love he needed. When Sue was born, she determined to give Sue the attention the older child had been denied. She did not realize that children need to be *left to themselves much of the time so they can discover their own potentialities* and not depend on adults for complete support and entertainment.

The child at birth is both the strongest and the weakest of all. Because he is helpless, the whole world is organized to supply his initial needs, and we are his willing servants. But as he grows older, his demands for food are less frequent; he learns to walk, talk, control his bladder and bowels, dress, bathe, and otherwise help himself. In short, if he is developing properly he should become more of a help and less of a burden to his parents. By the end of adolescence, a child should be independent of his parents both emotionally and physically; he should have developed enough independence of mind to make social judgments and to contribute to the welfare of those around him.

But in the usual remedial case, we find that the parents somehow have not managed to free themselves of the dependency of the child. Where we find children whose behavior is infantile, we find parents

who have failed to become independent of the child. The child is using the parents as if they were crutches. He senses that he is behind other children of his age and is jealous of their achievements, and because he cannot keep up with his age-group, he turns more strongly than ever to the parents for his satisfaction. The emotional demands of the child are of such a nature that the parents cannot supply them. The child wants to have a place in the life of other children around him and is unhappy because he has not developed the ability to be a part of their group life. Because he feels empty of real satisfactions based in accomplishment, he demands all kinds of trivia of his parents as a substitute satisfaction, but is no happier when he gets the things he demands. He grows hostile to his parents as the years go by because he wants the feeling of achievement which no one can give him but himself. He has been late in starting to do things for himself and now is afraid to try.

Some schools of psychology advise giving such children "more love" as an antidote for the ills they suffer. Because they complain and accuse others of not loving them or of loving a sibling better, the unfortunate parents are urged to smother them with proof of love. This they do by increasing their attention and services to the child who is made more helpless and dependent than ever. He has little chance of gaining independence and becomes less and less willing to turn to his own age-group for companionship.

This is a real tragedy. Nothing will give him self-respect and relieve his jealousy of other children except learning to stand on his own feet and achieving as much independence as others his age have acquired. The dependent child, because he cannot co-operate with other children, wants to be the "boss" just as he dominates the parents at home. But since other children resent and will not tolerate this the dependent child is turned back on the pampering parents who become more "slavish" because they realize the failure of the child in the outside world. Thus the child is caught in a vicious circle that gets narrower every day. We must always give such children not more "love" (pampering), but an opportunity to gain more independence. To answer their anguished cries (and our own emotional frustrations) by giving them physical help is to further condemn them to impotence and failure. Not having the courage to stand on their own feet and in fear of failure, they will actively resist efforts to make them independent. But we must develop the courage to *make ourselves independent of them*. The parent who has spent years in slavery must now begin to

fight for his own independence. Then the child will be forced to learn to be independent of the parents. Parents must not expect the child to be strong enough to be independent if they themselves dare not free themselves of the child.

If the parent has the courage, he must do two things: (1) he must make a verbal "declaration of independence" from the child; (2) then he must "fight a short war" to secure his release from his previous slavery. The child will then find himself in a new situation, like a general without an army, whose commands no longer bring assistance, and where he will be faced with the necessity of moving to achieve things for himself.

The "declaration" should be a short one. The parent must formally declare that he will be a friend but not a servant to the child; that he will no longer take over the child's duties simply because the child expects or demands special privileges and services. In itself this declaration of independence will have no meaning to the child, for he has been accustomed to ruling his parents with a whim of iron. That is why the declaration must be followed with a *short war* to convince the child that the parents are just as worthy of the "pursuit of happiness" as the child is worthy of it. When he finds from his parents' *actions* (not impotent screams) that their rights are equal to his own and that they mean to employ these rights for their own enrichment, he will suddenly discover a new respect for them. In a short time, his own needs will force him to begin to try to help himself.

As soon as anyone begins to try to help himself instead of screaming for help, he experiences a growing sense of mastery and achievement. The feeling of adequacy begins to grow and he senses that he is moving in a direction that will soon bring him into equality with those he has formerly envied. His fear of failure is diminished; he finds others accepting him where formerly he had been rejected, and instead of turning to his parents for consolation and support, he feels the joy of being a part of a team at school and at play. Having found these new powers within himself, he prefers to develop and increase in this direction and he stops bringing pressure on the parents. The hostility he had felt toward them disappears and he begins to enjoy co-operating with them rather than continuing in the old path of sabotage he had followed for so long. In short, he soon learns to be a help and not a burden to those around him. And it goes without saying that he soon teaches himself with very little help to read or

to accomplish whatever task he has been refusing to perform until now, in order to gain special privilege.

