

What's Wrong With American Mothers?

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WILL YOUR CHILDREN BE FIT TO FACE THE BUSINESS OF LIVING? OR ARE YOU—WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS—CONDEMNING THEM TO PERMANENT IMMATURITY? A DISTINGUISHED PSYCHIATRIST GIVES THE FACTS ABOUT A WIDESPREAD PARENTAL FAILING.

FIRST of all, I would like to define my use of the word "mom." I am not being derisive, although I happen to prefer "mother." "Mom," as I will use it throughout this text, is merely a convenient hook upon which to hang an indictment of the woman who has failed in the elementary mother function of weaning her offspring emotionally as well as physically.

The term "mom" is not my own invention. It has been used in the derogatory sense by numerous writers, most recently by Philip Wylie in his *Generation of Vipers*. But Mr. Wylie's "mom" is described in too vindictive terms to satisfy a trained psychiatrist.

For three years of work during the war I saw the results of both "moms" and "mothers." In my tours of hospitals, both overseas and in this country, two sharply contrasting pictures were etched upon my mind.

One picture I saw in many seriously wounded youngsters, particularly amputees; in combat-fatigue victims who often, after a few days of rest, some good food and a little encouragement, were back in the line fighting as well as ever; in the many thousands of young Americans in England eagerly and impatiently preparing for D Day.

The other picture—a sad contrast—I saw in the NP wards of Army and Navy hospitals in this country—tens of thousands of the vague manifestations of the so-called psychoneuroses. There were backaches by the score, for which meticulous and exhaustive examination failed to uncover any bodily reason; headaches, infinite in variety, but unexplainable on the basis of physical disturbances; hundreds of cases of just plain tiredness or don't-feel-right, and dozens of other mysterious complaints. No amount of reassurance, encouragement or treatment would bring response from these patients. It was like trying to push back a wall of water. There was nothing solid to grasp.

True combat fatigue struck down men who could not be broken until great hardships, deprivations, exhaustion and soul-searing emotional experiences were loaded upon them. They were honorably wounded. What was the difference

between those men who failed on the battlefield and those who failed long before they reached it? Which of these classes and which men in these classes were sick?

They were all sick. Those psychiatric battle casualties, who served splendidly and broke only after an overload of strain was placed upon them, were sick. Those men, too, were sick who made a feeble attempt at service, but soon after induction, sometimes only a few days, retreated under the cloak of neurotic symptoms. So were those men sick who failed to clear the induction hurdle because they were weighted by psychoneurotic impediments. Finally, the men who attempted to dodge the draft were sick.



"A baby soon learns that making a noise stimulates the adults in the vicinity into scurrying about to relieve an unpleasant situation."

Why did the desire for self-preservation defeat one group of men and not the other? The answer in a large percentage of cases can be given in one word, "immaturity." The majority of the men who failed, like the majority of the men who fail for the same reasons in ordinary life, were immature.

What is maturity? It is the ability to see a job through. It is the inherent desire always to give more than is asked in a given situation. It is the quality of dependability that makes other people say, "There's a reliable person." It is independence of thought and action. Maturity represents the capacity to co-operate; to work with others, to work in an organization and to work under authority. The mature person is pliable and can alter his own desires according to time, persons and circumstances. He is tolerant, he is patient, he is adaptable—he is human. Maturity is the basis of morale in the individual.

Maturity is not an inborn trait; it is not hereditary. It is the result of early background, environment, training and unselfish parental love. Conversely, immaturity is caused by the lack of an intelligent foundation in the business of living. It is not difficult to find basic reasons for immaturity. Often it is merely necessary to retrace the life of an immature person. In the vast majority of case histories, a "mom" is at fault.

Every woman who bears children is confronted by a dilemma from which there is no escape. The solution is not easy and the stakes are high. No nation is in greater danger of failing to solve the mother-child dilemma than ours, and no nation would have to pay as great a penalty as the United States for not solving it.

The future social behavior of a child has its beginning and is patterned in the conflicting sensations and emotions that arise from the early relationship between the mother and child. For the child, the mother is not only the great dispenser of pleasure and love, and the great protectress, but also the source of pain, the ruthless thwarter and frustrater. So, the dilemma of the mother is likewise the dilemma of the child. Weaning is as much a part of motherhood as is nursing. Taking away from a child is as important as giving to it.

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Parents welcome a hero. He was not one of the appalling number of young Americans whose rearing made them unfit for military service.

Rejecting and thus emancipating a child is as significant as clinging to it. Furthermore, these seemingly contradictory phases of motherhood belong to each other both in nature and in sequence.

What happens to the child whose mother not only has failed to sever the emotional apron strings but often has not even loosened them?

His natural gregarious instincts lead him to seek social relations with his fellow man. But, because he had learned only to take, he sooner or later is rebuffed. He becomes a bystander in the game of life—a sad, disillusioned and envious spectator. He cannot be a lone wolf, living apart from his fellow men. Few men succeed in doing that, and he least of all. Psychologically, it would mean his eventual emotional annihilation.

And it is not always the son who suffers. I have known many a young woman who has realized

that she was being dominated by her mom, and upon the mom's death first experienced a feeling of freedom and release, but ultimately has lived strictly according to her mom's selfish code. Always the subconscious thought was, "What would mom think if I did that?"

What constitutes a mom? How does she differ from a mother? Fundamentally, a mom is not a mother. Mom is a maternal parent who fails to prepare her offspring emotionally for living a productive adult life on an adult social plane. A mom does not untie the emotional apron string—the Silver Cord—which binds her children to her.

I look at mom without rancor or resentment, and not without understanding. Mom is not of her own making. Various forces work together to produce her kind. The basic mosaic of her behavior in most cases was put together in her own childhood without her knowledge and without

her consent. Furthermore, momism is the product of a social system veering toward a matriarchy in which each individual mom plays only a small part.

Outwardly, a mom is not distinctively marked. She may be fat or thin, tall or small, blond, brunette or a redhead, or she may wear a halo of silvered hair. She may be beautiful or uncomely, dressing dashing or dowdily. She may be a college graduate or she may not. She may be quite ignorant of Emily Post's dicta or she may be gracious and charming.

However, she does have one thing in common with the other types—the emotional satisfaction she derives from keeping her children paddling about in a kind of psychological fluid, rather than letting them swim away from the emotional womb with the bold strokes of maturity.

