

Elizabeth Strachan



How to bring out the BEST in YOUR CHILD

PART 5

TEN-PART COURSE TITLES



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How to Bring Out The Best In Your Child



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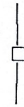
THE PARENTS ASSOCIATION

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PART FIVE

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ILLUSTRATION 83

At mother's suggestion the daughter has made delicious home-made candy which she is passing. Her trait of generosity is encouraged through well-earned praise.

HOW GOOD MANNERS SMOOTH THE WAY TO SUCCESS

By good manners, we mean far more than the ability to select the right spoon from out of an array of silverware at your plate. That particular social attainment is at best a minor one.

Good manners go deeper than this. Primarily, the well-mannered person is the one who displays thoughtful consideration of others. He has poise, courtesy, self-control, unselfishness--qualities that make for a life of usefulness.

Look, for a moment, into your own circle of acquaintances. Among them, you may find one particular person whom you just do not care to invite to your home. Why? Possibly you did so once, only to be shocked and embarrassed by his crudities, his disregard of the little social amenities that you have every right to expect of a guest in your home. Maybe he talked loudly and offensively, or perhaps he even interrupted while others were speaking. He may have accepted your hospitality without so much as a "Thank you." He may even have offended your other guests by his very rudeness. But it doesn't matter now. He has been crossed from your list. And probably from a good many other lists, too.

A lack of good manners can have grave implications, not only socially, but economically. This handicap may so mark a man that he can hardly expect to make a success of his life.

Is he himself to be blamed? In part, perhaps. But most of his difficulties as an adult can be traced to his childhood when he received inadequate training in manners.

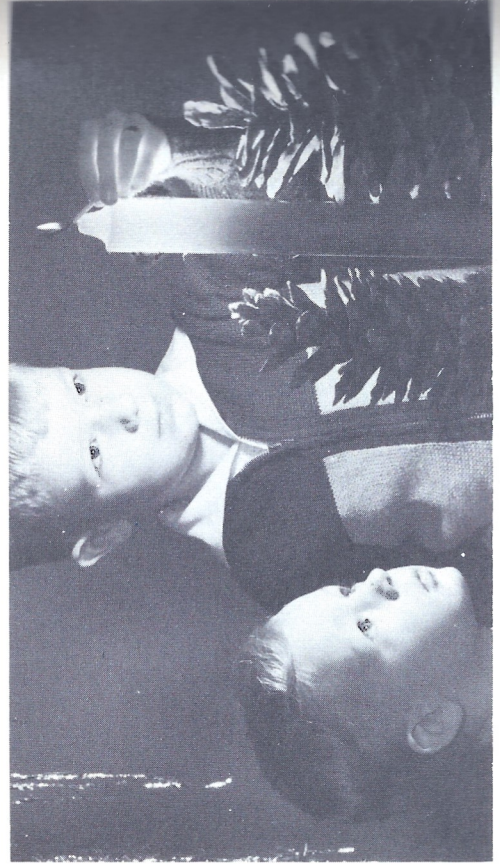
Your Child's Success Will Also Be Yours

Throughout this course, you have noted the great responsibility that rests upon you as a parent. Do not regard this as a heavy burden that can drag you down. Rather, regard it as a glorious responsibility which will give you a lift. After all, as we grow older, we live in our children. They represent our lives. Their failures are ours, but so also are their successes.

People respect and admire the parents of a well-mannered child. We would like to earn that respect and admiration ourselves. Quite aside from our own satisfaction, however, we want above all to insure cultured behavior in our child for his own benefit.

In the pages that follow, you will find many concrete suggestions on training your child to use good manners. You will learn how to weed out undesirable habits such as thumb-sucking and nail-biting; you will learn how to cultivate in your child the kind of behavior that is socially pleasing and acceptable.

But this is more than a book on etiquette and outward customs. This part of the course is designed to help you get to the very heart of your child and create within him an altruistic, unselfish spirit without which mere etiquette is but sham.



HOW TO TEACH MANNERS

Are Good Manners Natural?

In the case of a well-mannered adult, we can say that good manners come naturally to him. Throughout the years, his practice of courtesy has become a very part of him. With children, however, no habit of good manners has been formed.

Children do things instinctively. Their actions and reactions are not thought out, for they have not had enough experience to distinguish the niceties of living in a civilized society.

It is not for us to despair when we see our children display impoliteness. They simply do not know any better. School children may laugh at a newcomer who stammers. They may taunt him, or even mimic him. Cruel? It is not meant to be cruel. Thoughtless? Certainly, it is thoughtless, because these children have never been confronted with such a situation. They have never had their thought directed to the proper attitude toward those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Good manners, then, must be taught. How can we hope to have our children well-mannered unless we definitely teach them? The other day I overheard two adults talking to each other about a neighbor child. "Aren't his manners awful?" said one. The other replied, "Well, what can you expect? He doesn't know any better." The first adult countered, "You mean his parents don't know any better!"

Thus does the behavior of a child reflect upon his parents. To train your child properly does take time, but it is time well spent, not only for your own sake, but for his.

How Much Training?

It is impossible to measure and specifically state the exact amount of time a parent should spend in teaching his child good manners. Some children learn quickly, some less quickly. But it is a basic fact that most children have

strong, selfish instincts which they display in acts of impatience and rudeness. Do not be discouraged if you discover that your child needs a great deal of training in good manners. This book is designed to help you. If you follow the instructions carefully, you will be richly rewarded, not only today and tomorrow, but in the years to come as you see your child make a happy and successful adjustment to his environment. (See Illustration 84.)

Teaching "Please"

One mother writes in exasperation, "I tell my son over and over again to say "Please," and he simply will not do it."

It goes without saying that the child whose parents are habitually courteous will find it easier to use polite expressions than will the child who is merely told to say certain words at certain times.

At this point you might find it helpful to examine your own customary manner of asking for something. Suppose you want a book that happens to be lying on the dining room table. There are different ways of persuading your child to bring it to you. One way is to come out flat-footed and say, "John, bring me that book." Another way is to say pleasantly, "John, will you please bring me that book?"

What a difference! The very word "please" carries with it the connotation of giving pleasure, of making glad. For this reason, you will do well to teach this gracious word to your child as soon as he can talk. I knew one little toddler who invariably surprised grownups by her precocious use of the word. Every time she would so much as hiccup, she would smile apologetically and say "Pommie please!" ("Pardon me, please!")

Here is a simple way to teach your child to say "please" when he wants something. Have in your hand an attractive object, say, a bright-colored ball. As soon as the child reaches for it, get his attention, smile, and say very distinctly, "Say, 'Please!'" As soon as he makes the attempt, exclaim, "That's fine! Now you may have the ball." After a few moments, repeat the procedure. He will soon grasp the idea that he is to say "please" whenever he asks for an object. If, upon occasion, he should forget, simply withhold the object slightly and he will remember.



ILLUSTRATION 84

This girl has said "Please" and is ready to say "Thank you." The boy has been properly taught to pass a pitcher with the handle toward the other person. If chairs were closer, he of course would pass with his other hand.

