

INDIVIDUAL  
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Dear Friends:

In this number we are introducing two new features: one is the publication of an original paper; the other is a Chicago column. Perhaps our groups in New York and Rio de Janeiro and other large groups might like also to have their present and future activities published regularly in a special column. We would enjoy following their activities.

We hope you won't mind our asking you again for comments and suggestions which might help us improve the News.

Thank you all again for your nice words of encouragement.

The Editor

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#### DIFFERENT STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL DIFFICULTIES

by

Dr. Alexandra Adler

When discussing educational problems, parents frequently express fear lest their children develop into criminals or neurotics in later life. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that any symptom of mental aberration may appear in a child without having at all the same significance as in an adult. The child is likely to try out a great many tricks. From the way adults react to them, he will conclude which attitude spells success for him. A child cannot be expected to know what is right and what is wrong. He learns these by the results of his behavior when he is confronted with his environment. Therefore, all kinds of neurotic symptoms (as phobias, compulsions, hysteric symptoms) as well as "criminal behavior" (for instance, stealing, tendency to injure others, etc.) appear during childhood. Some of these can be seen in every child. However, such symptoms are usually of short duration since a normal child comparatively quickly feels that he can be more successful in a socially acceptable way.

Some time ago, the following history of a case of bedwetting was given to me for interpretation. It concerns a boy five years of age, a third child in a family of four. When he was two years old, he lost

a very much loved nurse who had worshiped and spoiled him. Shortly afterward the fourth child arrived. At about the same time, he turned against his mother, who owing to pregnancy and birth of the fourth child, was unable to pay very much attention to him. He had always wetted the bed, and this gradually became worse. He also presented other symptoms, as writing all over the walls of the house. One morning he awoke in a dry bed, and was very interested in this; but as no one took any notice, he took a glass of water and carefully wet the bed.

In this case the child was apparently consciously fooling his family. He was aware that bedwetting was of some advantage to him. It brought him the attention of his family which, from his point of view, was a success. The fact that he did not wet the bed was to his family a sign of progress but a sign of failure in his opinion. So he did his best to correct this failure and poured water into his dry bed.

Cases in which patients apparently are fooling their families or their doctors show us clearly what the patients are striving for. It seems as if fooling may be under certain circumstances a first step in the neurotic development. At times we may see this symptom together with neurotic symptoms, the meaning of which is unknown to the patient.

The meaning of the symptom does not change considerably whether it originates from the "subconscious", which means it originates without the patient understanding the purpose of the symptom, or, as in this case, with a clear understanding. Probably most children with neurotic symptoms do not understand their meaning.

On the other hand, this case shows that merely knowing about the meaning of a symptom is not enough to bring about any cure. This child, for instance, apparently was still convinced that he was right in wetting the bed. He did not see any other way of being successful.

Such cases are very instructive in demonstrating different stages of mental diseases. If a neurosis gets established, the patient is, as a rule, hiding the meaning of the symptom from himself. He recognizes reality with its demands which his neurotic symptoms prevent him from meeting, and these symptoms present themselves seemingly independent from the conscious personality.

We still have not gone far enough to predict the development into a psychosis. As far as the literature and my own experience go, a psychosis has been "predicted" correctly, up to now, only when it was already present. This can also be seen from the excellent report by Mooney and Witmer (1) who examined the records of child guidance clinics and followed children who later became psychotic. The patients had been thoroughly examined from the psychiatric and psychological point of view. The only common trend in all these children was that they were described as solitary or seclusive. However, we know from our experience that this is one of the most frequent complaints of children brought to the child guidance clinics. All of us know

of some unfortunate cases who were never expected to develop into psychotics but, who although they did not show definite trends pointing toward the malignant development, apparently had some mental difficulties. Even the comparatively large group of "model children" who later developed schizophrenia were usually considered "queer" during their childhood and adolescence. With the expression "queer" was meant that the patient showed certain exaggerated responses to different situations." One can recognize in many symptoms of a psychosis an exaggerated response to different stimuli. But this consideration does not help us to understand why some of these types developed into psychosis while others did not.