Silver cords come in varying lengths. Sometimes they are short, (Continued on Page 85)

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mere tether ropes, with both ends always in plain view. Not long ago I heard two moms boasting that their sixteen and seventeen year old children had never slept a single night away from their homes. "When bedtime comes, kiddies want to be tucked in," they concluded with satisfaction.

More often, however, silver cords are much longer, and sometimes difficult to trace. Seemingly they allow a wide range of freedom, but it is surprising how quickly they can be drawn taut, should the children roam near strange pastures.

The best blueprint comparisons between mothers and moms that I have ever seen were the letters received by men in the service from their mothers and moms. One of my students, a naval officer who had served in the Pacific, recently told me of a number of instances in which marines awaiting combat orders had received letters from moms, setting forth dramatically their maternal anguish and, in one instance, begging a son to feign illness in order to avoid the dangers of combat. In their anxiety and distress of mind, the men brought the letters to their

medical officer. One marine was in such a state of tension that the doctor sent him to the hospital on the eve of a battle, since, emotionally upset and indecisive as he was, he would scarcely have had a fair chance to come through with his life and probably would have endangered the lives of others.

The typical mom's letter to her son whines and complains, gives a gloomy picture of the home situation, and is heavily perfumed with sentimentality masquerading as love. In my tours through the various camps and bases during the war, I saw hundreds of lonely youngsters trying desperately to make the grade, attempting to acclimate themselves psychologically to military life, who were completely broken by a typical mom letter which filled their minds with worries about home and particularly about mom. The final result in a large percentage of the cases studied was a discharge for "psychoneurosis."

It would be an error to assume that there is a clear-cut line of cleavage between mothers and moms. No normal woman can produce a child, give it life and love, and nurture and protect it when it is a helpless infant without creating a close bond that never can be completely broken. This is as it should be.

Theoretically, a mom is a woman whose maternal behavior is motivated

by the seeking of emotional recompense for the buffets which life has dealt her own ego. In her relationship with her children, every deed is designed emotionally and to bind them to her securely. In order to achieve this purpose she must stamp a pattern of immature behavior on her children, and thus completely exclude the possibility of their living life in an adult manner. Probably there are not many complete moms, although I have known a few women who have almost succeeded in reaching the summits. Actually, there are traces of mom in every mother. There should be. So, in moms, there are odds and ends of motherhood, although sometimes they are microscopic.

The mature mother uses emotion sparingly. Her major purpose is to produce a proper balance of give and take in her children, so that they may attain full-statured personal and social maturity, and lead reasonably constructive and happy lives. The immature and insatiable mom, on the other hand, binds her children with emotional coils. Being immature herself, she breeds immaturity in her children.

In her dealings with her children, the real mother mixes logic with her love, and attempts to lead her children into thinking for themselves. In matters requiring judgment in selection, whether it be clothes or opinions, she knows her children need guidance, but in decreasing amounts and with the object of increasing self-decision.

A mother knows that a home in which children live should be comforta-

ble and pleasant and supply their reasonable needs. There need not be many restrictions, but there must be a few. To have the right kind of home, it is not necessary to act like some moms and permit the door mat to symbolize a wishing rug.

A sensible mother will at once detect the artificial nonsense of the mom with her unbroken circle of familial joy and harmony. She knows that children are adults in the making and, if adults never disagreed, they would soon be at each other's throats to escape the monotony of unending concord. Some moms reveal the immaturity of their motherhood by the constant exercise of authority. More ensnare their children by letting them do practically anything they wish. The mothers' "musts" and "must nots" are usually qualified and self-explanatory. The objective of mothers is to build up an increasing reservoir of self-criticism and inhibition against the temptation to impulsive behavior.

Guarding the health of their children is difficult for mothers. Many moms solve it easily by intoning an endless litany of warnings about everything from overshoes to vitamins. The mother knows the danger of ingraining too deeply a pattern of oversolicitude about health and physical processes. She is seriously but sensibly concerned about the health of her children. She tries to inculcate normal commonsense caution without impressing fears of sickness, accident and death. Usually she succeeds in establishing a happy compromise.

The mother gives her children a reasonably sound and healthy sex perspective, without finding it necessary either to compose a paean to Eros or a hymn of sexual hate. Her own mistakes and disappointments are not permitted to distort the perspective. On the other hand, sex is not presented as unalloyed bliss, exempt from responsibility. She avoids aphorisms and soothing bromides. She does not paint a precisely detailed picture, knowing that one person's sexual life cannot be modeled upon that of another and that the removal of spontaneity is destructive. The mother does not hope or wish to do more for her children than to give them sufficient honest information and the nucleus of receptive and favorable attitudes toward sex.

This is not true of many moms. Of all moms, probably the cruelest is the one who closes the door of her children's lives against the vista of normal and wholesome sex and fastens it securely with her silver cord. Unconsciously avenging herself for the disappointments, frustrations and thwartings of her own sex life, she divests sex of all its beauty and makes it seem loathsome.

Neither mothers nor moms are immune from divorce. Mothers, however, are more apt to tolerate difficult and unsatisfactory marriages for a long time, fearing the damaging effect of divorce upon the children and the hazard to their futures. They are likely to postpone decision until they are honestly convinced that the conditions of the marital situation entail a greater risk for the children than would a legal split. Moms are less thoughtful. Often in the home they erect mother-child citadels and busy themselves strengthening the defensive outposts. Husbands find it increasingly difficult to storm the defenses, and many of them take the few steps necessary to separate themselves from a situation to which already they are more or less alien.

Divorce leads to treacherous terrain, and sometimes even mothers stumble, yielding temporarily to the temptation of bringing a bill of indictment against their father before the tribunal of the children. For the mom, the post-divorce terrain is a happy hunting ground. Mom always packs her gun and seldom neglects an opportunity of taking a pot shot at her ex-husband. Her marksmanship is not excellent and often she succeeds in inflicting mortal psychological wounds upon the innocent bystanders, her children.

The technique of employing but few words is well adapted for this purpose, provided the words are carefully selected: "I tried my best; I wonder where I failed"; "I couldn't help showing my love for you children"; "I had to protect my children." These are very effective statements, conjuring up the vision of a selfish male seeking to devour the young who have usurped his place. The odds are better than even that one of the children at least will remain permanently marriage-shy, and that several of them will retain such distorted emotional reactions about marriage that their own marital ventures will end in disastrous failures.