Teaching "Thank You"

One of the most delightful ways of teaching "Thank you" is the following game, called "Muggins." It is played with small 2 x 3 1/2 inch cards. One nice thing about this game is that the children themselves can prepare the equipment. That is, they can cut thirty-six plain white cards of the proper dimensions and write on each card the required words.

The thirty-six cards represent four different families of nine members each.

The names of the families are as follows: Gardener Family, Hearty Family, Funny Duffer Family, Policeman's Family.

The nine members of each family are these: Grandfather, Father, Mother, Uncle, Aunt, Brother, Sister, Little Dog Tray, Two-wheeled Cart.

To prepare the set of cards for the Gardener Family, take nine cards and write across the top of each, "Gardener Family." Across the bottom of each of these cards write one member of the family. For example, write on one card "Grandfather"; on another card, "Father"; on another, "Mother," and so on.

Do the same for the Hearty Family, the Funny Duffer Family, and the Policeman's Family. The name of the family across the top; the name of the member across the bottom.

How to Play the "Thank You" Game

Now, to play the game. Deal these thirty-six cards to the number of persons playing. Allow time for the players to classify their cards, grouping them according to Families. The object of the game is to see which player can first gain legitimate possession of a complete Family Set.

Each player asks for one card at a time from any other player he cares to name. For example, one player finds that he has in his hand several members of the Funny Duffer Family, so he decides to try to complete that set. He may say to another player, "Mary, I would like to have Little Dog Tray of the Funny Duffer Family." If Mary does not have that card, the next player takes a turn; if she does have the card, she must hand it over.

But right here is where the fun comes in. The player who receives the card from Mary may be so eager to accumulate the other cards of his set that he forgets to say "Thank you!" If he forgets to say "Thank you," the first player to say "Muggins" gets to take over all his cards. The player who forgot to say "Thank you," then becomes a Ghost.

Most Children Will Try to Avoid Being the Ghost

Once he becomes a Ghost, he can get back into the game if he is adroit enough to get any active player to speak to him. The Ghost may say anything which he thinks will most likely inveigle an unsuspecting player into responding to his remarks. For example, the Ghost might say, "Do you think that was fair?" or "How many more cards do you need to complete a set?" If any player answers him, the Ghost immediately calls "Muggins," takes over the cards of that player, and is thereby reinstated as an active participant in the game. The player who, in an unguarded moment, answered him, then becomes himself a Ghost.

There may be several Ghosts at one time, and they may converse with one another as they please.

Each active member of the game keeps on playing so long as he receives from any designated player the particular card he calls for and says "Thank you." As soon as he asks for a card of some one who does not have that particular card, the next player starts.

The player who runs out of cards becomes automatically a Ghost until such time as he can get some one to talk to him, or until he can legitimately call "Muggins" and take over the cards of the offending player.

The excitement grows as the game proceeds. Invariably, the more intent a player becomes on completing his set, the more likely he is to forget to say "Thank you" for each card he receives. Then another player calls "Muggins" and takes over all his accumulated cards.

Grown people, as well as children, enjoy the merriment of this entertaining and profitable game. You will enjoy playing it with your children and their friends. I heartily recommend it as a refresher for persons who have become careless about saying "Thank you!"

"Good Morning"

In teaching your child to use a friendly greeting, be sure that you yourself add the cordial touch. Put real warmth and enthusiasm into your voice. The spirit in which you express a greeting is even more important than the words that you use. In due time, your child will not only imitate the expression itself, but will take on the spirit as well.

Consider for a moment the friendly greeting, "Good morning." It is not enough merely to say the words in a perfunctory way. Put real meaning into them. Remember that "Good morning" is really a short way of saying "God give you a good morning!"

By way of drilling your child in the cordial expression of "Good morning," you might find it helpful to dramatize an imaginary situation. Play like you are his favorite uncle, Uncle John. Let your child be sitting in a chair reading a book, when "Uncle John" comes into the room. The clearing of your throat can be the cue for your child to look up and be surprised. Then, upon recognizing his favorite uncle, let him immediately arise, extend his right hand and say with the utmost cordiality, "Good morning, Uncle John!" My guess is that your youngster will love this sort of thing, especially if you take turn about in impersonating Uncle John and see which one of you can outdo the other in making the imaginary relative feel welcome.

In like manner, you can play that you are your child's schoolteacher and give him a happy drill in approaching his "teacher" with a hearty smile and pronouncing her name very distinctly. A teacher is always pleased to hear her name pronounced plainly. (See Illustration 85.)

The Special Case of "How Do You Do?"

One little girl, upon being told by her mother to say "How do you do?" to a woman friend in a department store, shrank back and refused to say a word. She buried her face in her mother's coat and put both arms around her mother's legs.

As this was not the first time the child acted in this manner, the mother, alarmed at this excessive shyness, made an appointment with me and brought the child to the Parents Association Clinic.

