



For Parents of young children

A Young Child And His Parents

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE ■ UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Leaving the doctor's office, 5-year-old Jane suddenly threw her arms around his neck and gave him a kiss. Her action probably was fostered mainly by relief as she realized he was not going to give her a shot. But obviously she felt friendly toward the doctor.

Not all children regard adults with such open affection. Many children warm up to adults slowly as they discover that adults are pleasant and trustworthy. Others carry suspicion and mistrust of people into adulthood.

We know that many 5- or 6-month-old babies show fear of strangers, even though they have accepted them before. But we don't know when a child begins to think of people as "friends" or "enemies." We do know that a child's experiences with his family, with the people next door, and in fact with everyone he meets play some part in his social growth.

It is in his home that a child first gains ideas about what adults are like. He learns as he watches how his mother and father behave in their roles as parents and how they behave toward each other and toward other people. Of course, every child reacts differently depending upon his personality and his feelings about himself.

What are some ways parents can help their child learn to enjoy and respect adults and be liked by them? What sort of a picture of parents does a little child need?

Parents As Examples

Does your child witness a warm, loving relationship between you and your spouse? Children reared in an atmosphere of love and affection can more easily bestow love upon others than children who are deprived of it. Does your child see

that you and your husband can talk over and resolve your differences readily?

Do you teach your child tolerance and thoughtfulness for others? Example is a powerful influence. It's so easy to say, "Hand me your boots right now!" instead of "Mary, please hand me your boots." In the same way, it's easy to use one tone of voice when talking to the deliveryman and another for talking to the banker. Such conduct suggests to a child that some people are better than others. The example you set and the image of others you convey to your child mold many of his attitudes.

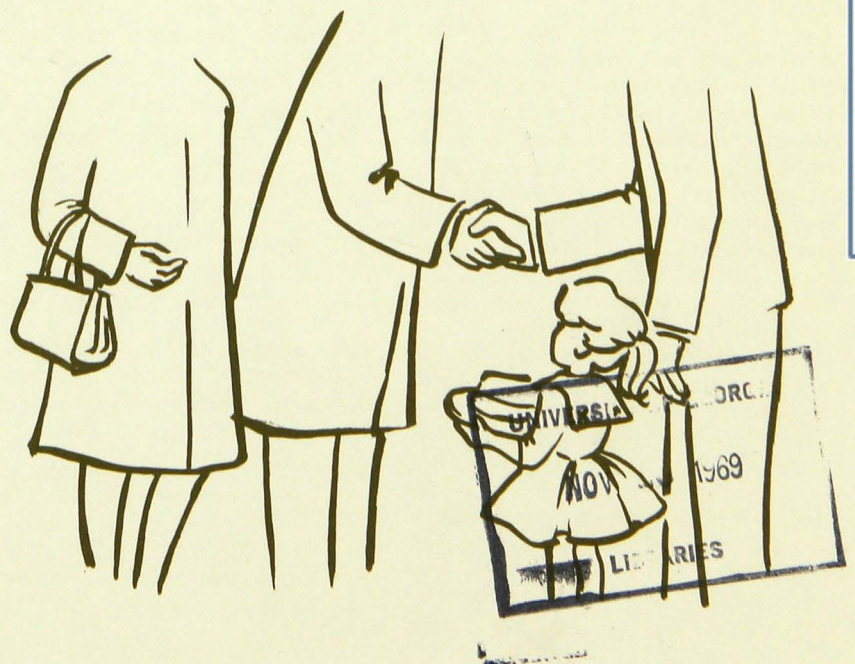
Taking Part

Children can develop social skills by being allowed to participate in greeting

guests who come to your home. Let your child help with the hostessing by passing the napkins or allow him to display a new toy. But don't ask him to perform before guests. To a shy child, being the center of attention may be so devastating that he may dislike having callers. The child who enjoys being the main attraction may take advantage of the situation. One way of expressing disapproval of this behavior is to say something such as, "Please play in your room for a while; Mrs. Brown and I want to visit." Whether your child is shy or precocious, try to see that his early social experiences are pleasant ones.