Seldom can the silver cord be identified as an obvious tie. It appears in many guises. And mom herself is a protean actress. Depending on kind and degree, there are numerous types of mom, including the common garden variety, the "self-sacrificing" mom, the "pretty-addlepate" mom, and the "pseudo-intellectual" mom. The distinctions are largely ones of approach; the results invariably are the same.

The common variety of mom takes no end of trouble and spares herself no pains in selecting clothes for her grown-up children. She supervises the cut of their hair, the selection of their friends and companions, their sports and their social attitudes and opinions. By and large, she does all their thinking for them. By such solicitude, I don't mean mature, wise guidance, but dominance—sometimes hard and arbitrary, more often soft, persuasive and somewhat devious.

I know one mom who wooed her fourteen-year-old son away from a crew haircut to the more poetic one she wanted without uttering a single word of protest. It was only necessary for her not to try too hard to conceal a few soft sighs and the tears in her eyes when she gazed at her boy's chosen haircut. It is interesting to record that, years before, this mom had delayed the shearing of her son's flaxen curls, even though it involved frequent quarrels with her husband, who had heard other boys refer to his son as "that sissy."

Another mom broke up her son's friendship with a robust youngster by being plaintively sweet about it, but invariably having a "sick headache" each time Bill and Jack engaged in rough-and-tumble play just outside the house.

A third mom lured her son from football to tennis by being "discovered" in tears when the boy returned from practice. After much persuasion, she reluctantly admitted she lived in daily terror that he would be injured. The final touch was the gift of a fine tennis racket, "so that when you play, dear, you will be playing for mom."

The "self-sacrificing" mom, when hard pressed, may admit hesitantly that perhaps she does look "played out" and is actually a bit tired, but she chirps brightly, "What of it?" She does not say so, but the implication is that she does not care how she looks or feels, for in her heart there is the "unselfish" joy of service. From dawn until late at night she finds her happiness in doing for her children. The house belongs to them. Food is available at all hours. No buttons are missing from garments in this orderly house. Everything is in its proper place. Mom knows where it is. Uncomplainingly, gladly, she puts things where they belong after the children have strewn them about, here, there and everywhere. The service is almost continuous.

For sons and daughters who pass from such conditions to everyday give-and-take living, it is like stepping from a warm shower, run for you by mom, into a cold mountain lake.

Then there is the "ailing" mom who has given all her strength in bearing her children. Now, in middle life, she is pitifully frail. The doctor says there is no organic disease; "she just isn't very strong." Not that she ever speaks of it; yet, somehow, even the neighbors know of her sadly spent condition. The children of such moms always know. Some of them know it bitterly and resentfully, but invariably there is at least one child who knows it lovingly and pityingly. Around this child the silver cord is drawn taut. Why not? It is a life for a life—fair enough.

Psychiatrists know there is a catch. It is not a fair bargain. We have seen too many broken and frightened men and women after death had taken away the invalid mom. It was too late for them to re-enter the lists of life. The silver cord had been drawn so taut that all other personal and social threads had snapped.

The "protective" mom is no doubt activated by sincere, although sentimentally immature considerations. Unerringly she inserts herself as a protective barrier between the children, or more often between one child and justly merited censure from the father or from the other children. The unfortunate victim of such solicitude is doomed to find out that the personal and social conditions of adult life swiftly nullify the emotional bond of protective security from deserved blame given in childhood.

Neither in civilian life, in family life nor in the Army is it possible to go for long without incurring censure. One may slide out for a time, but to balance this, there comes to every human a certain measure of unmerited blame. Unless the child has learned to face the consequences of his acts, then, as an adult, his ego will be badly bruised.

There is a mom I think of as the "pretty-addlepate" type. She would be amusing if she did not do so much damage. Certainly she makes no conscious effort to bind her children to her side. She follows an elaborate cult of beauty, with lengthy rituals of clothing, cosmetics and perfumes, hair-dos, dieting, massage, and so on. She is pleasing to the eye. When she bends over her children before leaving for a party, the children are entranced by the vision—"mother is so lovely and smells so sweet." This is not necessarily harmful in itself, but, so far as the addlepate I have in mind goes, it is about all her children see of her. A little girl I know bursts into hysterical weeping if there is even a suggestion that any other woman is as beautiful as her mother or any other little girl as pretty as she. For the sons, the ideal of womanhood engraved on their personalities is one in which physical pulchritude is the important component. A rose by any other name will never smell so sweet to them.

There is another mom who is as "serious" as the addlepate is frivolous, and as useless. She is the "pseudo-intellectual" mom. She is forever

taking courses and attending lectures, not seriously studying one subject and informing herself thoroughly about it, but gathering a few blossoms of knowledge here, there and everywhere. One month it is mental hygiene, the next economics. Astrology succeeds Greek architecture, and nursery schools follow phrenology. To her children, her owlsh, heavily rimmed spectacles are as fascinating as the golden, sleek hairdo of the addlepate. The mind behind the spectacles usually is just as immature as the one under the expertly tinted tresses, and just as incapable of pointing the way for children in the direction of intelligent, well-rounded maturity.

One can have little patience with those moms who worry constantly and needlessly about the health of healthy children: "Don't play so hard; you are not very strong." "Don't get wet; your lungs are a little weak." "Don't run; you might trip and break your ankle."

The average boy resents such oversolicitude, yet, if mom persists, the silver cord eventually will be securely woven into the emotional life of the youngster. Self-preservation is the strongest of human instincts. Undue solicitude on mom's part is harmful.

I have sketched in only a few of the many varieties of mom and have examined only a few of many silver cords. Moms have one thing in common, varying in degree, but identical in kind: they hold on to their children for too long and almost never willingly relinquish their grasp. They fail to prepare them for independent, mature lives.

In most cases, a mom is a mom because she is the immature result of a mom. She doesn't realize that she is one, and would resent it if she were accused. She believes that she is being everything a real mother should be to her children. Didn't her mother use the same tactics?