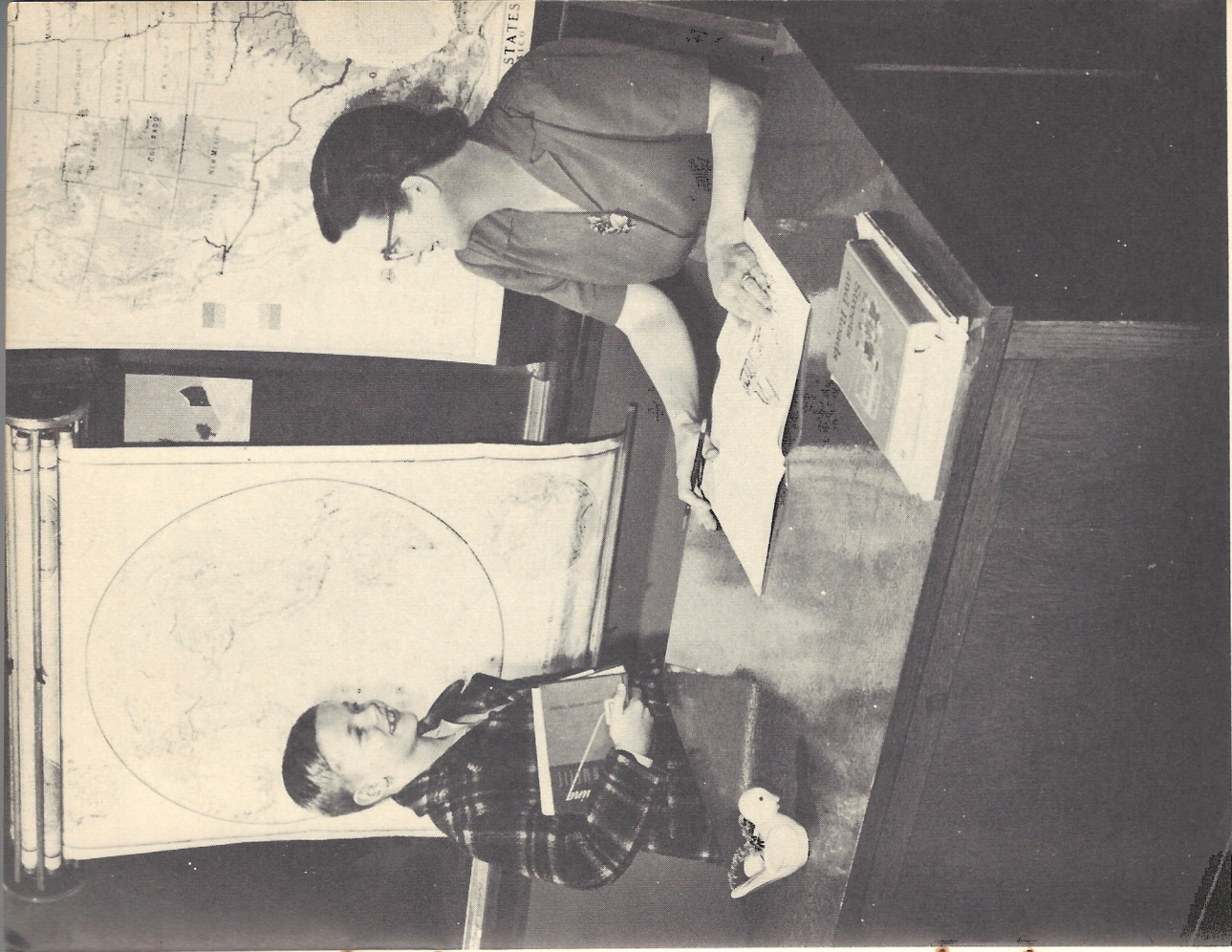


ILLUSTRATION 85

This boy enthusiastically greets his teacher with a hearty smile and says, "Good morning, Miss Thompson." She knows from his pleasing manners that he comes from a cultured home.

Immediately I began talking to the little girl in a friendly way, then joined her in playing with some of the toys in a nearby playroom. As soon as I had won her friendship, I returned with her to my office where her mother sat facing my desk. I motioned the child to my own desk chair and asked her to occupy it. "My name," I explained, "is Mr. Beery. But let's play that you are Mr. Beery sitting here in my chair. Now watch me closely to see how I talk to you. I'll stand over here and then I'll walk up to your desk, like this and say 'How do you do, Mr. Beery.' Now watch how I smile when I say it."

On completing the action, I said, "Now, it's your turn. I'll sit in the chair and you stand right over there where I was. Then you walk over here to my desk, just as I did, and say 'How do you do, Mr. Beery?'"

She came slowly toward the desk. Her head was down but with a little encouragement, she finally uttered "Hi."

I complimented her. "Oh, that's fine. You're going to learn fast. Now we'll try it again. Do just as you did before, and this time, look right up at me and smile when you say, 'How do you do, Mr. Beery.'"

"Hi" Was Followed by "How Do."
That Was TWICE as Good!

In her second trial, she managed to say, "How do." By way of alleviating her self-consciousness, I shifted our attention for the moment from herself to the door of my office. I called attention to the fact that the door was even farther away than the spot where she had been standing. I reflected further that it would not surprise me in the least for her to be able to start over there at the door and come toward me saying, "How do you do, Mr. Beery!"

She started immediately toward the door and returned saying, "How do, Mr. Beery." Each time an improvement was made, whether in enunciation or in general spirit. Before she left the Clinic, she was actually smiling as she said distinctly, "How do you do, Mr. Beery!"

A week later, after her parents had followed the same method of dramatization and encouragement, the child had overcome her shyness and was making excellent progress in greeting friends.

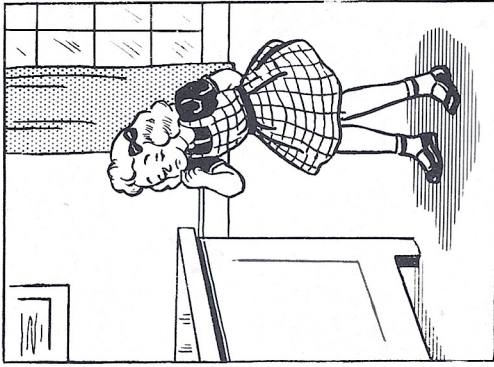


ILLUSTRATION 86

The most this little girl could say at first was, "Hi."

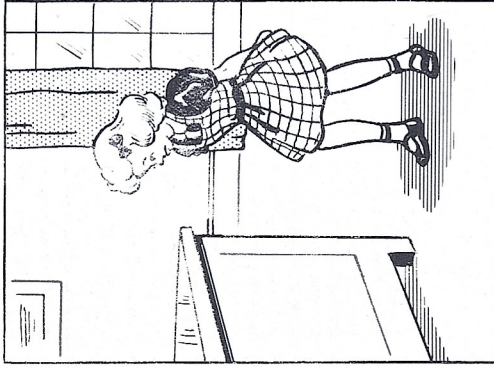


ILLUSTRATION 87

On her second attempt, she managed to say "How do."

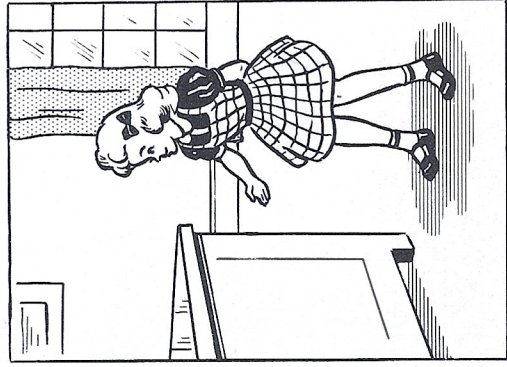


ILLUSTRATION 88

In another trial, she was able to say, "How do, Mr. Beery."

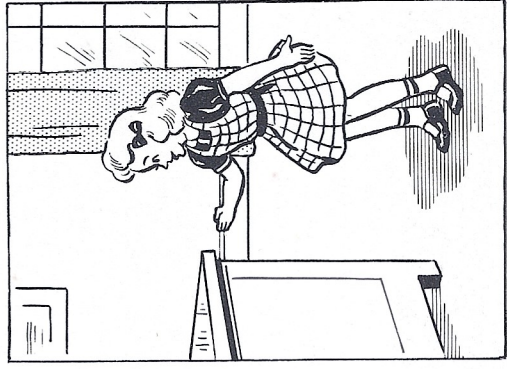


ILLUSTRATION 89

Finally, after several trials, she smiled and said, "How do you do, Mr. Beery."

TABLE MANNERS

One large happy family used this jolly method for checking up on the table manners of the various members. In the center of the table they placed a small bank in the form of a china pig. Any member of the family who broke one of the ordinary rules of table etiquette, was obliged to take from his own allowance a coin and drop it into the slot in the pig's back. Thus, if any one spilled catsup on the tablecloth, dropped a fork, upset his glass of milk, neglected to say "Please" or "Thank you," in went a coin. The children in this large family grew up to be poised, law-abiding citizens, with unusually polished table manners. Not only that. The mother declares that in the process of teaching such manners to her children, she collected in the China pig enough money to buy a completely new table service--silverware, tablecloth, napkins!