1. Mooney, M. and Witmer, H. L.: Ten Problem Children Who Later Became Psychotic. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 3:109, December, 1932.

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#### I. P. LITERATURE

PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE by Erwin Wexberg, M. D. Mental Hygiene, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, October, 1939, pp. 594-600.

In retrospect we view the years between fifteen and twenty-five as Dr. Wexberg describes them--"years full of hope, optimism, and happy illusions". But to the parent, teacher, and psychiatrist who watches over youth, these years may and often do present a multitude of problems--the well-known problems of adolescence. Although it is in early adolescence that physical strength and well-being are at their height and the climax of mental capacity is reached, Dr. Wexberg emphasizes the fact that actual intellectual maturity as measured by accomplishments and maturity of emotional life and character are attained much later.

"Why character should be delayed in its development" is Dr. Wexberg's point of departure. He limits himself to a single, but probably the most important factor behind this lag in character development--the adolescent's relationship to his family.

Dr. Wexberg describes briefly and in general the change from the obedience, willing or unwilling, of the child to the open rebellion, impertinence, resentment, and truancy of the adolescent who is striving for "independence, freedom and the right of selfdetermination." Parent and child occupy opposite camps. There is no attempt to understand each other. The parent is convinced of the rightness of his stand: The child is equally convinced of the rightness of his.

Brief anecdotal case histories illustrate the failure of force. Dr. Wexberg recognizes, nevertheless, the fact that during adolescence important decisions must be made. Shall I let him quit school? Shall I let him go around with that crowd? Only through mutual

confidence and understanding can child and parent make these decisions wisely. But as Dr. Wexberg points out, preventive measures in the early life of the child should erect this foundation of confidence and understanding. "Preparing the child for his life as an adult person" is, according to Wexberg, the building up of an immunity to the problems of adolescence. For the child who has been trained in self-reliance and responsibility, there is no sudden revolt; he has been growing-up into independence since he was a baby.

Jane Bermond

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## REVIEWS

Abraham Lincoln Center Camp under the direction of Miss Elizabeth Baker has compiled a handbook for its staff workers. We quote the following interesting sections.

In the chapter "Worker-Camper Relationship" we find a section on "Motivations". "Although the majority of the campers are from the underprivileged group, it is not to be conceived that they are any different from other children. They are not problem children, but children with problems, especially environmental problems such as adults with wrong attitudes about relations with children.

"Many motivations for behavior exist including: the desire for attention; discouragement in competition; disbelief in the good intentions of others; the wish to impress others with superiority; the wish to punish an offending world; disbelief in capacity to contribute."

From the section "Treatment":

"Treatment must be based on understanding, both of theoretical material and the individual child. Workers can learn a great deal by training themselves to observe children in groups and deducting attitudes toward the life situation from that behavior.

"Workers should be careful not to blame the background of the child for his behavior which makes for inactivity, but should regard a problem as a challenge to his ability to solve it. Workers can solve these problems more easily by ingenuous treatment and allowing nothing to excite them.

"A friendly relationship with the child is a basis for effective treatment. This is not to be confused with over-identification and subjective treatment. The child should be encouraged to accomplish what is possible for him whether in the matter of obtaining additional skills or in the field of human relationships with individuals or the group. The encouragement and appreciation should be on the basis of the child's contribution; not his physical appearance or material possessions; and his own standards--not in competition with others.

"The worker should maintain a sincere interest in the child's point of view. He can well afford frequently to ask the child's advice about decisions without fear of undermining his own authority. He should assist the child to adjust to persons of his own age in a well-rounded program of interest and activity.

"The worker must retain a sense of gaiety and good humor at appropriate times. He must mean what he says; be calm, relaxed, soft-voiced, fair, consistent; and not talk too much especially moralizing. He should anticipate a social reaction which will go farthest to produce the desired results. He should be consistent in attitudes and retain a substantial faith in the child's good intentions no matter what he does. Above all the worker must practice what he preaches.

"The worker must use a good deal of ingenuity in dealing with children. Natural consequences are most successful in coping with problems. These things which naturally result and are not superimposed by adult authority are consequences which induce conformity. This includes group pressure. The same methods will not work all the time with all children and therefore must be varied to suit the individual instance.