Immaturity breeds immaturity, and so goes the vicious cycle. Hundreds of case histories could be cited, but I use

the following example because my knowledge of it extends over three generations—grandmother to mother, and on to daughter, who, in her turn, is imposing momism on her young son. The grandmother was the garden-variety type of mom, and when her daughter grew up, she, too, became the dominant mom who, in turn, prevented her daughter from growing up. When the daughter found a husband, she entered marriage without the slightest knowledge of what constituted a mature married life—even to the point of not knowing how children were conceived or born. She knew nothing of family finances and home running—her mom had always taken care of such things, and had picked out her clothes and her friends for her as well.

After six years, her first marriage ended in a Reno divorce. She has since remarried and has a young son. The boy, now seven years old, is fast becoming a mom's child. Unfortunately, the girl's mom is still living, so the youngster is feeling the effects of double momism—his mother and his mother's mother. My one hope is that the father—unfortunately, a man overly interested in his business affairs—someday soon will take a hand in the raising of his son.

Some moms once were mothers—mothers who slipped into the ways of momism later in life because of lack of attention on the part of the husband. This type of delayed mom shows up quite often in families of three or four children where the youngest child arrived fairly late in life. With the older children, mom was a good mother. She was young and could throw off the fact that her husband paid little attention to her. She had other interests—her house, community affairs, her friends, her children. However, by the time the youngest child begins his formative years, the mother, perhaps in her late thirties, has begun to tire under the full responsibility of running the family. She begins to want and require companionship; her outside interests are dwindling. Under these conditions, it takes a strong mother not to fall into the pitfall of feeling that her last born, particularly if it is a boy, is hers. Here is a chance for her to have companionship in later life; here is her chance, as the boy grows older, to shift some of her responsibilities; here, in effect, is a chance to make a husband out of her son. Some mothers recognize the symptoms and, like the real mothers they are, fight it. Others slip and another mom is added to the rolls.

And far from the least of the mom causes, because it is the fertile soil in which the seeds of momism grow, is our social system and our way of life. Pretty much everything we do—socially, politically, educationally—glorifies mom and praises her "self-sacrifice" and her "giving her life for her children." In her community, a mom is likely to be judged the ideal mother, while the real mother often goes unnoticed—unnoticed because she does not wear her motherhood on her sleeve. Instead of censuring mom for her shortcomings, we encourage her with misplaced adoration.

Sometimes pop is a mom. Again, the metamorphosis of the male parent into a mom usually had its beginnings when he was a child and had a mom. As is the way with moms, she left him dangling on the limb of emotional immaturity in adult life.

Young women are rarely calm or detached concerning marriage. Following the ancient biological law of the female, they are strongly moved emo-

tionally. The maternal instinct is the potent driving force. The helpless type of male too often makes a deep appeal to such a woman's budding sense of maternity. Frequently, marriage results from the mixture of these two elements.

Then the wife finds she has married a child-adult. For a time, the situation may be intriguing, but soon it begins to pall. Particularly is this true when children begin to arrive. They provide a much more satisfactory answer to the call of maternity than does a hulking fellow of twenty-five or thirty who always wants to be babied.

There are many techniques of being a male mom, all of them easy and pleasant. For instance, it is simple to curry the children's favor by never punishing them. Thus the mother acquires the reputation of being the ogress, the stern disciplinarian, while the father is thought of as "nice" and never "tough." If a mother is attempting to teach a child the value of money by having him manage his allowance and keep within it, the father can torpedo the effort by slipping the youngster extra dimes and quarters.

When it comes to seeking the co-operation of an immature husband in the numerous matters which have to do with the welfare of the children, the wife and mother is faced with a dilemma not easy of solution. As far as the decisions go, it would be much more satisfactory if she made them herself, but if she does not make a pretense of asking the advice of her husband, then he is hurt. When an immature man is hurt, he does not conceal it, but wears it openly for all the world to see.

Furthermore, the mother knows that there is a certain stage in a boy's development when she cannot possibly be the surrogate for her husband. At this age, her son has very definite ideas concerning femininity and the role of women in this world. He wants to feel deeply chivalrous toward his mother, and he can scarcely think in terms of chivalry about a competent executive. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the wife to "star" the father and depend on his "wise" decisions, even if he is only a man of straw. If his wife accomplishes this, she must still elude the second horn of the dilemma.

The immature husband cannot make decisions on the spot or anywhere near the spot. Either he is "too tired," "all worn out by a very tough day at the office," or "too busy," or the matter is so weighty that he will have to "take time to think it over," intimating that women are apt to be too intuitive and illogical. This, irrespective of the fact that the wife has presented the matter diplomatically at least a dozen times during the past two months and, unless she knows one way or the other, right now, it will be too late for Jim to get the dinner jacket for the high-school senior prom tomorrow night.

While the immature husband adroitly evades making final commitments about the children, he scans the horizon with an eagle eye for any flaws that may appear in the results of the decisions his wife has had to make.

The mom in the house need not be a parent. There are a number of moms by proxy who can do as much damage as a parental mom. I like to call them "mom surrogates," because they are substitutes and successors. Grandmothers may have momish proclivities. However, unless they were moms themselves, they are not too serious and are apt to confine themselves to minor bribes, sly little efforts to discount parental authority, obvious and

somewhat amusing conspiracies with the children, assisting them in evading responsibility for misbehavior.

The problem is more serious if the children have a mom. Then grandmom can join forces and sometimes pour reserves of material resources into the battle at critical times. The lone opponent, husband or wife, has to utilize superior tactical skill in order to hold the defensive line of maturity for the children.

Grandmother also may be a "mother-in-law." If strongly inclined to momism, functioning in her dual capacity, she is a dangerous opponent of maturity for children. Her field of operation is large. If her son is the father, it is likely that during his childhood he was deeply injected with the mom virus. Then she has her field day. Resenting the wife, the intruder and usurper who separated her from her boy, she strives mightily to erase any outcroppings of maturity appearing in him as the result of association with a mature partner.

At the same time, she tries to line up the children against their mother: "Your mother is a lucky woman. She has just about everything—a wonderful husband, a fine house and such beautiful and smart children. She is so well and strong, and never seems to get tired. It makes me very happy to see her enjoying life so much. . . . I wish I could say the same for your father. Children, I am worried about him. He works so hard and looks so thin and white. I suppose he needs different food. Vegetables out of a can never did agree with him."