When it comes to teaching a child such points as the correct way to handle soup, the best technique is to demonstrate the positive--the right procedure and simply say, "This is the way." (See Illustration 90.)

Handling Silverware Quietly

A simple but successful technique for teaching a child to avoid rattling silverware at the table is that of playing a game.

An opportune time for playing this game would be after a meal, while the child is still seated at the table. Being well fed, he is now in a receptive and friendly mood. This is the game. Before the silverware has been cleared away, place both hands over your closed eyes and ask the child to see if he can place his knife across the edge of his plate without your hearing him. If you barely hear the knife touch the plate, say "Oh, that was awfully soft, but I really did hear it. Let's try it again!"

After two or three trials, let the child cover his closed eyes with his hands and have the fun of checking up on your ability to place your knife quietly across your plate. It will delight him if he finds that occasionally he can even outdo you in quietness. Frequent drills of this sort will train him surprisingly well in this particular refinement.

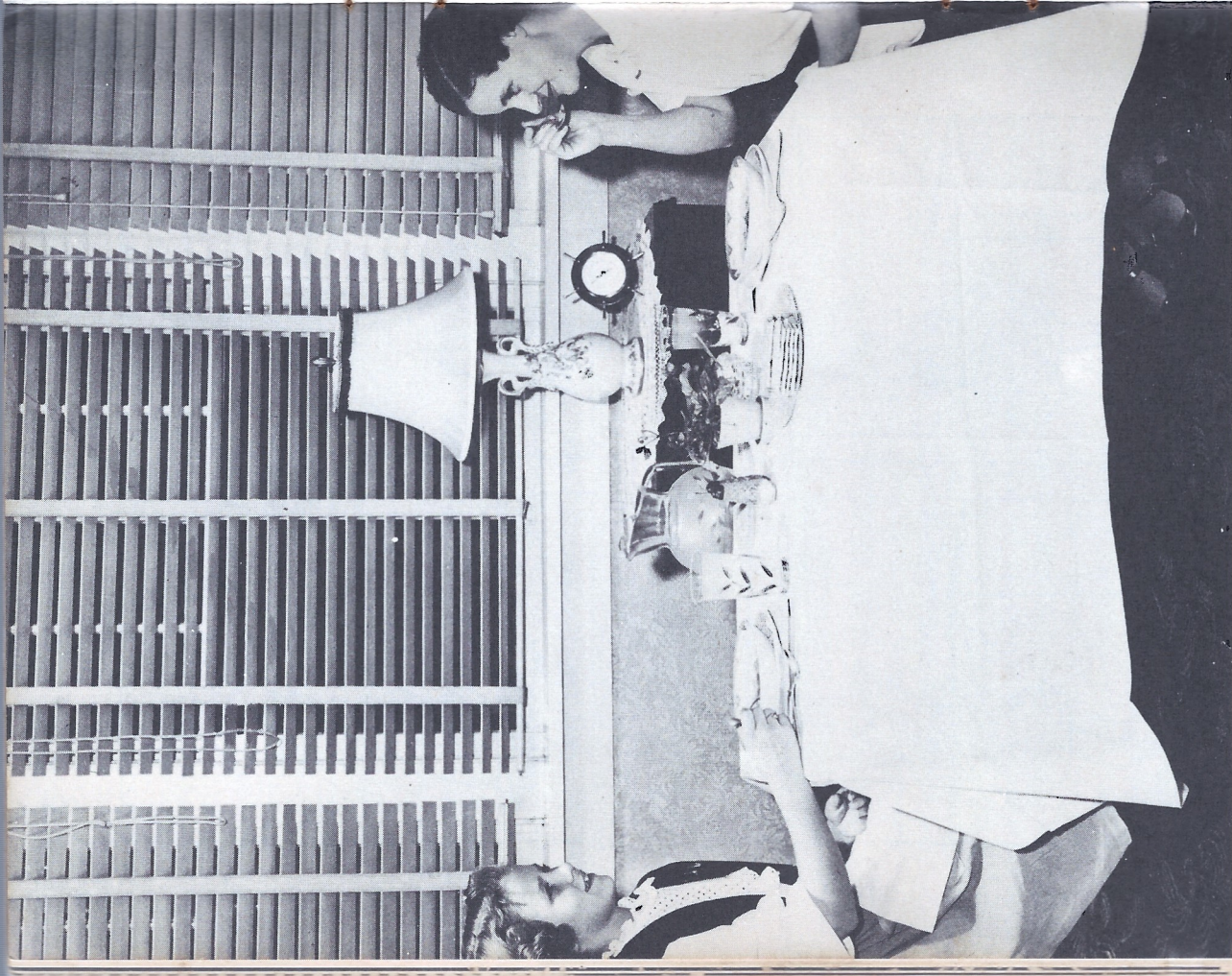


ILLUSTRATION 90

The correct method of teaching proper etiquette is not to find fault but rather to demonstrate the right thing to do. The mother simply says, "This is the way."

Leaving the Table

It is expecting too much of an active child that he should habitually sit through a long after-dinner confab in which he has no interest. However, there is a rude way of his leaving the table; and there is a gracious way.

The rude way is for him to bolt his food and run. The gracious way is for him to wait for a lull in the conversation, then say quietly, "Daddy, may I be excused from the table?" Upon receiving permission to leave, the child may then slip quietly over to his mother, or whoever happens to be the hostess, and say, "Thank you, Mother," or "Thank you, Aunt Mary, for the good dinner!" This simple expression of thanks will invariably kindle a tender response, perhaps a loving pat on the shoulder, or "Why, bless your heart! You are so very welcome!"

I know of nothing that can so endear children to the hearts of grownups as just such little courtesies as these.

General Comments About Table Manners

Table manners may also be taught on the basis of simple obedience. "When you chew your food, Donald, it's a good idea to keep your mouth closed--like this." Compare that simple instruction with, "Stop chewing your food with your mouth open. That noise you make is disgusting."

In the latter case, the command is not only negative, but it smacks of faultfinding. Such an approach would be sure to arouse resistance, or maybe even bring on indigestion, a child should never be criticized or scolded during a meal. As in the first case, simply state your instruction positively and helpfully. Meal time should be especially cheerful and never marred by any unpleasantness.

Remember always the importance of approval. At the child's very first move in the right direction, say, "Oh, you're getting the idea. That's fine!"

Sometime when you are enjoying a dinner at your favorite restaurant, you may happen to admire some particular act of courtesy, such as a boy helping his mother to be seated at the table. If you have not already given your own child private instructions on the point which you especially admired, you can make a note to do so at home when it is convenient. (See Illustration 93.)



ILLUSTRATION 92

The mother does not even mention the word, careless. The positive trait she wants to develop is CAREFULNESS. So she gives her daughter impressive tests and praises her progress. Principles involved: Suggestion and Approval.

MANNERS IN CONVERSATION

Some children talk too loudly. Still others have the unfortunate habit of interrupting while others are speaking. With patience on the part of the parent, both of these undesirable faults can be corrected.

