

The Family Council

Editor's Note: The Family Council consists of a Judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual case history. The Council reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Victor T. - My wife is ruining our boy.
Martha T. - We have to accept the facts about Johnny.

Victor T. - I am worried sick about my youngest son, a boy of 13 who gives every sign of being a sissy.

The two older boys are regular guys and have done everything to try to interest Johnny in sports, but it hasn't worked. Johnny is very effeminate looking. He's afraid to fight and shows no interest in any of the things a boy of his age should care about.

I feel that my wife has brought this all about by pampering him. Now she is going to do the worst damage of all. She wants to send him to an art school and encourage his interest in women's fashions - of all things!

Martha T. - Victor has been fighting Johnny's inclinations for years. He has tried so hard to make a normal boy out of him, but I fear it is hopeless.

The time has come when we must accept the facts. Johnny isn't like other boys. We can't expect him to live a normal life. At least we can help him make something of himself as far as a career is concerned. I think he has real talent, real imagination. He can become a designer if he starts his training early and works hard.

I have cried many tears over Johnny and now I am finished with that and I want to do something positive. Why should Victor hold him back?

The Council: Johnny could do with help from a child guidance clinic and the T's should investigate the facilities in their community.

Beyond that, some important changes in their attitude are in order.

First of all, we think that both the mother and father are jumping to conclusions. This boy is not doomed to live an abnormal life simply because he doesn't care for sports and shows an interest in women's fashions. An artist or designer of women's clothing can live a perfectly normal life - if he gets the right kind of encouragement to do so.

As we get the picture, this boy may have been pressured too hard by his father and brothers and protected too much by his mother. Probably he is ashamed and afraid to engage in masculine pursuits out of a strong sense of inferiority to the bigger, stronger males in his family. He hides behind Mother's skirts and she probably enjoys rescuing him.

An easy comradeship with his father and brothers will help Johnny much more than pressure to behave in a particular way. If he feels easier in his relationship with them he may suddenly show an interest in the things they care about. That is the time to encourage him in a tactful, patient way - not giving him the idea that his masculinity must stand or fall on the basis of his ability in sports. It is natural for all children to want to indulge in physical activity for sheer pleasure and release of energy, if they are not inhibited by fear of disgrace.

As for the art education, we think every child should be encouraged to bring out his abilities, but parents should not decide exactly what the child's vocation must be. It will be quite enough to encourage Johnny by sending him to art school. Let him find out for himself what he can do best. It may not be the designing of women's clothing, but if it is the family should not accept that as a sign of abnormality.

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7179



by Alice Brooks

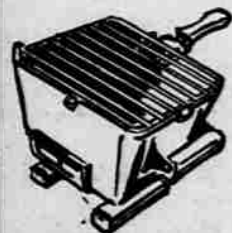
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