When the wife is the daughter, the formula works out in reverse order. Then the son-in-law is placed in an unflattering category and the daughter is a "poor, ill-treated, long-suffering child."

Even more hazardous for both father and the children is the devious mother-in-law who moves quietly and efficiently, and often talks in whispers. Should the daughter show any signs of growing up under the tutelage of a fairly satisfactory marriage to a reasonable husband, this experienced mom-in-law speedily moves up her verbal shock troops: "He won't be satisfied until you slave for him night and day. You are losing your looks. You will be an old woman before your time. I know men and their tricks." Various devices are used to keep the children in

line and their vision at the level of immature emotional reactions.

Mom twirls her baton at the head of a long procession of surrogates. Should mom have to drop out of line, there are many competent to take her place—older children, bachelor uncles and spinster aunts, cousins, occasionally a stepmother, old family friends. There are three surrogates, however, who deserve honorable mention—the governess, the nurse and the schoolteacher.

There is a type of governess mentioned in awed whispers by some women as a "jewel." Undeniably, she is competent. The children are always neat and clean; their manners are superb. There is the rub. Mademoiselle is too perfect. As it happens, she is probably emotionally starved. Life has never given her more than abortive opportunities of tapping the hidden reservoirs of her emotional desires and yearnings. The children become her children. Unfortunately, since she is their governess and not the wife of their father, she can be only a token mother. This is not sufficient to promote well-rounded maturing. By reason of her position in the household, Mademoiselle cannot be a mother. She must be a mom.

There are trained nurses—spinsters, emotionally cheated by life. They do a perfect job of nursing children through a serious illness tenderly, devotedly and skillfully. Again there is the danger that they hold the children too closely; that when they finish the case and leave, they take something of the child with them that can never be replaced. I know a number of nurses who will nurse only children. Many of them are emotionally mature women and do a fine piece of work professionally. A few equally skilled professionally are unsatisfied and immature emotionally. I fear that in their contacts with children, the harm they do, owing to frustration in their own lives, outweighs the benefits of their technical nursing, no matter how expert it may be.

Children spend at least one half of their waking lives in direct and indirect contact with their schoolteachers. It is inevitable that in the vast army of schoolteachers there are many who, however intellectually able they may be, and even though they may have graduated *cum laude* from a teachers' college, nevertheless are too immature emotionally to teach children.

As it happens, a large number of schoolteachers are unmarried and many of them are no longer young. By no means is the fact that the teacher is a spinster necessarily any reason to fear that she will influence harmfully the emotional development of children. I know many teachers in this group who are fine, capable and mature in their reactions to life.

However, when a teacher—perhaps particularly a spinster—is a surrogate mom, she is one incarnate. She pours the wrath of her own emotional disappointments and sufferings upon the children over whom she has authority—in full measure and overflowing. She may be an expert sadist, capable of inflicting much more suffering than if she were permitted to use physical flagellation. She has available the instruments for the production of mental pain—rigid authority, unexplained punishment, “clever” sarcasm, power to humiliate the child before others. It is as if these women said to the children, “I hate and resent you. I am going to make you suffer for the children I did not have. I will make it my business to prevent you from being happy mothers and fathers. Why should you have the things in life of which I was cheated?”

The psychoneuroses occupy very extensive territory in psychiatry and in life. On a scale drawn between fantasy and reality, between mental disease and the average reactions of men and women in their daily lives, the psychoneuroses may be placed somewhat to the left of the reality line. They may be only a short distance to the left. Here are the men and women who have a few neurotic symptoms. Some such people compensate so adequately and in so many directions that they are more competent and mature than many non-neurotics. I know a woman whose nineteen-year-old son is rendering splendid service in the Navy and whose two lovely daughters, seventeen and fifteen years old, daily demonstrate a fine maturity of thought and conduct. None of the children has ever suspected that for many years their mother has suffered considerable mental turmoil and apprehension whenever she is left alone.

However, usually psychoneuroses are even more to the left of the reality marker, but still definitely nearer to it than to the unreality of mental disease. Only occasionally is a psychoneurosis close to this area. Nevertheless, the psychoneuroses are retreats from reality, and the mental mechanisms by which emotional conflicts are transformed into neurotic symptoms are reality-evading techniques.

Psychoneurotic symptoms are many and varied. They may involve a massive loss of whole functions like walking, talking, seeing or hearing. Or they may evidence themselves as headaches, backaches, tiredness, pains, odd feelings here and there and everywhere, located in every organ and system—stomach and intestines, heart, lungs, genitourinary organs, skin. In other psychoneuroses, there are tensions, fear, and chiefly anxiety—anxiety which has been cut loose from its original moorings, so that the patient does not know what makes him so tense and anxious.

I do not assert that all psychoneurotics had moms. However, I believe that very often they did. A psychoneurosis serves the same purpose mom served. The mom, either by dominance or by soft subterfuge, postponed the necessity of facing the hard-and-fast issues of adult emotional and social life and

the making of decisions about them. By diverting attention to the contemplation of the symptoms, the psychoneurosis delays the facing and honest solution of the emotional conflict from which the neurotic symptoms were derived. It holds the patient in the protective bondage of his symptoms, which make him feel important, even though it be on a false and pathological basis. He is spared the belittling necessity of surveying his real insufficiencies and inadequacies. Decidedly, psychoneuroses may be mom surrogates, used by many who have not been able to achieve maturity.

There is a form of mental disease called schizophrenia, or dementia praecox. In spite of the fact that under modern methods of treatment more of these patients recover than formerly, schizophrenia still remains the psychosis which largely populates our mental hospitals. Psychiatry has succeeded in parting only slightly the veils which conceal the cause or causes of schizophrenia. Someday science will remove the veils altogether, and then we shall know what produces this mental disease which annually removes many boys and girls from the world of the mentally alive and condemns them to dream away their lives in some hospital or asylum. Irrespective of whatever will be discovered, it will still remain true that schizophrenia, in effect, is a withdrawal from everyday life as we know it and live it.

Again, I am not suggesting that all youngsters who became schizophrenic had moms instead of mothers. I do believe, however, that an extremely large number did have moms, either maternal or paternal, and sometimes both.