Loud Talking

In cases where there is a deaf relative in the household, it is not at all uncommon for a child quite innocently to acquire the habit of speaking loudly.

Happily, words and sentences are comprehended even by a deaf person, not so much by being shouted as by being carefully enunciated. And so, if your child has acquired the shouting habit, sit down and explain to him--better still, demonstrate to him--that the more courteous way to make himself understood even by a deaf person is to walk right up to the person, get his attention, then pronounce every word slowly and distinctly.

If, upon occasion, the child should forget and come bursting into the house shouting to you, simply smile, place your right index finger against your lips as a gentle reminder, then answer him in a quiet, well-modulated voice.

Interrupting

One of the most annoying of all conversational habits is that of interrupting when others are speaking. Doubtless you have seen cases where the mother is earnestly engaged in conversation with guests, when in comes her youngster and demands immediate attention. The mother, not wanting to be rude to her guests, tries to pay no attention to her child at the moment, only to have him tug impatiently at her skirts, or perhaps even strike her with his fists.

You will never have such an embarrassing moment yourself if you will take precautionary measures--now.

Any child loves to be admired for little courtesies, such as saying "Thank you" on receiving a compliment, or "I'm sorry" on accidentally bumping into some one. Well, then, simply include among these little courtesies the proper etiquette when others are talking. Teach him that under no circumstances does one barge into a conversation without receiving so much as a nod of invitation.



ILLUSTRATION 93

When any point of courtesy in society happens to appeal to a mother, it is a simple matter to have her own child do that which she especially admires. She may even have fun teaching him.

By way of showing him what not to do, you might dramatize for him the situation referred to above, where a child actually strikes his mother with his fists.

Then, by way of contrast, you might dramatize for him the courteous approach, showing how the well-mannered child waits until there is a lull in the conversation, then says quietly, "Pardon me, Mother."

Have an understanding with him that whenever you are engaged in conversation with guests, and he approaches you in this courteous manner, you will give him your undivided attention just as soon as you possibly can--without being discourteous to your guests.

The Show-Off

It is not uncommon for a child who has been praised too lavishly for performance of some kind, to want to be the center of attraction wherever he happens to be. This tendency expresses itself in his insistent and repeated demands, "Look, Mother!" "See what I can do!" "Watch me!" "Now watch me do it again."

A situation of this kind requires careful handling. Perhaps the child is hungry for affection. Let him know unmistakably how precious he is to you. But some evening when he is in a receptive mood, explain to him quietly before he goes to bed that what people admire most in a child is not spectacular performance but a lovable, self-forgetful spirit.

The Gracious Touch

Children are quick to grasp the idea that underlying all good manners is a kindly spirit; a thoughtful consideration of others. It is natural at Christmas time for the children to enjoy helping to send gifts to make others happy. Sending little remembrances should not be limited to Christmas. When wrapping packages for others at any time, it is well to make enthusiastic remarks like this: "Oh, wouldn't you like to see Uncle Jim's eyes sparkle when he sees what we are sending him? My, he will be so happy!" (See Illustration 94.)

If a child has been properly trained in the basic concept of thoughtfulness for others, it is possible for him to equal his elders, if not to surpass them, in the matter of tact and delicate perception.



ILLUSTRATION 94

The idea to emphasize when sending a gift to a person at Christmas, or any time, is that it will make him feel wonderfully happy. The mother herself is enthusiastic and so the boys actively share in the pleasure of giving.

Consider little Betty's answer to Sarah Jane. The two girls met, wheeling their dolls on the sidewalk. Sarah Jane, with a defiant chip on her shoulder, said, "My doll is prettier than yours." "Oh!" agreed Betty, "That is a beautiful doll!"

Extremely Bad Manners

Some children, unfortunately, develop such habits as nail-biting, thumb-sucking, the slamming-of-doors, extreme untidiness. The following examples will show how words and action, together with patience and understanding on the part of the parents, can rout even these pernicious traits.

The Disorderly Twelve-Year-Old

A father writes:

"Our twelve-year-old boy fails absolutely to keep his personal effects in order. He leaves his clothing scattered around the room, the dresser drawers open, and his tools lying where he used them last. We shall greatly appreciate any suggestions."

In reply, I suggested the following procedure:

Spend more time with the child, showing him how business men and other successful persons always put certain articles in certain places. It might be helpful to accompany him to a neighborhood grocery or meat market and point out the orderliness which makes possible the success of the establishment.

When you return home, let him suggest the place where he can most efficiently keep his tools. Provide him with plenty of coat-hangers for his closet. Help him to work out an arrangement of hooks so that the articles of clothing he wears most frequently, cap, sweater, shirts, can be within convenient reach. (See Illustration 95.)

For the sake of neatness, he might like to make a special shelf or perhaps a door rack for his shoes.

By way of further improving the appearance of his room, he might like to be given a free hand in selecting a suitable picture or mirror.

In short, help him to transform his sleeping quarters into the most efficient, attractive boy's room he could possibly desire, then commend him for keeping it that way.



ILLUSTRATION 95

Orderliness is a rare but admirable trait in a child. It helps to develop an orderly mind. Parents should provide and suggest exact places to put things—and then see that correct habits are built up.

The father carried out this suggestion and later reported that it worked.

It usually happens that when a child is allowed to be careless about the way he keeps his room, he will tend to become careless also about his personal appearance. So, in addition to helping him acquire the habit of keeping his room in good order, you should help him at an early age to get into the regular habit of washing his hands and face and brushing his hair before meals. (See Illustration 96.)



ILLUSTRATION 96

The "part" in his hair need not be perfect at first. But even a young child should be trained into the habit of brushing his hair along with washing hands and face before meals. He naturally will improve his skill later.

Door Slamming

Full of boundless energy, children often dash excitedly out of the house without even noticing the jarring noise of a door slamming behind them. They are thinking only of what lies immediately ahead of them. This type of thoughtlessness should be stopped before it becomes habitual.

What to do? The child must be impressed with the proper way to close a door. Simply call him back--I am assuming that he is already obedient--and suggest that he close the door quietly. A smile and a firm tone of voice will help to "nip in the bud" this unfortunate habit. If the child is very young, the mother may first dramatize how to make the door close very slowly. Then she may have the child repeat the process two or three times. (See Illustration 98.)

Use a Calendar Pad

Here is a suggestion which many parents have found to be helpful. For one reason or another, you may not find it convenient to deal with a certain point in your child's behavior right at the moment you observe it. If you simply jot it down on a memo pad, you will be more likely to deal with it in the very near future and thus save yourself possible embarrassment later. (See Illustration 97.)

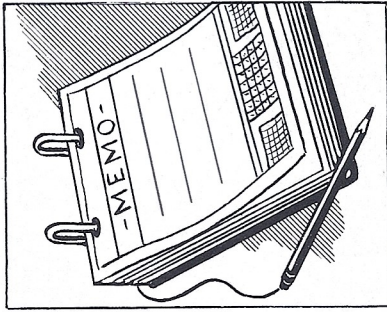


ILLUSTRATION 97

For example, a father and mother found their year-and-a-half-old baby disturbing a church service by noisy jabbering. They did not know how to stop it. Either forgetting to schedule a little lesson on the point needing attention between one Sunday and the next, or not knowing just what they should do, the child continued to annoy the parents and others for a number of Sundays.