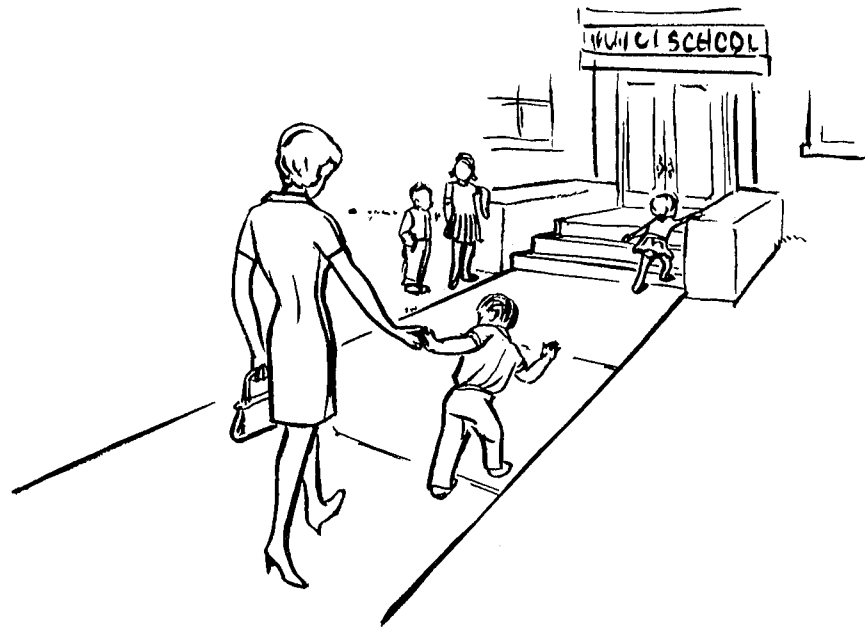
Social Acceptance

Children learn social graces most naturally at home. They learn politeness most



easily if please and thank you are part of their daily lives. Likewise, a child doesn't learn by himself that he cannot pick up a package of gum in the store or pick the neighbor's flowers. You must explain such social rules to him. And, if he does pick up something that doesn't belong to him, you must show him how to return it casually and politely.

Eventually your child must learn courtesy, cooperation, honesty, and a host of other social skills. But learning to be socially acceptable takes time. Sometimes parents begin too early and too earnestly to teach little children the things they want them to learn. Most of us find it easier to allow our children to grow physically than to allow them to grow socially. Children learn to walk when they are ready. The same fact applies to social growth; it is gradual and you cannot cram it all into the preschool years.



Other People

Do you talk to your child about out-of-the-home experiences so he gets an idea of what Dad's work is like and whom Mother meets when she goes to the store? If Dad's work takes him some distance from home, even a 4-year-old may have difficulty imagining what his father does. Perhaps one reason why children often play fireman, policeman, or deliveryman is that these are the only men's jobs children are familiar with.

With today's life pace, many of our contacts with people are brief, allowing little opportunity to see how others live and work. You can help your child understand other people by telling him that the plumber who comes to the house has a son in the Navy who lives on a boat or that the milkman has five grandchildren he likes to talk about.

Help your child to have friendly contacts with different kinds of people. If you have friends with backgrounds different from yours, your child will grow accustomed to these differences. Later in his life he probably will be an unprejudiced judge of people because he has known people different from himself. Many families make a point of inviting foreign visitors into their homes and agree that the visits provide a rich experience for everyone in the family.

Today's children, perhaps even more than past generations, must learn how to cooperate with many different kinds of people. Preschool children make only a beginning in learning to cooperate. But we can see that beginning in their desire to help, in their gradual willingness to share, and in their ability at learning to play together.

Displaying Affection

How do you display love for a child?

- By telling him
- By showing him (a pat, a hug, a kiss)
- By responding to his needs
- By showing interest in what he is doing
- By helping him when he needs help
- By answering his questions
- By approving his successes
- By spending time with him

A friendly and kindly home atmosphere is contagious.

Suggested Readings

1. "The Best Mothers Aren't Martyrs," *Parents' Magazine*, May 1961, pp. 40ff.
2. Ginott, Haim, *Between Parent and Child*, Macmillan, paperback, \$1.25.
3. *Making the Grade as Dad*, Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 157, 25¢.
Write to: Public Affairs Pamphlets
22 E. 38th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016
4. Montague, Ashley, "Who Really Rules the Family?" *Parents' Magazine*, December 1962, pp. 48ff.

5. "On Being an American Parent," *Time*, December 15, 1967, pp. 30-31.
6. Wolf, Anna W. M. and Margaret Dawson, *What Makes a Good Home?* #105 paperback, 60¢, 1965. Write to:
Child Study Association of America
9 East 89th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028

Looking Ahead To School

Are you helping your child form an image of teachers? You're probably tempted to say, "If you act like that at school, the teacher will scold you." But you'll help your child more if you picture teachers as friends. And he's more likely to look forward to going to school if you do.

* * *

If your preschool child talks all the time, encourage him and especially give him something to talk about. A child's ability to use words grows if he's allowed to recount his experiences. If he's had some practice, he'll be prepared to talk with his teacher and classmates. An interested audience at home provides a good beginning.

Parents Newsletter Committee: Sue Fisher, chairman; Ron Pitzer; Marie Christenson; and Caroline Frederickson.

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