The resemblances between the ideology and philosophy of momism and national isolationism are more than accidental. The extreme isolationists tried to make us believe that it would be possible to fence in our country with a Chinese Wall high enough to turn back any enemy attack by land, sea or air. They assured us that we would be completely invulnerable to military invasion. We were assured, too, that the isolationist wall could not be breached by economic, political or ideological spearheads of penetration. We were to retire behind this wall and live happily ever after.

The isolationists hoped to sell the idea to the nation by twofold propaganda: 1. The security we would experience if we adopted the plan. 2. The dire dangers to which we would be exposed if we did not adopt it.

Much the same bifaceted technique is employed by moms. Here the emphasis is on the peace and happiness of the home and the danger of entangling alliances. The cement that binds the happy little home together is invisible, but very cohesive. In the last analysis, mom's isolationism has a much better chance of surviving than has political isolationism. The protecting wall which the political isolationists proposed erecting was too concrete. The proof of its vulnerability was too readily demonstrable.

One of the most dangerous of the mom surrogates comes in a bottle. To the heavy drinker, it provides all the protection, all the escape from life's hard knocks and all the synthetic feeling of well-being that mom provided.

The alcohol addict—and alcoholism is an addiction—generally turns to liquor for one main reason: he is immature. Basically, he lacks the adult ability to face the problems of life.

Alcohol gives him a pleasant, easy escape from reality. In about 80 per cent of all the alcoholic cases that I have studied, momism in childhood was the underlying cause.

Let me state a typical case history: John H's mother was more than forty when he was born, and since he was the only child, and probably would be the only child, she determined to keep and protect him at all costs. From his earliest days he was coddled and pampered. She fought his battles for him; made his decisions for him; would not let him take an active part in sports; picked out his friends, his clothes and even the books he read. In short, she dominated him completely.

From the time John was old enough to walk and talk, he was shy and timid. He wanted to be accepted as one of the boys, but his desire to conform in such things as dress, play and general activities in and out of school was completely and thoroughly thwarted by mom. As a result, he was picked on and bullied. He was called a sissy and a mamma's boy. He was teased and laughed at. Naturally, his shyness increased. He fast developed all the traits and behaviors of an introvert, in spite of the fact that he wanted to be otherwise.

The story was no different when he entered an Eastern university. He did find acceptance within a certain group, but they were very much like himself. Then, during his junior year, he made a discovery—after a few drinks, he found that his shyness seemed to fade. After a few more drinks, he felt he could meet people, talk and enter into things. He embraced alcohol as a new-found friend and protector—it solved his problems for him, it dulled the sharp edge on the knife of reality, it provided a protective shell that mom no longer could give him.

John didn't realize it then, but by the time he graduated from college he was well on his way to alcoholism. It usually takes about five years from the time a person realizes his continued need for alcohol before he begins to feel that alcohol is as important as food and sleep. In most cases, he finally slips completely into the realm of unreality and fantasy, and must have alcohol to keep him there. By dulling

his senses, it provides an easy way to escape the problems and the unpleasant things of life. Everything seems easier. The alcoholic, like the schizophrenic, lives in a world of his own making. John H is forty now, and completely cured of his addiction by psychological re-education. However, one mom trait persists—he still feels shy and self-conscious, in spite of the fact that he now is a very successful professional man.

Since the important factor in the production of alcoholism is childhood-determined immaturity and indecision, the logical treatment is psychological re-education to produce more maturity and decision. To his surprise and inner dissatisfaction, the patient discovers that the wise physician declines to be a mom. He does not tell him what to do and what not to do. From the very beginning, the physician refuses to deal with anything but the mature segment of the alcohol addict's personality, however small it may happen to be. The patient must make his own decisions, and once he starts, he begins to grow up. The patient himself must decide, "Shall I serve cocktails to friends? Shall I keep liquor in the house? Should I go to the corner bar with the boys?"

Once the mother or mature wife understands what the doctor is trying to accomplish for the alcoholic son or husband and appreciates the sound reasons for his technique, she becomes a helpful ally. Not so with mom. Never is she more than halfway convinced, and she is likely to follow her own system. She is among the patient watchers at the front door, awaiting the abnormal drinker's return. She is one of the expert sniffers of breaths, seemingly able to detect alcohol in quantities smaller than can be discovered by the police. She rewards periods of abstinence by affectionate displays, and often by lavish material gifts; she punishes alcoholic indulgences by withdrawing rewards. The alcohol addict is treated as a child. Of course, the continuance in the home of such immaturity-prolonging conditions nullifies the doctor's efforts. He cannot compete with mom.

At the moment, the social portrait of man is very incomplete. Were it even half finished, the world would have

scarcely embroiled itself in two bloody and destructive wars in the short space of twenty-five years. Each individual unit, each man and each woman, may be symbolized by a circle. The circle, when it is complete, is the ideal—a human being in even contact with his environment. Each circle, representing one person, is surrounded by a series of concentric circles. The circles immediate to the personal circle signify the human being's personal rights—a *very few* sacred personal rights, such as the right to protect and preserve his life, the right to bar unwanted intruders from his home, the right to worship God as his conscience dictates, the right to think independently, though not always to carry his thoughts into action. There are a few really personal rights, but not many.

Beyond the limited group of circles of personal liberties, there are many more circles. They represent the rights we share with others. These circles overlap similar circles surrounding other individuals and are mutually held territory. Highly placed or lowly placed, no one has more than a fractional claim upon this jointly occupied area. It is in this give-and-take land—the overlapping of rights and responsibilities—that the fate of democracy will be decided.

The capacity to live democratically and constructively is acquired only in childhood. Only reasonably mature parents, and particularly mature mothers, are competent to teach their children these lessons of democracy by permitting them to perfect their social instincts in their relations with other children. If the intermediate territory of give-and-take is populated with the sons and daughters of moms and their surrogates, then democracy cannot stand. It has happened elsewhere; it can happen here.

Earlier, when I discussed the causes of moms, I laid the blame to the moms who raise moms, responsibility-shirking husbands, sexual frustration and general emotional immaturity. These, however, are merely the immediate causes. The basic underlying cause is the social system under which mom is allowed to flourish and flower. If I have been hard on mom and her surrogates, she can find solace in the unending hymn of praise that the system provides. Actually, the system deserves the more severe indictment.