What they should have done at the start was to make a mental or written note to give their baby a few little lessons in the privacy of their home.

MANNERS IN CHURCH

Naturally, when you are in church, you do not want to create a scene and therefore it would be difficult to give a child the necessary correction in the presence of others. But when giving a lesson in your own home, you can teach the child and test him until you feel sure you will be able to control him in church or anywhere else.

When first giving a private lesson on "Quietness" it is important to guard against trying the child's patience too far. Start with a quarter of a minute, then a half-minute, then a minute. Gradually increasing the time on following days. Alternate these short periods of time in which you play with the child enthusiastically--encouraging him to laugh and make as much noise as he wishes and then require a brief session of quietness. The purpose of the lesson is to associate the idea of quietness with the proper suggestive action which is that of moving your finger tips slowly to the child's lips.

The baby will soon learn that the sight of father's or mother's fingertips slowing approaching his mouth means that any unwanted noise is to stop at once. The private lessons will demonstrate that you have a proper check on his behavior because the fingers may muffle or lightly tap above and below his lips. This he can avoid by becoming quiet. It is important to be happy and friendly in the "Quiet" session as well as in the alternating play period. (See Illustration 99.)

With a young child at church, especially one inclined to be restless, you should be exceedingly friendly and allow a reasonable amount of freedom. For example, he may get some relaxation and satisfaction out of being able to stretch his arms and legs and he certainly should be allowed freedom of this sort.

Nail-Biting

A mother in Oregon wrote:

"My seven-year-old daughter is well-mannered generally, but she has the very annoying habit of biting her nails. I have talked to her but she still does it. Can you advise me definitely how to help her cure this habit?"



ILLUSTRATION 98

After a door has been carelessly slammed, the child should be called back and put through an impressive little drill on how to close a door slowly—just an inch at a time at the start of the lesson.



ILLUSTRATION 99

When a child jabbars too much in church, he probably needs a private lesson at home to teach him to be quiet on proper occasions. The gentle tips of fingers may become language which a baby can understand.

In replying to this mother, I first brought to her attention the importance of a check-up with the doctor. Nail-biting is often a manifestation of nervousness, in which case the basic cause of the nervousness should first be removed.

In this particular case, the child proved to be in good health. Hence, the problem was simply that of ridding her of the unlovely habit.

The mother and father, taking a vacation trip East, brought the child to the Parents' Association Clinic where she was given one short, unforgettable lesson. Her parents agreed to follow up that lesson with occasional reminders, if necessary. The result was the complete elimination of the habit.

Here is How the Lesson was Conducted

First of all, I engaged the little girl in friendly talk, in order to gain her confidence and cooperation. The early part of the conversation had no reference to nail-biting. We simply talked about the many things of interest to her--her dolls, her playmates, her class at school.

After this, I asked to see her right hand. Silently and carefully, I examined each finger separately. "Would you like to have pretty finger nails?" I asked. She declared she would. "Nicely rounded finger nails like your mother's?" "Yes!"

More than once, by calling attention to her daddy's nails and also to my own, I managed to get her to reaffirm her desire to stop biting her nails.

When I was well assured that she was even eager to help by cooperating with me in curing the habit, I placed a large sheet of white paper on the desk and told her to place her left hand, palm down, on the paper. I then traced the outline of her hand, after which I held up the paper, squinted my eyes, and commented on the fine shape of the hand and the individual fingers. (See Illustrations 100 and 101.)

Next I returned the paper to my desk, and had the child replace her hand on the outline. Very meticulously I measured the length of each nail from the quick, out, then wrote down each measurement on the corresponding finger of the chart. Where the nail had been bitten clear to the quick, I wrote down a cipher; in other cases, 1/16 of an inch, or

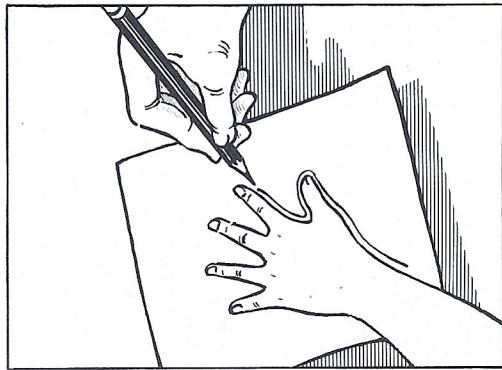


ILLUSTRATION 100

I traced the outline of the child's hand, palm down, on a blank sheet of white paper.



ILLUSTRATION 101

The outline-drawing of the hand was held out at arms length and admired.

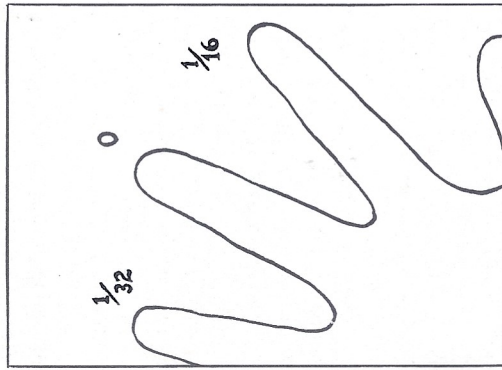


ILLUSTRATION 102

At the end of each finger traced on the paper, I marked the exact length of the nail as of that date.

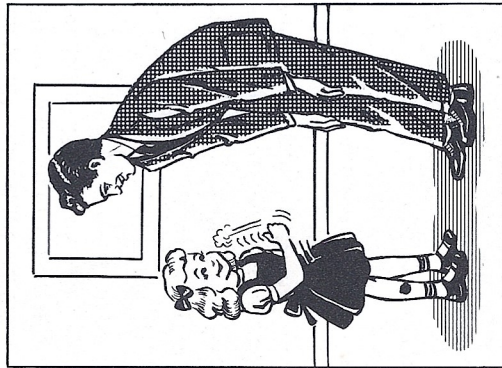


ILLUSTRATION 103

I directed the child's first exercise. Her hand came up slowly. Then she slammed it down abruptly to her side.

whatever the exact measurement happened to be. I used both sides of the sheet of paper, one for each hand. (See Illustration 102.)

This done, I turned to the parents and gave them specific instructions. At the end of seven days, they were to examine the child's nails and write down the measurements on the chart, using a red pencil or crayon. Seven days later than this, they were to go through the same procedure, this time marking the fractions with a blue pencil, or pen.

Having now explained the chart technique, I proceeded to give the actual drill, which was the most important part of the lesson. The child stood obediently in the center of the room, awaiting my exercises which were to help her keep her hands away from her mouth.

Taking her right hand in both of my hands, I raised it very slowly and impressively up toward her mouth, saying, "Now, just when your thumb here gets within about an inch of your mouth, take your whole hand down quickly--like this!"