With regard to the learning process, no one can teach a child to read or to do anything else. All education is, in the end, self-education. All a teacher can do is to expose the child to the material and encourage him to keep trying. Each failure must be regarded as a friendly invitation to try again—not as a loss of prestige. We can only make known to a child when he has made a mistake. If he keeps his courage he will eventually find the *knack* of the subject. Once that is found, in a short time he will function with assurance. No method of instruction works if the child is unwilling to learn, for “None is so blind as he who will not see, and none so deaf as he who will not hear!” But if we change the dependent, fighting attitude of the child into an inner willingness to stand on his own feet, he will soon find the knack of learning school subjects.

To relate what had to be done to convince Sue that she must learn to stand alone:

In the first place, the mother had a maid for housework and was not needed full time in the home. She was eager to return to her husband’s business and she was encouraged to begin her office work again. She was advised under no circumstances to do for Sue those things that Sue was old enough to do for herself, including her school work. No attention was to be paid to the “noises” Sue made to attract their attention. Piano practice and lessons were to be abandoned because Sue was using the piano as a weapon to assault her parents and not as a musical instrument. This should end the fighting about neglected practice until and unless Sue wished to resume on her own responsibility. No help was to be given on school work, and television was cut to one hour a night.

Sue used to distress her mother by saying she wished she had never been born. The mother was taught to disregard this, since Sue’s purpose was merely to increase her mother’s attention and services to her. The mother was also advised not to try to hold Sue’s friends for her, but to let Sue enjoy enough good, old-fashioned boredom so that she would be willing to go out of the house and seek companionship for herself. No effort should be made to get Sue to eat, and no special foods should be prepared for her.

Week ends had been centered around Sue’s entertainment. The parents were instructed to rehabilitate the ruins of their own social life and to let Sue fit into their plans, or to remain at home with the

maid if she chose. The parents accordingly went away for several week ends and left Sue at home. They were instructed to plan their summer vacation independently and not to listen to Sue's demands that they center it around her as before. She was to be sent to camp. In short, the parents were urged to be perfectly matter of fact with Sue, and to increase their own independence a bit more every day so that Sue would find a reason for becoming independent of them.

As for Sue's reading, the parents were advised to have her choose books on her *interest level* rather than on her reading level. She was to read these books to her parents, one of whom would sit beside her. Any word she did not know was to be given to her immediately without hesitation and without comment so that the pace of the story would not be slowed. This practice was to take place every night from fifteen to thirty minutes.* Sue's practice periods were to be conducted "in the spirit of the picnic" and not in a grim or painful way. *No mention was to be made of any mistakes.* Otherwise, all school work was to be left to the teacher and to Sue. It was pointed out that parents who engage in school work with children make trouble rather than diminish it; that the child knows he will be helped at night, so pays no attention during classes. This frees his attention from work during school hours and he finds mischief to fill his time. But if he knows no one will do his work at home, he will learn to listen when the teacher is explaining things in class.

It is difficult to persuade parents of a failing child not to assist with homework, but there is no better way to teach the child that school work is *his* job than by giving him the job to do. Each failing child has his own unique way of exploiting his parents, who are so accustomed to the abuse that they are not aware of it. We must make the parents aware of this exploitation and influence them to stop being subservient to their children. Unless the parents *grow up* so that they are in as strong a position as their children, we need not expect their children to give up the position of superiority from which they dominate the adults.

All this may seem a far cry from teaching a child to read, but it must be remembered that school failure is only one single symptom of dependency and exploitation. We must never try to treat it sepa-

*This approach has been described in the paper, *Remedial Reading*, by Willard and Marguerite Beecher, published in the *Individual Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. VII, 3rd Quarter (1949).

ately. The child must be examined on the basis of his twenty-four-hours-a-day performance and every single dependency challenged and removed. We must make ourselves independent of him at these points. We must upset and disrupt his whole habit of leaning on us for advantage and let him earn his privileges or go without. Only as we restore his independence movement in all other ways at the same time will he begin to put his back into the problem of learning to read, do mathematics, and other things as well. When the child has the *will* to grow up rather than to remain a baby, he will retain instruction given him and will use it. The endless drill of the old method of tutoring is not necessary.