Moms fit snugly into the social order as it has evolved in our matriarchy. The community applauds. Therefore, there is no urge for them to examine their records as mothers. The society in which they move judges them by deceptive surface appearances. Often they are spoken of as giving their lives for their children. Hidden from public view, however, is the hard fact that for the lives "they give" for their children, in return, either directly or—even more destructively—indirectly, they exact in payment the emotional lives of their children. Usually moms are paid in full.

If a person invents something or makes something, he usually is held responsible, partly at least, for how the product turns out. If a man makes a mouse trap which does not catch mice, both he and the trap will be criticized. Certainly the inventor will not be praised for cluttering the market with another useless contraption. When a real mother bears a child, no one need tell her she has incurred a responsibility. She knows it and demonstrates her willing acceptance of the responsibility by her everyday behavior. Only the mom escapes scot-free. When a

youngster becomes antisocial or even criminal, public judgment rationalizes the issue. Almost never is the mom—or the system which produced her—tried in the court of public opinion along with her delinquent son or daughter. Instead, the mom is profoundly pitied.

Personally, I believe that general education, particularly progressive education, certainly in its ultra-modern aspects, should be indicted as a part of the mom-fostering system. Many eminent schoolmen will disagree, but as many more will be in agreement. There is no doubt that progressive education rescued the educational system from the doldrums. The authority in the schoolroom had been too rigid; the fear of failure in classes was grim. There was undeviating attention to the material in the textbooks and there was no real bid for the over-all interest of the child. Progressive education corrected these and other things, but it overcorrected them.

The balance between individual self-expression and behavior was not only modified but shattered. I believe there is only one way of becoming a wise and constructive nonconformist in adult life, and that is by early practice and experience in conforming. Mental hospitals are filled with young patients who insisted on trying radical short cuts to nonconformity. Many youngsters, particularly boys, who, in the first year or two of school life, give interesting and promising evidences of self-expression, at the ages of ten to fifteen and later are unruly. "Insubordinate" would better describe their behavior, but the use of the word has been tabooed by progressive education. In the higher brackets of progressive education, in order to control the class, the teacher was supposed to convey delicate hints to the pupils and to encourage good example by his or her controlled behavior. No doubt it worked—sometimes. No doubt, too, more often it did not work. The children were too busily engaged in expressing themselves to observe that the teacher, too, was hopefully self-expressing.

Advanced progressive education strives to eliminate competition. It says there shall be no rewards for success and no penalties for failure. Class standing is abolished, so that no child shall feel humiliated or pained by the knowledge that another child is handling the academic work better than he. It is interesting and Utopian, but, unfortunately, it is not life and it is not sound preparation for life. Life is still very much a matter of stiff competition. It involves the striving for success and the enjoyment of its rewards, the facing of failure and the payment of its penalties. It is easy enough to change the criteria of success. The criterion need not be money. It can be power or honor or recognition and appreciation. At the current crossroads of our cultures, however, it must be something.

I am still very much worried about those hundreds of thousands of young Americans who could not serve in this war because they were militarily ineffective, the cause of which often was diagnosed as psycho-neurosis. I wish I knew more about the ingredients that went into the making of the ineffectiveness. There was a large amount of mom, but there were other things too. Perhaps it is merely a coincidence, but the peak of progressive education was reached about 1930. The majority of the school children of that time would have been at the military age for this world war. I would very much like to

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know how many of the psychoneurotic ineffectives had been exposed to progressive education.

At a cursory glance, progressive education would seem to be opposed to the principles and practices of momism. Theoretically, it is designed to promote a rapid flowering of maturity. It advocates independence of behavior. It opposes emotional dependency. It urges individual selection of interests. It scoffs at rewards and punishments. In fact, progressive education would appear to damn all the instruments and devices by which momship maintains its sovereignty.

Nevertheless, I believe there is a kinship between the techniques of progressive education and momism. They both produce a spurious maturity. In both, the authority is heavily veiled. It cannot be seen, but it is there. The authority bargains for something that has the semblance of maturity, but really is immaturity. The terms of the bargain seem to be very generous. Large behavior concessions are granted. In progressive education, behavior restrictions and penalties for misbehavior are largely removed, in the hope that self-expression will be favored and hastened. Progressive education operates on a much higher level than does mom, though no doubt she feels that what she, too, is doing is for the child's good. She bargains on a low level. In order to conceal the growth-restricting control of loving dominance, she concedes extensive behavior territories. This lends the appearance of unre-

stricted freedom of thought and conduct. For example, punishment may be waived and fear of consequences magically dispelled for surreptitiously taking dad's car, driving without a license, colliding with another car and incurring a heavy bill for damages. Should the law step in, dad is bullied by argument and tears into using influence and whisking the culprit beyond the law's clutches. Should William fall too far below the school's academic standards, mom successfully pleads the case with his teachers, and by dint of promises and threats, and perhaps by employing a tutor, she makes it possible for William to continue his ardent tooting of the saxophone. Jack, who is well beyond the age of childhood fantasy, tells elaborate and fantastic lies. Mom is entranced by his "powers of imagination" and successfully foils his father's attempts to cultivate truthfulness.

Much of this self-expressive behavior involves youngsters in situations which are ominous and threaten retaliations and punishments. Mom is the indefatigable and omnipotent protectress, the invulnerable fortress between the child and the consequences of his behavior. But for the child's future it is a vicious circle. The more "self-expressive" the youngster's behavior becomes, the more he needs mom's protection; and the more she gives it, the tighter she draws the leading strings.

What are we to do about it? The problem is one of combating the cause rather than the effect. I'm afraid



The Sergeant Had a System

A POST PEACE ANECDOTE

ONE day shortly after my return from overseas I was one of a throng of travelers who boarded a Chicago-to-New York day coach. As I pressed hopefully forward toward one of the few remaining empty seats, I saw a sergeant ahead of me hurriedly performing a routine that was new to me. Dropping his hat in the first unoccupied seat he came to, he rushed on and deposited his handbag in the next vacant space. Continuing full tilt on down the car, he reserved a third seat with his shaving kit and a fourth by snatching off his jacket and dropping that. Then he stood at the far end of the coach, surveying the rest of the milling seat hunters with a satisfied expression.

That soldier, I thought, as I settled into my own seat, certainly

takes good care of his buddies. But then, to my astonishment, the sergeant came strolling back up the aisle, reversing his routine—almost. He picked up his jacket and his shaving kit, skipped the seat with his bag in it and retrieved his hat from the first seat. After that, he returned to Seat No. 2, swung his bag up onto the rack, and sat down with an air of solid, permanent comfort. It beat me—the whole maneuver just didn't make any sense.