At the word this, I brought her hand down suddenly. To forestall any possible crying on her part, I hastened to say, "That was certainly quick, wasn't it? I should say it was. Quick as lightning. And that is what you will want to learn to do all by yourself. Now let's do the same thing with your left hand."

After putting her left hand through a similar drill, I supervised her as she went through the exercise alone. She thought it was great fun. With a little encouragement such as "Oh, that's fine! You're learning fast," she really dashed each arm down violently. (See Illustration 103.)

I suggested that for ten consecutive days, she go through this exercise each night before going to bed.

How successful has this particular exercise been? When it has been followed faithfully, I have never known it to fail.

Thumb-sucking

We are not speaking of the baby who occasionally puts a thumb into his mouth. Any infant, when once he has discovered his thumb and his mouth, will soon bring the two together. Rather, the habit we must prevent is the persistent thumb-sucking that lasts beyond babyhood.

Thumb-sucking of this kind, like nail biting, may be caused by physical or psychological factors. Perhaps the child is not receiving enough nourishment. Possibly he is not receiving enough affection. In any case, a check-up by a physician is the logical first step.

When the causes have been discovered and removed, then start in on a campaign to break the habit.

I would suggest that in the case of a baby, you first show him an attractive object. Then, remove his thumb gently from his mouth and put into his hands the bright object that is too large for his mouth, say a colored balloon. The new object will occupy both his hands and his mind. This is a very elementary application of the Principle of Substitution.

In the case of an older child, the habit of thumb-sucking may be broken effectively by the same drastic procedure as that described above in curing the habit of nail-biting.

UNSELFISHNESS, CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

Unselfishness is a virtue that must be taught. It is acquired, not inborn. A practical way to develop unselfishness in a child is to arrange circumstances so that he has practice in performing kind acts which bring their own natural reward. (See Illustration 83, page 2.)

Children are often cruel to animals without meaning to be. Use every chance to teach kindness. Let us take a specific example. A child has a pet dog. The parent, child, and dog play together for a long period in the yard. The dog is made to chase a ball or a stick. He does so until he is worn out. He pants and his tongue hangs out. At this point, the parent draws the child's attention to the fact that the dog is thirsty. Perhaps the child is thirsty, too, so he can more readily sympathize with the dog. Here the parent has set the scene for a lesson in kindness. He tells the child about the dog, shows him how the animal is distressed. The father says, "All we have to do is go into the house and help ourselves to a drink of water, but 'Sport' here can't do that, can he?"

The father tells that the dog must rely on the kindness of his master for the water he so badly needs. The dog's distress impresses this point upon the boy. "Let's give 'Sport' his drink first, shall we? Because he doesn't know whether he is going to get a drink at all. And you and I know that we're going to have a nice cold drink."

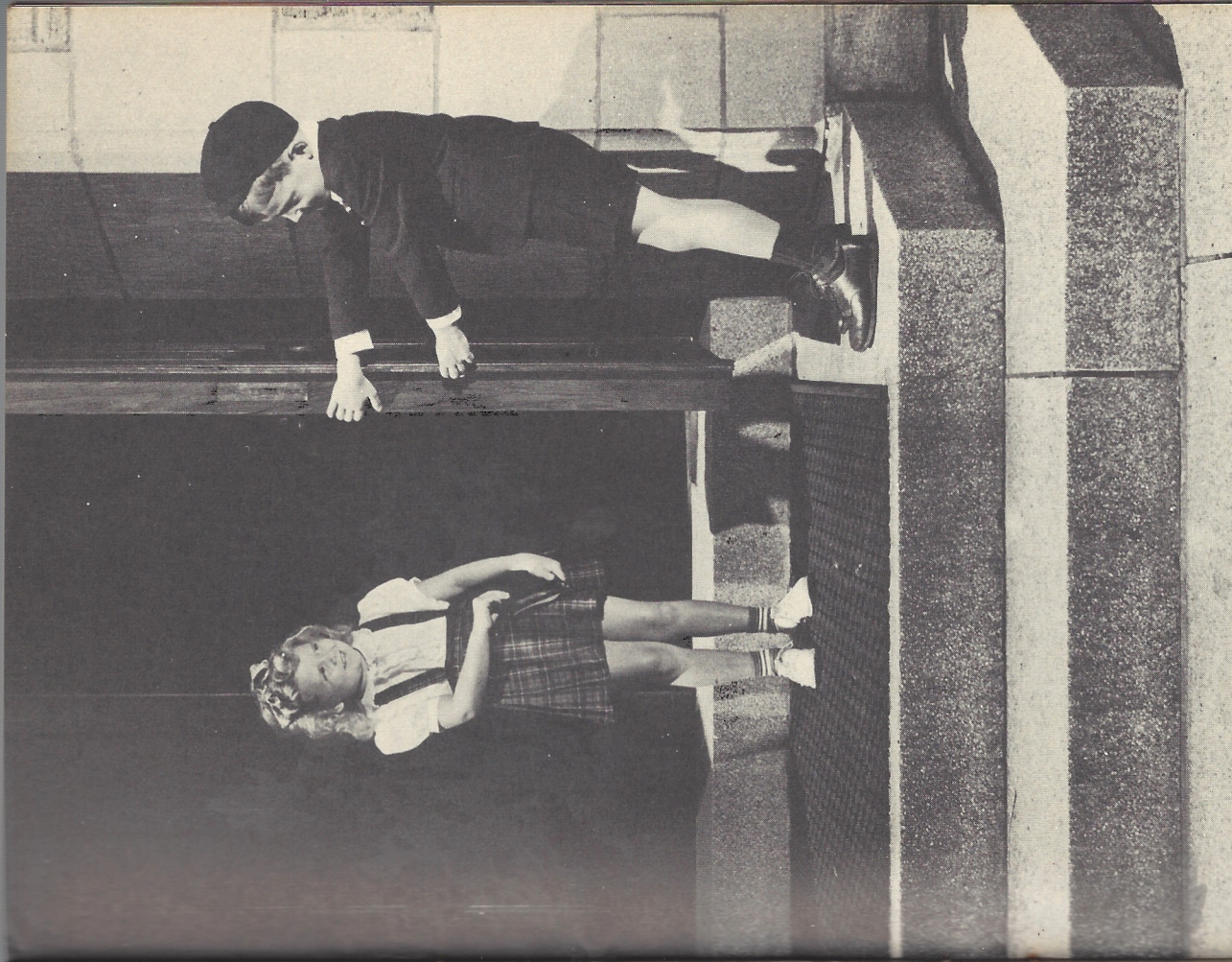


ILLUSTRATION 104

Teach the boy that it is his duty and privilege to act as protector and guide to girls and women. Train the girl to accept graciously the superior strength, mechanical knowledge and helpful care of boys.

Where is the natural reward in this little experiment? Why, as soon as the dog has had his drink, he perks up, ready for play again. The child sees all this. "Sport" feels better and now the boy knows he can resume playing with the dog. There is the natural reward.

At this point, the father might point out this fact to the boy, helping him better to understand it. The dog's satisfaction is the boy's, too. And this is another form of reward.

