

INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY USED IN POLICE TRAINING

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"Why does a youngster throw rocks at a policeman and call him names?" "What should we do when we find a juvenile offender telling us lies?"

These and many other questions are typical of ones asked by policemen in a recently completed series of lectures by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs given to all members of the Chicago Park District Division of Police in their training school. It was the first time that a whole police force received systematic instruction in understanding and handling of children.

Dr. Dreikurs, who had helped organize the Youth Bureau of the Park Police and had participated in a school of instruction for their juvenile officers, was invited to conduct a series of classes wherein each officer of the Park District was given not only an insight into behavior problems of children, but was encouraged to develop new attitudes towards others and a better understanding of himself. This course was part of a comprehensive program of study dealing with causes and prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Following is the outline of the course which was mimeographed and distributed to all officers. It is an application of Alfred Adler's approach to human problems.

1. Definitions: Psychology is the study of the mind, its feelings, emotions, ambitions. Psychiatry is that part of medicine which examines the mind and attempts to treat its ills.
2. Purpose of this course: To give us new ideas, new attitudes and a better understanding of ourselves; to assist us to develop a proper attitude, not only toward children, but toward our friends, our relatives and our own self.
3. Primary Rule in dealing with a child: In order to do something with a child you must first establish a contact with him, overcome his resistance and win him over. The same is true of a lecturer and his audience: No matter how good his material is, unless he first establishes this contact, whatever else he does or says will not penetrate.
4. Development of the personality: Personality, character and temperament are developed in very early life. A baby observes, experiments, and draws conclusions. He is exposed to two sets of experiences, one from the outside, his environment, and one from the inside, which is his heredity or "inner environment." A child has the ability to influence his hereditary endowment and his environment. **EXAMPLE**: A child born with a certain innate weakness may give up or he may try to overcome and overcompensate for it. (Demosthenes overcompensated).

Personality is the result of relationships and interactions. (Comparison with a spark travelling between two electrodes; actually it consists of a multitude of responses back and forth.) In all human relationships we constantly influence one another. Whenever two people live together the resulting conditions and the behavior of both are due to the interaction of both of them, even though one makes all "mistakes" and the other none, like the saint woman and her drunkard husband.

5. Influences upon a child:

a. The atmosphere of the family: The parents establish the atmosphere of the entire family. If children in a family have the same qualities, it reflects the atmosphere of the family, that is, the relationship between father and mother. If they have different qualities, it reflects existing competition between brothers and sisters.

b. The family constellation: The family constellation refers to the position of the child in the family, the sequence of brothers and sisters. An only child develops a peculiar attitude, living as a dwarf amongst giants. When a second child is born, the only child is "dethroned." The first child tries to maintain his superiority, but as the second child grows the differences between the two narrow and competition is keener. Each watches the other closely. To avoid defeat they choose different fields of endeavor and develop different personality traits, skills and interests. When the third child arrives, we have a "middle child" who has neither the rights of the older child nor the privileges of the younger. In larger families, parents sometimes arbitrarily group the children into the eldest, youngest and the "middle group." Middle child or children often give us the most difficulty.

c. Present methods of training: The feudal system with its idea of control by means of rewards and punishments has handed down to us our present ideas on training children. The two methods used today are: (a) spoiling (giving in, protecting, pampering), and (b) suppressing (fighting, ridiculing, scolding, beating). Usually a parent does both! First the child is spoiled, then as the child gets out of control, the parent tries to suppress him. Both methods have the same detrimental effect; they undermine the only basis on which a child can properly function: self confidence and courage. Both lead the child to misbehave, both imply discouragement of the child.

6. Proper methods of training:

a. Establish the proper relationship to win the child's cooperation by establishing mutual respect: the child for the parent and the parent for the child.

b. Encourage the child by not looking at and emphasizing what is wrong, but by building on what is right. Few of us know how to encourage, all are adept at discouraging.

c. Instead of punishing and rewarding, set the stage for the child to experience the logical consequences of his behavior.

d. When a child misbehaves, try to determine why he is misbehaving. A child generally knows when he is doing something wrong, but he does not know why he is doing it.

