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# Grade Crossing in Child Life

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**I**N THESE days of automobiles with the consequent faster life which they have brought the Stop-Look-Listen Signs at the grade crossings become of tremendous significance in the saving of life and limb. In the life of every child there are many grade crossings so to speak—places in his life where there is a need of Stop-Look-Listen signs to control his behavior.

I must confess at the very beginning that I am not going to tell much about the grade crossings as I am about the sign post. I am using the term, 'grade-crossing' as the name of those places in a child's life where his behavior needs to be changed in some way. At one time he needs to stop doing immediately the thing in which he is engaged; more frequently, his behavior needs to be changed only in part, some redirection is advisable. Again all that may be needed is encouragement to continue along the way that he has chosen. The parent is the logical as well as the natural sign post in these grade crossing situations or, perhaps better, forked-road situations, in which the child is sure to find himself again and again. Railroad companies and road commissioners are careful to erect the signs at the proper places. Failure to do so would mean an even greater toll of life and limb not to mention the financial responsibility which would have to be faced in case of accident. Because of ignorance and carelessness on the part of parents, in numbers which are appalling, the child has no assurance that warning or other informational signs will be placed along the mental, spiritual, and moral roads which he has to travel and, even more unfortunately, when he does find them scattered here and there the information which they bear is not always reliable. The responsibility, if disaster results, rests squarely upon the shoulders of parents and the damage suits are paid in bitter tears of disappointment that the child has not turned out well.

These guide posts which the parent may use if he knows about them and if he is interested enough in them, as he surely ought to be, are erected from an intimate first hand study of human nature such as psychology affords. There are a few rules of procedure growing out of a psychological study of child nature which should be of service in helping you change a child's behavior when such should be done. They might be called principles of rewards and punishments. They are principles which may be placed under four groups. The first two suggest changes which may need to be brought about in you as the parent; the last two have more direct reference to the child.

The first is, "Keeping your job on your mind." And what is your job as a parent? Making every contribution that you can possibly make to the end that your child may develop into an adult fully equal to the tasks which he himself will have to do. To this end he needs to develop a high degree of self confidence and independence. He needs to be able to stand squarely upon his own feet when he becomes a man. With this sense of independence he must have due regard

Four essential factors in training are:

Keep your job on your mind.  
Be consistent.  
Reward rather than punish.  
Use the best incentive that is available.

for the rights of others as well as a sympathetic attitude toward humankind in general. Anything which you are about to require of a child must be judged in the light of this objective. If it works toward this end, your demands are just and you must insist on the child obediently carrying out your wishes.

The second is, "Be consistent." Think of yourself, as you really are, as the child's first, and consequently most important, representative of law and order. Law, whether it is of man, of nature or of God, is consistent. The child should never have reason to expect that 'Mother will not count this time,' or 'she may forget,' or 'she may change her mind.' This is a very difficult rule to observe but there are one or two suggestions which may make it a bit easier. To develop the habit of thinking your problems thru rather than merely feeling them thru will save you many mistakes and consequent inconsistencies. You will frequently find that when you turn the searchlight of your own thinking upon the problem that the issue is in doubt. Maybe the child is in the right after all, or what he is doing may make no fundamental differences. Perhaps the demands which you were about to make were for your temporary convenience merely and might not square with your larger program for the child's life. Whenever you are uncertain as to what should be done, give the child the benefit of the doubt. Many times all that you need to do is simply to wait and the matter will clear up automatically. A certain mother, already dressed to go out for the evening, was hearing her small boy say his evening prayer. Much to her surprise he rushed through it pell-mell. Naturally she felt it her duty to remonstrate but it developed that the child was hurrying thru to help mother get off to her engagement sooner. All doubtful problems will not be settled as easily as this but in the interest of consistency it is better to let the problem pass by apparently unobserved than to attempt an unwise solution.

I consider these first two principles fundamental. The observance of the others are but means to the ends toward which we are striving.