In Sue's case, the parents were co-operative and followed recommendations. Sue soon learned to be a helpful "fellow man" and a good student, in sixteen one-hour sessions, spaced a week apart.

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Now let us look at a few other cases very briefly. In each case can be seen the same basic difficulty: the child is ruling the parents by sabotaging in the home as well as at school, and the parents have surrendered their own rights to the child. Because the child is accustomed to special privilege at home, he expects teachers and others to grant him the same easy existence in the outside world. As Adler said, "The child wants to live like a worm in an apple." Our job is always the same: to remove the false support so that he will be willing to learn to "pay as he goes" in life.

HARRY is an only child, ten years old, and in the fifth grade. He has had trouble in reading for the last three years and has had a tutor for eight months during the past year. Nothing he learned carried over during the summer. Since then his mother has undertaken to tutor him but with small success. If his father mentions grown-up activities, Harry is sure he will never be able to do them in later life. He began school at the age of five and disliked the teacher at once. Regardless of all the tutoring he has had, he cannot figure out any words for himself.

Harry is a Boy Scout and is good at sports, but *he must win all the time* and is a bad loser. He is reluctant to enter any activity that is new to him because he dares not risk failure. On the one occasion that Harry went to camp, he did not like it, nor did he learn to swim. Since then he has avoided trying to learn swimming. In school, he does well in arithmetic but fails in spelling as well as reading and is

very jealous of children who get good marks in spelling. His mother sits with him an hour a day, helping him with spelling. He says, "I just do not like to read."

Like most only children, Harry was indulged. He threw his clothes around, made a fuss about getting up mornings, wanted only to play or to look at television in the evening. He never enjoyed teamwork, but liked to run things his own way. In school, he got expelled from assembly for making trouble. He did not make serious trouble, but he was a drag on co-operation because he had no feeling of being part of the group or team.

Harry expressed his problem very directly when he said, "I just don't like to read." What was not so clear is that he was declaring, "Do not expect me to do anything I do not like." In short, he believed that "his wishes were laws binding on the community." He wanted always to be the *only one to win* and felt he must not be expected to work at things in which he could not make a good impression. His play activities always came ahead of work.

The whole order of events had to be changed for Harry. His parents firmly undertook to see that he got no rewards unless he was willing to carry through with parts he did not like, as well as the parts he did like. His father stopped giving him everything he wanted simply because he demanded it. Television and other privileges were granted only after he had applied himself *honestly* to his work. Children often set up a stubborn resistance at the beginning to try to break down the parents' will. They pretend to be trying, but after a half-hearted attempt, even though they do very poorly, they still expect to be allowed to go on to their television programs. Harry was sent to bed a few times but pretended he had just as good a time there as if he had been allowed to stay up. As time passed and he found his parents did not reward him unless he did his rightful share, he improved rapidly enough; he gave up his stubborn sabotage and began to co-operate. He was enrolled in a boys' club to help him learn co-operation and teamwork. By the end of twenty one-hour sessions, Harry was reading independently enough to go forward.

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MARY was fourteen years old and the oldest of three children, with two brothers, twelve and nine years old. She was academically retarded and in an "opportunity class," only one grade above her older brother. She read, but without retention and with little concentration. She had

no feeling for mathematics at all but knew how to count well enough. She had been given special help by a variety of tutors but without progress. At the birth of the second brother, Mary began to stammer badly. For four years she attended a child guidance clinic for her speech defect.

At home, all three children bicker and fight with each other. Mary sometimes stammers and gets explosively angry. She wet the bed, day and night, until three years ago. The younger brother teases the two older children, but gets along with children outside the home. Mary and her older brother do not have friends. The mother reported that it is impossible to get the three children to do anything together. She has had to cook different things for each at meal time. And though there are several radios and television sets in the home, there have always been serious battles in the living room over programs. There has been constant tattling.

