

many ways that only the more common characteristics can serve as a guide:

A baby's entire vocabulary is crying or cooing. Cooing presents no problem. Crying at feeding time is natural. Crying immediately afterward suggests the feeding was insufficient. Crying several hours later suggests a baby is thirsty, that the water in the formula should be increased. Crying about one hour before feeding suggests feeding isn't strong enough. Crying that goes on and on, especially when accompanied by disturbed sleep, suggests the feeding does not suit the child.

Whatever the cause of crying, it is poor judgment to decide that the baby is being "bad" and let him cry himself out. Babies who "cry themselves out" quite often tend to develop into nervous, difficult children.

Children between two and five like to test their will against that of their parents. Repeatedly, they'll reach for something taboo—while watching to see what their parents will do. At such moments, it's wiser to distract these children than to yell or scold; to take them by the hand and say, "Let's not do that, that's no fun!" Even toddlers who may not understand word for word will respond to a quiet tone and manner.

Here let me say that if loud commands generally are obeyed and low ones are not, a child's ears should be examined for wax. Wax in young ears (likely invisible) is a surprisingly frequent cause of seemingly willful inattention.

I'VE KNOWN very few children who didn't, at one time or another, refuse to eat. Since this is invariably an attention-getting device, it should receive no attention. The child will not starve; studies show that children can go two weeks on nothing but orange juice without suffering ill effects.

Of course, a mother should make sure her child's refusal to eat stems neither from a monotony of diet nor too-large portions, unappetizingly served. Once these possibilities are ruled out, a child should be given 10 or 15 minutes to eat what is placed before him.

At the end of this time, his plate should be taken away without either visual or verbal reproach. And during the time the food is before a child, a mother should make no reference to what has or has not been eaten.

For spoiled children, I have great pity. They're the martyrs of permissive parents who—too lazy to practice quiet, controlled discipline—let things slide until something angers them. Then, quite inexplicably to a child's mind, they crack down severely.

Too often we don't take the trouble to analyze our children's actions. I remember the scoldings my daughter received because she would not say the "Now I Lay Me Down" prayer. The scoldings caused tears but not obedience. It was not until years later that she told us she had

been afraid of the part that went, "If I should die before I wake."

What she should have had, of course, was not scoldings but a good deal of reassurance and comforting.

Very often, the child who misbehaves is a nervous child. To punish or scold him is cruel, for it invariably emphasizes the nervousness so that the irritating symptoms become exaggerated, too.

A few years ago, Mrs. Hill was the adviser to a church club for nine-year-old girls. One child, Helen, had the reputation of being exceedingly troublesome. At the first club meeting, she slapped another girl in the face, then ran to the other end of the room and banged on the piano. "I'm convinced," my wife told me, "that Helen needs love badly, but I don't know if, in fairness to the others, I can keep her in the club."

"Before you decide," I answered, "please give her every chance."

A PHYSICAL examination showed Helen had diseased tonsils and suffered from an unbalanced diet. She was the daughter of an uneducated domestic servant who, overanxious for her to conform, was perpetually critical. As a result, Helen was well on her way to a physical breakdown which, very easily, could have turned later into a moral breakdown, too—not because of her background but because she wasn't getting the love and understanding she needed as a human being!

Her tonsils were removed, her diet was corrected, her mother was persuaded to substitute affection for slaps. Slowly, as the causes of Helen's nervousness were eliminated, she quieted down. Her anti-social conduct subsided, and she became more co-operative and better adjusted.

In coping with behavior problems, I prefer intelligent discipline to punishment. I like to think of it as coaching an individual to play the game of life according to accepted rules. But there are times when punishment, administered without too much anger, is necessary. (However, parents should appear sympathetic when they punish, so children know that it is being done to help them.)

Certainly, a child who slaps should be slapped in return, hard enough for him to understand that a slap hurts and therefore deserves punishment. There even are times when punishment should exceed the misbehavior, as when a small child runs out into the street and does not come back when called. Because of the danger involved, it is necessary for the child to associate the street with the sting of a switch against his legs as he is led back to safety.

We're forever hearing about complexes being responsible for misbehavior. Complex is a much overused word.

It irritates those of us—slightly old-fashioned, perhaps—who believe that, with proper physical care and thoughtful training, complexes are as needless as weeds in a garden.



The Great Merlini — magician, writer, a member of Society of American Magicians — has given hundreds of shows, mystified thousands of young people with his magic.

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