Third, "Where possible, reward the child rather than punish." I have said, 'where possible' because I realize that this rule, like most rules, has limitations in its uses. To observe its spirit means that you are going to deal with your child positively rather than negatively. You are attempting to avoid the extreme reached by the mother about whom we have all heard who sent James out to see what little brother Johnny was doing with instructions to tell him not to do it. When the noise of free and innocent play

begins to get on your nerves you are not going to say, "Do stop that noise, you are driving me crazy!", rather you are going to say, "I noticed that the violets were coming out down in the grove yesterday, when I was looking for dandelion greens. I wonder if you would not like to go and gather some." And when they joyously respond to your suggestion you will not fail to show your unstinted approval. How much better this method is than to punish them for not stopping the noise. Punishment when effective tends to break the spirit. A dog that has been habitually whipped crawls on his belly or goes about with his tail between his legs.

You will, of course, have to punish now and then. Bad habits have grown up in spite of you and certain instincts for which you are not responsible will have to be checked or considerably modified. Punishment of the right sort, properly directed, will bring about these changes very effectively.

Fourth, "Use the best incentive that is available." The incentive or motive is bound to be a reward or a punishment of some kind. There are several suggestions that will help you in the selection of the best.

For instance, everything being equal, the reward or the punishment should be natural or, at least, the logical outcome of the behavior with which you are linking it up. When the small child is advised not to play with the knife and does so in spite of the advice and cuts his finger, the sequence of events seems natural enough. When he is told to share his toys with his little visitor and does not follow the suggestion of mother, he is quick to see the significance if mother takes the toys away from him. The child has no tendency to question the justice of a punishment which is the natural outcome of his misbehavior. This rule, again, has its limitations. One cannot follow nature throughout. Nature's punishments are always of this character, but frequently they are too costly. The person does not live to profit by the punishment.

The application of this fourth principle means, further, that you will more and more appeal to altruistic motives rather than to selfish ones. Mother's pleasure ought soon to be a greater reward than a stick of candy. As development goes on the good of the greatest number should be a stronger reason for right conduct than mother's happiness if the two should unfortunately conflict.

Again if you choose the best incentive you will choose a reward or a punishment that is constructive. That is to say, it will be of such a nature that it will not merely lead to the continuance or the avoidance of the act with which you are associating it, but it will be worth while in itself. Sending a child to bed for some naughtiness is scarcely a constructive punishment as it tends to make unpleasant an act which under ordinary circumstances a child would like to do. To reward a child by giving him candy is to fix a habit which you may wish had not been established. To punish a child by making him stay indoors to help with the

(Continued on Page 14)

## United Cigar Store

Service and Smoking  
218 MAIN STREET

## ALM AND SON

### Shoe Repairs

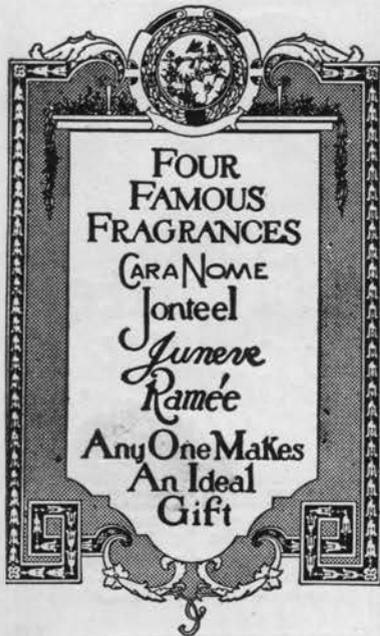
Speed and  
Satisfaction.

Main Street

## GODARD'S GIFT SHOP

Martha Washington  
Candies

210 MAIN



## Lowry & Theis

THE REXALL STORE

217 Main St. Ames, Iowa

met May 11, and a tentative program was suggested by the chairman, Genevieve A. Callahan. Other members of the committee present were: Fern Stover, Mrs. Beulah Schenk, Anna Olsen and Josephine Wylie of the publicity committee.

Miss Callahan has gone over the matter of the program for the annual meeting in November in a very thorough manner and it only remains to line up the various out-of-town people for the program.

The keynote of the whole program is, as planned, "The American Home", including interesting features for the Homemaker, the Home Economics business woman and the Home Economics teacher.

### PARTY SPIRIT

Thirza Hull

"A Brazil nut! That's what I am!" proudly stated a curly headed lad as he held his place card up to view. "How dare you say that I'm a peanut?"