"The worker should cultivate a psychological rather than a logical approach to problems of behavior. Children are more apt at understanding psychological explanations than adults because they are less inhibited and more frank than adults. Children are quick to sense emotional reactions and are able to use these factors to best advantage. These psychological discussions or explanations can be used with both individuals and groups effectively."

Would you like to hear more from this remarkable handbook?

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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We have received the following comments on the News. You can be sure of our gratitude for all remarks, even unfavorable ones. Unfortunately, we have not received any statement of adverse criticism, which must certainly exist. We intend to publish any future comments in our News and thank all those who have already written us.

"All the people I know like the News Letter tremendously and are enchanted by its existence."

Alexandra Adler, M.D.

"Es ist mir ein Bedürfnis Ihnen zu sagen, dass mich das Erscheinen der I.P. News sehr freut." (I want so very much to tell you how pleased I am with the appearance of the I.P. News.)

Raissa Adler

"Congratulations on the enterprise. I hope it will prosper and eventually grow into a fullfledged journal.

H. L. Ansbacher

"I am so glad you are starting a magazine in America. It was Adler's dearest wish, and indeed, he did not think Individual Psychology could spread any other way."

Phyllis Bottome

"I feel that you are making a worthwhile attempt to unite the disorganized followers of a common belief and I commend you for your efforts."

Robert C. Fagan

"Please continue the work that you have started."

W. Hepner

"I have enjoyed the numbers of Individual Psychology very much."

Marjorie Johnson

"I have enjoyed the News very much and feel that it was really necessary."

B. Krausz

"It was a real joy to receive the I. P. News. At last I have the assurance that I am not struggling in isolation and in vain, without contact with the work of others. I believe the News is a good thing and the beginning of a new journal. My best congratulations."

E. Lindenfeld

"It is good to know that at long last this fond dream--the I. P. News--now has become a reality.....Naturally no one can be more enthusiastic about it than I."

Edyth B. Menser

"We were very happy to learn that there is again to be an Individual Psychology publication."

Bernard V. Strauss, M.D.

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Mr. James W. Kerr sends us "Costume Personality Charts" designed by Rose Netzorg Kerr. They are being published by Fairbairn Publishers, Waldwick, New Jersey, which is the trade name of Mr. Kerr's publishing business for art education. These charts used in colleges and universities in the art departments and home economics courses are especially interesting to us because Alfred Adler advised Mrs. Kerr while she worked them out and he saw the final draft. Throughout the charts one feels Adler's influence. Mrs. Kerr recognizes costume design as an integral part and expression of the personality. She says, "As a therapist with an understanding heart and a strong sense of encouraging direction, you will read the total personality of the girl." By answering this questionnaire even the

individual girl or woman cannot fail to gain an insight into her own personality problems as expressed in her manner of dress. More valuable would be the use of these charts in group discussions where questions, answers, interpretations, and solutions could be exchanged. Mrs. Kerr has worded her questions clearly and simply. The pen sketches that accompany this stimulating material are appropriate and clever.

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#### CHICAGO COLUMN

We hope to be able to publish in this column all the different activities of our group as they occur. Your contributions are necessary to complete our reports.

The Chicago Association has increased its activities. An educational group has been organized under the leadership of Dr. Charles Adler and Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs; and the organization of a medical group under the leadership of Dr. Nita Arnold is scheduled to start in January.

The first Friday of every month the central and associate members meet to hear a lecture and discuss a general subject. The educational group meets the last Friday of every month when a specific educational problem is presented for discussion.

An advanced class conducted by Dr. Arnold and Dr. Dreikurs will be started sometime in January.

Our meetings take place in our own lecture room, 612 N. Michigan Avenue. To raise funds for redecoration and new furnishings a musicale will be given at Dr. Arnold's home January 12.

As far as activities of our members are concerned, we want to mention the report received from Miss Elly Redwin. Her work with problem children led her to organize a mothers' group for the discussion of educational questions. In the past they have met every Friday in a private home, but they will stabilize the group in connection with the Y.M.C.A. We wish this enterprize much luck.