

The Middle Years of Childhood

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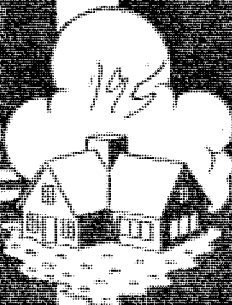
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AGES 6-12

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Characteristics of the Middle Years of Childhood

A period when parents tend to be less observant and appreciative because, in many ways, growth and development at this time is not as spectacular as the "pre-schooler" and the "teen-ager."

A time for trying out his own abilities and interests and a time to gain in self-confidence and self-reliance.

An experimental age when the "try anything once" attitude urges them to use all their senses in an impulsive way.

The years when boundless energy requires much space for the development of skills, interests, and activities stimulated by an aroused imagination.

The stage when the child feels that the social conventions we thrust on him must be for another generation.

Development and Activities of the 6-12 Year Old

Growth in height and weight is slow and relatively uniform.

This is often called the unattractive or the "homely" age.

Prepubertal changes occur at the close of middle childhood.

Reading, radio, and TV have an influence on every child.

Hobbies of all kinds are of high interest and can be very beneficial to the child.

Language abilities grow rapidly and show much inventiveness.

Some Problems That Can Develop During This Period

Many problems are only a result of attitudes and lack of knowledge of normal growth and development of a middle aged child.

Teasing and quarreling rates high as a trial to parents.

A child's arguing can be a good sign to his parents.

Dawdling, whining, sulking, and tattling can tell much if the parents search out the reasons.

Make sure the good manners required are the important ones.

Bed-wetting, nail-biting, and other nervous habits may be a visible indication of more serious problems.

The child's worries and fears are usually concerned with himself.

Some parental practices and home situations may make it necessary for the child to use escape tricks such as rationalization and day-dreaming.

Lying, stealing, bullying, and destroying property are **not** healthy ways to act, but they do force parents to recognize that something is wrong.

Responsibilities of Parents of Children in the Middle Years

Be sensitive to the child's need for feeling approved of and accepted and enjoyed by his parents.

Help the child understand parental aims if the discipline used is to be meaningful and helpful.

Remember that character training and moral development are especially important and for these the child needs an understanding and skillful parent.

Help the child develop a wholesome attitude toward sex behavior, feelings, and understanding.

Give the child every chance for good health through medical and dental care, proper food, and adequate rest.

Supply surroundings and experiences that are stimulating, try to keep aspirations high, and show appreciation for their efforts.

Recognize the responsibility of handing down to the child those ways and customs that are good.

Create a home atmosphere that is conducive to happiness—a place where children can be children.

Understand and Help Develop Independence and Good Adjustments

Parents can make the home a friendly place and a center where there are opportunities to do interesting things, yet, realize that the family is a part of a community in which the child must live.

Belonging is important, and to be accepted by his own group the child needs to act his age.

Gangs can be a healthy, constructive part of life.

Friends with whom he can confide, share, and quarrel are important to the child.

Play is the occupation of childhood and it can tell his attitudes and feelings about life.

Play offers a variety of opportunities to try and to test interests and roles.

Pets can help a child develop sympathy and tenderness.

Each child has an obligation to contribute to his family and is worthy of respect.

The child needs to become familiar with household routines as a preparation for later life and at the same time take on more and more responsibility for his person.

Helps for Parents

Prepare yourself beforehand for the time the child will come out with "shockers," questions about sex, tall tales, etc.

Develop the practice of talking things over with the child.

Share activities and experiences as much as possible.

Use understanding discipline as do parents who love their children.

Provide children with some money, for they need the opportunity to learn how to handle money.

Let the child grow as he will and respect him as an individual for "he is just as big for him as you are big for you."

Situations for Discussion

THE JONES FAMILY

Situation I

Mr. and Mrs. Jones are in their late thirties and have only one child, seven-year-old Timmy. They live in a comfortable house and have the respect of all the community.

Timmy came home from school one afternoon and asked his mother if he could play with some boys down the road. Her answer to him was, "No! You stay home and spend some time with me. Don't we have fun together?"

"I don't want to stay home! I don't like it here! When I get bigger I'm going to run away," was Timmy's retort. He was sent to his room until supper.

At the supper table Mrs. Jones related the incident to Mr. Jones. Timmy acted somewhat embarrassed and accidentally knocked over his milk. When his parents got after him for this, his reply to them was profane. His father asked, "Tim! Where did you learn such bad language? Don't ever use such words again. If you do you'll get punished good and hard."

Timmy stated that he had heard the words from some boys at school. "I forbid you ever playing with those boys again," injected his mother. "What would people think of us if they heard you use such words?"

When the parents went to tuck Timmy in bed that night, they found him playing with his genitals. His father spanked him and told him he was a naughty boy. Both told him that it was wicked and sinful and that nice boys didn't do such nasty things.

QUESTIONS:

1. What might cause such an outburst from Timmy when told he couldn't play with his friends? What should Mrs. Jones have done?

2. If his parents persisted in handling future situations as they have these, what could you predict of Timmy's behavior?

3. Could these relationships be improved? If so, how?

THE JUKE FAMILY

Situation II

The Jukes live in a large, rather new home that Mrs. Juke keeps as neat as a pin. There is plenty of room for the three children: Tom, Dick, and Mary, ages twelve, eight, and six. The parents have grown up in this area which was settled by people of one nationality and religion. Many of the old ways still remain.

Tom asked his mother if he could have a friend whom he had met at school spend the night with him. The school being in another community attended by children she did not know prompted a sound "No, I won't have my house torn up by a bunch of boys. Besides, you have your brother to play with," she added. Dick then asked if he might spend a night at his friend's home but his mother still refused. When he persisted with the subject wanting to know why, his mother informed him that when she was a young girl, children didn't question a parent's word.

About that time Dick came in the room with some jars containing insects. He started to tell his mother that he was going to collect all the different kinds of bugs on the farm. He was cut off and informed

by his mother that he would do no such thing in her house. She mentioned the stamps, flowers, airplanes, rocks, and hundred and one things that he had started to collect and that she had to throw away. She told them both that it was hard enough to keep the house clean and all they ever did was to make mess after mess. If they had to make messes, why couldn't they do so elsewhere.

QUESTIONS:

1. What sort of feelings do you think Tom and Dick have toward home?

2. What all is involved in this situation with Tom and Dick?

3. Was Mrs. Juke right in her treatment of Dick's proposal to collect bugs?

(continuation of Juke Family)

Situation III

One evening Mary was told to get ready for bed. Some time later she had only her dress and shoes off. Her mother was "after her" for a full forty-five minutes before Mary was finally ready for bed. Then Tom and Dick began to take her things claiming them as theirs. She ran crying to her mother who told the boys that they also had to get to bed. When they started to argue, the father told them to stop sassing their mother and to get to bed and that was final. He said that if they talked back once more they would get it.

The next morning the boys were still sulky about the previous evening. Mr. Juke told them that they had better snap out of it if they wanted to go to the movie the following Saturday. The boys asked their

father for some money for some school activities as the other boys had money. He stated that he would decide if they were to get money and what they were to get it for.

At the breakfast table the subject of TV was brought up. The children asked why they couldn't have a set. Mr. Juke said that it was a waste of time and it cost too much. Tom suggested that in some of his spare time he could earn some extra money to help form a kitty as some of his friends had stated they had done. He was told that if he had any extra time more work could be found for him at his own home.

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you feel about the boys' money situation?

2. Did the activities in the evening warrant such treatment?

3. Was Mr. Juke right about the TV set? What would you have done?

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