"You are a peanut, Billy," returned another boy, sure of his convictions. "Just ask Mrs. Jones if you aren't."

The weeping Billy was led to his hostess, who alone could pass the final verdict. The hostess had by this time discovered her mistake in the choice of place cards. On each was a picture of a different variety of nut and the identification of the varieties was designed to furnish part of the afternoon's entertainment. And now here she was with a weeping child on her hands and her pleasant little plan completely ruined.

Small boys and parties are things which, when taken together, are to be approached cautiously. Controversies are easy to start and hard to stop. Place cards should add to the spirit of a party without giving any chance for a disagreement to arise. Now, if the place cards, instead of being nuts, had been small candy trees, the boughs could have been easily stripped and no evidence left from which to conjure mischief.

Such place cards are made either from gumdrops or fudge, with the aid of small green wire. Fudge can be molded into very life-like tree trunks and gum drops, though not as pictorial, are just as palatable. Green wire can be fashioned into branches that can hold gumdrop leaves and a plain white card bearing the child's name. As a table decoration, a similar tree can be made on a larger scale. It is possible for such a tree to be very fruitful, even bearing lemon and orange drops on the same branch. The beauty of these place cards is that they are perfectly harmless.

One of the cleverest parties I have ever seen given for children was a Circus Party. Everything was there from the clowns to the calliope. The invitations were tiny paper elephants and the entrance to the dining room was a big circus hoop. The place cards were exceptionally clever and each one different from the rest. Here a fierce lion stood next to a white rabbit with pink ears and eyes. All the animals were drawn as lifelike as possible and were painted as nearly like the children's ideal as grown-ups could get them. The leopard **must** have big spots and the giraffe **must** have a long neck. Part of the animal was left unpainted so that the child's name could be printed on the card. Standards on the back made the animals stand up and they really felt that they were at a circus parade marching around the table.

In the center of the table was a circus

ring, in which paper dolls were posed in hair raising positions on a tight rope and on a trapeze, while down below in the ring was a group of funny clowns. At either end of the table were two camels—the jointed wooden toys of which children are so fond—and on the back of each were two saddle bags filled with candy and nuts.

From the moment the children stepped inside the circus hoop into the dining room they were entranced. Every child loves a circus and all that goes with it. They really felt that they were at a circus when the hostess served pink lemonade and animal crackers. We noticed that when every child left, he carefully took with him his place card and it is safe to say that nearly all of the children played circus the next day in their sand piles and back yards.

### A Morning With the Children

(Continued from Page 2)

"Would you rather sit in our circle Jimmie, or sit on a chair by yourself?"

Another question might be, "Why do you not have more childish fights?" And the answer would be "children under normal conditions do not do this, only spoiled children do."

Some ideas of nutrition and good health are conveyed to these youthful minds. A desire to want to drink milk and eat spinach is stimulated by the granting of stars for the accomplishment of the feat. Four year old Doris, upon returning home from the laboratory said to her mother, "Mamma, teacher says I musn't eat fried bread or pancakes for breakfast so don't you give them to me."

"What may you eat?"

"Oatmeal, and milk and oranges."

The laboratory then without interference with the function of furnishing an educational unit for the preschool child—gives an opportunity to college students for psychological studies of child training and behavior problems.

### Grade Crossing in Child Life

(Continued from Page 4)

dishes is to place a chore which is necessary and worth while in the wrong light from the boy's point of view.

Finally the best incentive is one which is commensurate with the behavior with which you are associating it. In other words, you should not reward too extravagantly or punish too severely. Let the degree or the amount of it be determined by the situation itself. The child will put down a punishment which is too severe as unjust and it may be the beginning of an unwholesome attitude toward the parent who has administered it. To reward unduly centers attention upon the reward rather than upon the act which you are trying to fix as a habit.

### To Go To Potter Metabolic Clinic

Adele Herbst, '25 and Agnes Crain '25 are to go in October to the Potter Metabolic Clinic at Santa Barbara, California, as student dieticians.

Mrs. Floyd C. Klingman '11, and son, John Maxwell, sailed on February 27 for Port au Prince, Haiti, to join Mr. Klingman who is there in government service.

Ila French '24, is at present principal of the consolidated schools at Beaver, Iowa.