These are but a few of the varied ways in which these children tyrannized over their parents and each other. Both the mother and father were trying to be "modern" parents and not to "frustrate" their children. But their idea of child guidance was merely to abdicate all authority and surrender their right to have any will of their own. The home was torn with conflicting demands, each child fighting in a different way to be the center of attention at the expense of the other two, with the parents abject servants trying to please each child separately. As may be guessed, that which pleased one child would be the very thing the others would reject.

Sibling rivalry exists in almost every home. The children compete with each other to determine which one can enslave the parent most completely. They start fights and try to get the parent to decide which one was right. If the parent is foolish enough to decide for one against the other, he makes a bitter enemy of the other child who, in turn, will start another fight to retaliate against the sibling and the "unfair" mother. The parent is always in the middle with such fights. There is but one way to stop such rivalry. Children must be taught that they have no right to damage either the peace or property of the home. If they get into fights, the parent should send them out of doors to do their fighting, or otherwise restrict them *both* equally. The fight must be regarded as a joint attack by the children against the rights of the parents rather than as a fight between the children. Instead of trying to find out who is right and who is wrong, the parent must act at once to protect his own rights, against the disturbers. When children

find that their parents will not be a party to their quarrels and will not allow the home to be despoiled, the children will find no reward for their fights and will find a way to get along together.

Adler taught us that the oldest child may easily feel dethroned at the birth of a younger sibling. Mary had two very active competitors behind her; her mind had not been free from her earliest years to turn it to school work or independent thought. She had to "guard her rear" constantly, and with small hope of success. No child can develop if he feels under threat of attack at all times.

In this case, as in the others, we had to begin to establish the independence of the parents first and to stop the mutual exploitation of one by another. Mary had done so little for herself that she had almost no foundation on which to build academically or otherwise. Nor were the parents easy to teach, since they had become so accustomed to the relentless tyranny of their children. It required thirty one-hour weekly sessions before Mary was able to "mind her own business" and not be enticed into competition with the others. But her arithmetic, reading, and friendships with other children improved remarkably during this period. She graduated from eighth grade in June and was looking forward to going to camp with pleasure.

Where sibling rivalry is active as in this case, it is never enough to work on the one child alone. Not until the parents understood the unfair and unfriendly competition among the children was there any hope of freeing Mary's mind for work. Only when they refused to enter the quarrels, and as each child learned to mind his own business and not attack the others, could Mary begin to develop. She had believed she was hopelessly stupid because of her continued failure, but by the end of the eighth grade term, she realized that she was able to succeed like other children when she tried.

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Tom's mother said he had been a very difficult baby from the beginning. He is now six and in first grade, with two sisters, one ten and one three years old. Tom refuses to answer the teacher or join in with the others. He demands a lot of attention, will try nothing new, insists on being served first at table, has tantrums, dawdles, says his little sister is smarter than he, sleeps and eats badly, and appears angry at all times. He shouts above others at home, asks mother endless questions, is jealous of the baby, usually labels himself the most

stupid child in his class, has nightmares, wets the bed about three times a week, and has a number of other disturbing behavior traits.

Middle children, such as Tom, often feel neglected and fight for attention from their parents. Tom's oldest sister has always been very bright, and has lorded it over Tom, and the younger sister is a "charmer." The sisters have had most of the recognition and Tom has felt left out. In addition, the mother has been distraught because of outside duties and has had to rush through her chores with her children. At home, she has behaved alternately in a slavish and waspish manner. The father is away from the home for long periods of time, traveling for his business. Tom, therefore, has had little that he could depend upon and is plainly angry.

Again we find sibling rivalry among the children, and parents being dominated or pulled in different directions in an effort to please each of them. The more the mother tried to please, the deeper she got into difficulties. Tom, being jealous of the baby, decided to act like a baby himself to get the same amount of attention from the mother. As in the previous cases, all three children were struggling to conquer the mother and each other.

As the mother learned to keep out of reach of all three children a little more, Tom began to pay some attention to his studies and to cooperate in school. Suddenly he "caught fire" with real interest in his studies. From that moment he became a different child, a much more friendly boy. His progress was amazing.