7. Why a child misbehaves: A child misbehaves for a purpose. There are four purposes:

a. To attract attention. If a child does not get enough in the right way he will misbehave in order to get more. Treatment: Eliminate giving attention to the mis-deeds. Emphasize attention in a constructive way. Instill a satisfaction of contribution or participation without reward of attention. Encourage him to the point that he is convinced he doesn't need attention to prove his value.

b. When the child is punished severely for his efforts to gain improper attention, he wishes to demonstrate his own power, "I won't do it," "I'll show you." Treatment: Don't be provoked into accepting the child's contest for power. Accept your defeat from the beginning. Assist him to substitute this power-drive for the pleasure of participating or functioning.

c. At this stage, after the contest for power has become too severe, the child has but one goal: revenge, to hurt others as he has been hurt by them. "Nobody likes me anyhow." Treatment: Don't accept the child's provocation to dislike him. Prove to him and convince him that he can be liked. Establish a feeling of belonging.

d. The last stage is when the child, completely brow-beaten, gives up in utter discouragement. ("I don't care.") Treatment here is a gradual process of general encouragement of the child's abilities and capacities to make him feel worth-while.

8. Puberty - Why adolescents are in a critical period of their lives:

a. Development of the body: Adolescence is a time of body-changes; arms and legs grow. Muscular coordination is disturbed and must be re-established. The sexual glands mature and produce a new awareness of the opposite sex.

b. Social development: As an infant, the child tries to find his place within the family. When he attends school he becomes a part of the immediate community. As an adolescent he looks for his place in society and the world at large. At this period he needs the most guidance and gets the least, because we do not realize his basic needs. The first need is respect, recognition, acknowledgement of his importance. Parents fail to supply this because they still look upon the adolescent as a child. Adolescents want to drink, smoke, and drive automobiles because this gives them the feeling of being an adult. Girls, and sometimes boys, too, who crave recognition and cannot attain it otherwise, find it in sex. Delinquency offers itself to an over-ambitious youngster as a means to gain importance without much effort. Unless we give all adolescents a sense of recognition within our society, we cannot hope to solve the delinquency problem.

9. What we as police officers can do:

a. The police officer represents to the child: The symbol of masculinity ("a big shot") and the representative of power and authority (the law). As a result of these, the police officer may be a much more powerful influence than a parent or teacher.

b. How to deal with a child: The important thing is not so much what to do as what not to do. We know much better what we should not do. If we stop and think of what we should not do and avoid it, then we are on the right track. Don't scold and preach. Be human and kind.

Don't look down on the child, but show your sympathy. Don't bribe; bribing never breeds respect. First win the child, then encourage him. Find some good in him and build on it.

c. How to make a child talk: Make him talk by removing his fears. See in him a human being and make him feel it. Show him your sympathy. Refer to him as being "pushed around" and abused. Let him do the talking. The stubborn, tough youngster is usually a frightened child beneath.

10. Rules to remember: Win him - respect him - encourage him. Remember that a police officer can have a tremendous influence over a child. He may be the first person in a child's life to give him proper understanding, respect and encouragement after the child had made up his mind that there is no point or purpose in being good.

Case studies were used to illustrate many points. The police officers themselves contributed their own experiences in connection with the problems under discussion.

The interest on the part of the police in this subject matter and the depth of their understanding of the principles outlined was most gratifying. Before the training course started, there was some apprehension in regard to the reaction which the policemen, who had never been exposed to psychiatry before, would have to such a program. The unexpected receptiveness and enthusiastic response can be attributed to the down to earth and common sense approach of Individual Psychology. Part of the response is also due to the fact that the Park Police has maintained a continuous in-service training program for its six hundred and fifty officers for the past eleven years. In a poll of the officers, taken afterwards, this series of lectures was named as one of the most useful courses ever given in the police training school.