When a child shows an act of kindness to another person, either young or old, he is almost sure to be rewarded by a gratifying and hearty reaction from the one whom he favors. The parent may greatly encourage a child in the doing of kind deeds by emphasizing how very happy it makes others feel and how their increased friendship returns to him and makes him happier, too. (See Illustration 104.)

Entertaining Guests

Suppose a family comes to visit you. Your child reluctantly meets the visiting youngster and then goes on about his own business, playing with his toys and possibly even resenting the other child's interest in his playthings. What should you do about it?

Pre-training in this point of courtesy and unselfishness is far more important and far more successful than waiting until the actual situation arises. I would suggest that you anticipate some such occasion as this, and talk with your child about it. Play a game with him in which a make-believe child-guest arrives. Dramatize the situation and encourage your child to take the initiative in thinking of something to do that the guest would enjoy.

Teach your child that, when guests are present and the number of large, comfortable chairs happens to be limited, he should take a seat himself only after older persons are seated. If he is already occupying a preferred chair when an older person comes in, he should offer his chair saying, "Would you like this chair?" (See Illustration 105.)

How to Teach Good Sportsmanship

In competitive games, almost any child likes to win. It gives him a feeling of importance. The loser, on the other hand, is instinctively unhappy. He has lost some of his im-



ILLUSTRATION 105

The boy is happily saying, "Would you like this chair?" Short dramatic lessons will help a child to learn the usual polite details about the proper reception and entertainment of guests.

portance. At least, it seems that way to him until he has been trained. After proper training, he will feel differently. (See Illustration 106.)

What is the best way to overcome poor sportsmanship? It is for the parent to set impressive examples of good sportsmanship in games played with the child. When a game of any kind is lost by the parent, he should show just as fine a spirit of friendship toward the winner of the game as if he himself had won. He should say something in praise of the game to make the winner feel even happier.

Besides setting the correct, personal example, the parent may point out to the child other examples of good sportsmanship that the two of them see. At a basketball game, for instance, a player may accidentally "rough up" an opposing player, then in a split second, pick up the other fellow and pat him on the back. That is good sportsmanship.

It is important for children who are "poor losers" to play under supervision of an adult who can emphasize the enjoyable spirit of the game itself and minimize the score. Instead of saying, "Did your team beat?" it is better to say, "I presume you had a fine baseball game this afternoon. The weather was just about perfect for playing, wasn't it?" If you want to refer to the score, you could say, "Was it a pretty close game?" Then, whatever the answer, say, "Well, I'm glad you had a fine game and an enjoyable time."

Children's Parties

It isn't necessary to wait for your child's birthday anniversary to have a party for his companions. Children love parties at any time. Parties are worthwhile because they aid children in their social development.

All you need is a paper table-cloth, paper plates, some tasty little sandwiches, small cookies, milk and fruit. Paper hats and decorated paper napkins will help the youngsters to have a wonderful time.

Praise your own children when alone not only for their acts of kindness to others during the party but also for their generous acts during the preparation for the party. (See Illustration 107.)

Some parents give prizes to little children who win games at parties. It is better to avoid even playing competitive games in which there must be a winner and losers. If gifts



ILLUSTRATION 106

These boys are well trained in sportsmanship. They will both be friendly —no matter who gets the last grip on the bat or whose side wins the ball game. With that kind of spirit everybody wins in the end.

are to be given at a children's party, how much more sensible it would be to see that every child present receives some small favor.

Age, of course, is the determining factor in giving prizes. It has been found that children under six or seven years of age are apt to become emotionally upset when one member of the group is rewarded and they are not. They are perfectly normal children.

Older children understand reward systems much better and can adjust more readily to being winners or losers.

An Cunce of Prevention

In this book, much space has been devoted to the prevention of undesirable habits. Perhaps only one or two of the specific "poor manners" discussed here have been applied directly to your own child. The others then may well be considered "preventive medicine." By working on good sportsmanship, for example, we help to instill it in our children even before they have a chance to exhibit poor sportsmanship.

Suggested Activities for Convalescent Child

Also in line with "preventive medicine" come suggestions for busy work for a convalescent child. Anyone tends to "misbehave" when not feeling well. How to keep a child "quiet" as the doctor suggests and at the same time, keep him cheerful and unselfish, presents a difficult problem for a busy mother. Here are a few suggestions to help in that situation: the use of blocks, modeling clay, puzzles, cutouts, coloring books, the making of scrapbooks, paper dolls, games that can be played with cards or parts that require no physical activity beyond the use of hands.

Children also find great satisfaction in making things from paper, cardboard, spools, toothpicks, match boxes. One boy greatly enjoyed making a garage of a cardboard box. He cut out doors and windows, used cellophane for glass, colored the garage with his crayons, and added a pill box for a chimney. Another child with the aid of a cereal box, four spools and an old handkerchief made a very realistic covered wagon.

This might also be a time for your child to repair and repaint broken toys with the aid of paste and nail polish.

A little girl would enjoy making a doll house of a small cardboard box and making curtains of lace and a rug from an old towel. If she does not have small furniture, she could make it out of cardboard.



ILLUSTRATION 107

A party itself seems all the more enjoyable if there has been fun also in its preparation. Make mild suggestions to the children and then be enthusiastic in praise of their generous acts.

Bad Manners in Other People

Our children, in their natural associations, will meet ill-mannered people, just as we meet them ourselves. If your child is constantly exposed to a neighbor child who is lacking in culture and good manners, you should simply work harder at the positive aspect. Refusal to permit your youngster to play with the little neighbor only increases your child's curiosity and interest in the situation. Emphasize the importance of good manners and, yes, help the other child as diplomatically as you can.

Teach your older child that one test of good manners is to be able to meet bad manners with good manners.

Orchids to Mother on Her Birthday!

There should be compliments to mother on her birthday--and everyday! They need not be in the form of orchids or other expensive flowers or candy. Inexpensive gifts from the children, as expressions of their love for her, are just as acceptable. (See Illustration 108.)

A thoughtful father may benefit his children everlastingly by planning with them frequent, little surprises for mother. The children should be taught both through suggestion and by example to express daily in word or in deed their appreciation of mother and the countless things she does for them. Their hearts need to be trained, from an early age, as well as their minds and bodies.

Also, mother should help the children plan little surprises for father and help them appreciate the work that he does to keep them all well-fed, well-clothed and happy.

The Essence of Good Manners

Some parents believe that by planning eventually to send their daughter off to finishing school, they are thereby absolved from giving her any specific training in refined behavior while she is still at home. This is unfortunate. She needs this definite home training.

I would suggest that as she approaches her teens, she be provided with the best possible up-to-date book on etiquette. This will acquaint her with the niceties of social usage. It will also give her a poise that will help her to make a proper adjustment to society.



ILLUSTRATION 108

It is good to see children remember mother, not only with gifts on "Mother's Day" and her birthday but every day, they should express in word or deed their heartfelt appreciation of things she does for them.

Your part, as parent, is to inculcate within her from childhood a loving and thoughtful consideration of others. When all is said and done, the charm of fine manners consists not so much in the outward amenities as in the gracious spirit which prompts them.