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Bob was the middle boy of three. The oldest boy was sixteen, Bob was ten, and the youngest nine years old. Bob was backward in school but gifted in mechanical pursuits. He was very wild and often rejected by other boys because on occasions he attacked them with a hammer. His teacher called him stupid in front of the class and he stopped trying to answer questions. Bob had a violent temper when crossed. In general, however, he appeared quite infantile considering his age. The school reported that, for a reason unknown to them, all three boys in this family behaved in an infantile manner.

There could hardly be a more virulent sibling rivalry situation among three boys than existed in this home. The father had abdicated all semblances of authority to his wife and to the children. The mother had lost all control over her sons and often took to her bed when the fighting got too bad. This frightened the boys for a time and they

quieted down until she got well again, when the fights broke out anew. The mother was afraid to leave them alone together lest they injure one another. When she was not ill, she was nagging or screaming at them. Each did exactly as he pleased, and tried to out-do the others in attempts to make work for the mother. Her days were spent in futile sputtering threats which were never carried out and which only stimulated more insubordination and hostility from the boys.

Here again it was necessary to get the father and mother to win back their lost rights and self-respect. As they became more independent, they were able to check the aggressions against them, and the boys learned to be more thoughtful of how they tread upon the parents' rights. They soon became more composed and the infantile quality began to disappear from their personalities. Bob began to show some interest in his school work. He developed an interest in amateur astronomy and began to read everything he could find on the subject as well as to write about it. As a result, he became an excellent pupil in school.

SUMMARY

We have examined a number of cases that appear vastly different on the surface. But we find a "least common denominator" running through all of them—the refusal of the child to play his part as an equal member of a team. In each instance we find a child demanding special privilege and avoiding responsibilities even in small matters where he is unquestionably able to do his share. Under the old approach to tutoring only the child's apparent inability to do his school work was seen. There was no tie-up between his persistent cries, "I cannot do school work" and his refusal to hang up his clothes, feed himself, dress, bathe and do similar things; nor was it realized that the child had a position of superiority in which others constantly waited on him, and that he *liked* his position of irresponsibility.

The new approach envisions the *whole profile* of the child's behavior throughout the day in *all of his relationships*, with his school, his so-called friends, parents, siblings, and others. The profile shows clearly how he evades doing his share at all levels of contact and how he forces others to give him an easier situation than he deserves. He habitually *gets* but refuses to *give*.

This new approach does not depend exclusively on special remedial instruction for its results. Nor do we need psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and others to invent any kind of "special pleading" or

prayers to change such children. All that is needed is that the parents and others who must deal with such a child *form a team* and agree to cut down the pampering and special privilege given the child every hour of the day. As long as he is able to get out of disadvantages and still enjoy his privileges, his television, radio, games, special handling, he will not consider making any honest effort to improve himself.

This new approach demands that we make a survey of the child's daily routine to find out how he is exploiting us. By eliminating all his "small comforts," we make his situation *uncomfortable to him* instead of *uncomfortable to us* as it had been previously. We give him a problem instead of allowing him to be a problem to us. Deprived of his "illicit profits," he will have an incentive for the first time to open his mind and to try to move forward on his own initiative. In reality he has no problem as long as we carry his responsibility. When we see that he has long been enjoying a superior position and we have been his special bodyguard, protecting him, then we can *change ourselves* instead of nagging him to change. As we regain our independence and refuse to be his special servants, he becomes obliged to eat, sleep, dress, bathe, be prompt, and to do other things in a proper way without making these activities our responsibility. Actually our *real* responsibility is to see the child become responsible for himself.

In the new approach, as we have said, we are not dependent on specially trained workers, exhaustive case analysis, and other expensive methods. We need only one person with common sense enough to see the ways in which this child takes advantage of his environment. If this person can encourage those who must deal with the child to "grow up to be as big as he is" and to treat him as an equal, the child has no choice but to improve his own activities. As he learns to tie his own shoes and otherwise look after himself, he will learn to improve his school performances, too.

In a nutshell, then, the main difference between the new and the old approach lies in the way we *see* the situation. Our way of dealing with it grows out of our viewpoint about it. As long as we *saw* the educational failure as a separate *thing-in-itself*, tutoring was the only answer. But when we see academic irresponsibility as only one of many other areas of chronic irresponsibility, then we change our whole approach. We improve our own position (become independent), and by doing so put the child in a position to improve himself. As stated above, "All education is in the end, *self-education*."