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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. Under the best conditions there are many grade crossings so to speak—places in his life where there is a need of Stop-Look-Listen signs to control the 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 coping. At one time he needs to stop doing immediately the thing in which he is engaged; more frequently, his behavior needs to be changed and some restriction is advisable. Again all that may be needed is encouragement to continue along the way that he has chosen. The parent may direct his attention to the child's need for signs as he points out the best way to go in his work. Railroad companies and road commissioners are careful to erect the signs at the proper places. Failure to do so would make 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 grade posts which the parent may direct his attention to 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 used to help change a child's behavior when such should be done. They might be called principles of rewards and punishments.

There are four such principles 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 references to the child.

The first is, "Keep your job on your mind." And what is your job as a parent? It is making a contribution that you can possibly make. The endeavor is to bring about that which may bring about 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 for the rights of others as well as a sympathetic attitude toward human kind 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 them through. Otherwise you are taking advantage of his weakness.

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 suspect 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 move you many miles in the right direction. 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 life. Wherever 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 to explain to the child 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 pel-mell. Naturally she felt it her duty to reprimand but it developed that the child was hurried thru 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 apparatus 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.

The third principle, reward the child rather than punish. I have said, 'where possible' because I realize that this rule, like most rules, has limitations. Its ultimate object is to enable the child 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 for the rights of others as well as a sympathetic attitude toward human kind 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 them through. Otherwise you are taking advantage of his weakness.

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 woods 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 crawled on his belly or goes about with his tail between his legs till, of course, he has learned not to do it any more.

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 to play with his toys again, he 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 asks him if he wants his toys again. The child has no tendency to question the justice of a punishment which is the natural outcome of his misbehavior. This confidence, has its limitations, One can not follow nature throughout. Nature's punishments are always of this character, but frequently they are too costly. The child may 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 unthoughtful act is not re- active punishment as it tends to make unpleasant an act which under ordinary circumstances would not have been noticed. 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

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met May 11, and a tentative program was suggested by the chairman, Genevieve A. Cullah. Other members down on the committee present were: Fern Stover, Mrs. Beulah Schenk, Anna Olsen and Jose-
phine Wylie of the publicity committee. Miss Cullah is once more the chair-
ner of the program for the annual meet-
ing in November in a very thorough man-
ner and it only remains to line up the
various out-of-town people for the pro-
gram.

The keynote of the whole program is,
as planned: "The American Home was a cir-

The invitations were tiny paper elephants and the en-
trance to the dining room was a big cir-

A Morning With the Children
(Continued from Page 2)

"Would you rather sit in our circle Jim-

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 Mary, upon re-
turning home from the laboratory said
to her mother, "Mamma, teacher says
I mustn'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 interfer-
ce with the function of furnishing an
educational unit for the preschool child—gives an opportunity to college students
for psychological studies of child train-
ing and behavior problems.

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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 extra-
 vagantly 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 unwelcome attitude toward the par-
tent 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

Adede Herbst, '25 and Agnes Crain '25
are to be at the Potter Meta-

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. The place card holder on the
ring was a group of funny clowns. At
either end of the table were two camels
—the jointed wooden toys of which chil-
dren 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 encircled. Every child
loved a circus and all that goes with it.

They really felt that they were at a cir-
cus parade marching around the table.

and animal crackers.

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