Some hours later I encountered the sergeant as I was making my way to the dining car. "Look," I said, "would you mind telling me what that laying down and picking up of your gear was all about?"

"Lieutenant," he readily explained, "did you get a look at the girl I'm sitting with?"

—THOMAS D. FOX, 1ST LT., INF.

there's little that can be done for the older moms—their work is done. But we can make an effort to educate the mothers-and-fathers-to-be. Unfortunately, full-fledged moms or pops are rather thickly insulated against education by the very conditions that made them what they are.

Repeatedly in the course of my professional life I have carefully explained to women the dangers of momism. All in all, the results have not been encouraging. In most cases, the impression I made on moms was neither deep nor lasting. It was not difficult to obtain agreement with everything I said, but, unfortunately, the business of being a mom is not one of thinking, but of feeling, and feelings etched in deeply by years of practice are hard to eradicate.

Most moms are impervious to advice or criticism. Blinded by their "mother love," they simply cannot see that they are wrong and are harming their children.

I doubt if we shall ever reach such a level of honesty that the Army will return to his mother a son who was inadequate and ineffective in military service, with a report like this: "We are returning your son to you. We cannot make a soldier of him. In fact, we do not believe anything useful can be made of him by anyone. If we kept him in the Army, we would have to assign two good soldiers to coddle him. He has not changed at all. He is still as much a baby as when you nursed him and changed his diapers."

I doubt if it will be ever possible for a mature wife to return her immature husband to his mom, with a note along this general line: "I am returning your son to you. I am afraid it was never intended that he should be a husband. I have three healthy, normal children, and I intend to keep them that way. I cannot do this if I permit your son to remain in this house. He is too old and too large to be a baby, and as a child he is not attractive. He cannot even play with the children, because he is too easily offended. But you will not have any trouble with him. He misses you very much, and I am sure he will be much happier with you than he has been with me and the children."

How can we go about laying a better foundation for parenthood? First of all, by educating and preparing our girls and boys to be mothers and fathers. In girls' schools, we have endless courses in cookery, sewing and baby care, but none in the serious business of being a real mother. The same situation exists in boys' schools—carpentry, economics and athletics, but not a word on fatherhood. Maturity might well be the subject of a course included in our high-school and college curriculums! Such instruction could scarcely be begun too early or continued too long. Not only should we be training future parents but the students would be given a true insight into the tricks of momism and would detect the subterfuges of moms and stubbornly resist them.

Secondly, we should correct the defect in our social system which militates against the mother and adds dubious prestige to the mom. It is made somewhat too difficult for women, particularly married women, to participate fully in civic affairs. Yet it would be impossible to imagine anyone whose experiences would be more fruitful and whose counsel would be wiser than those of a well-adjusted wife and mother. She knows the needs of children, certainly the paramount consideration of the nation. The mother who

has been frustrated in her marriage, but, nevertheless, has been strong and determined enough not to lower her ideals of motherhood, is splendid material for participation in public affairs. She refuses to compensate for her marital frustration by crippling her children with emotional overattachments. Therefore she has much to give to the community which would be helpful to others, and notably to children. The defect which denies the right kind of women total participation in political and other activities should be corrected by educating public opinion.

There is one thing we must remember: Immature, selfish moms produce sons and daughters who are usually not capable of making more than an indifferent economic return and largely incapable of more than a futile social gesture. They occupy an area of our democracy purely as squatters. Real mothers produce men and women who till and cultivate our national soil, economically and socially. If the moms increase disproportionately at the expense of mature mothers, then there is real danger that the nonproductive squatters will dispossess the contributing citizens of our democracy.

What can mom do about it? She can do a great deal if she is not too completely immature and is able and willing to recognize her true self and try. Unfortunately, markedly immature people seldom see their own shortcomings.

I suspect that the moms who have read this far will be angry. I hope they will be very angry, because the natural repercussion of their anger should be to defend themselves and exclaim, "Well, if you think you know so much, why don't you tell us what to do about it?"

If the moms say this, I'll be grateful. I shall regard it not only as an invitation but as a mandate. Of course, the way to stop being a mom is to stop being one, but there are helpful explanations and criteria.

The various schools of thought concerning the psychology of children often disagree in theory and techniques, but each one worth its psychological salt has the same objective—the accomplishment for children of a sound and enduring emotional and social maturity, so that without too great strain and without too many difficulties, the conditions and problems of adult life may be met and solved with reasonable success. Maturity, in any case, is the goal.

At least we can be sure of a few simple facts. We know there are children. We know, too, that they live and move about in certain surroundings which we call their environment. It would be silly to study children without reference to their environments. Environments become all the more significant when it is realized that children do not make them and only in very small degree can they control them. It is obvious that something very important must happen as a result of the contact between the child and its environment. For one thing, such contact involves physical factors that have a very definite effect upon the child's body—food with its important vitamins, sunlight, fresh air, the opportunity to move about freely, and many other things. If the supply of these things should be insufficient or shut off altogether, the effect would be disastrous—a serious slowing up or crippling of the physical growth and development of the child.

Just as the child must draw upon its environment for the satisfaction of

its physical needs, so also must it depend upon it for the satisfaction of its emotional needs and emotional growth. In this connection, it must be kept in mind that the important content of the environment of children consists of other human beings. For young children these are notably the parents, and most significantly the mother. If there is an insufficient supply of psychological food or if it is of the wrong kind, then the emotional life of the child will be seriously damaged, possibly even destroyed.

It is convenient to have a name for what is built into the child from that which it derives both physically and mentally from the particular environment in which it lives. It is called human personality.

A valid way of looking at the personality of a boy or girl approaching adult life is to realize that it is a condensed but exact record of everything that has happened during childhood, including the reactions to the multitude of experiences in life, large and small, trivial or critical. A pattern has been set. In the making of that pattern, the parents have been more instrumental and more determining than anyone or anything else. The bequest of parents to children of material possessions is far less important than the legacy of sound, mature, well-integrated, flexible personalities.

Children may be viewed objectively and their behavior classified into good or bad, according to whether experience proves that the pattern of behavior laid down in childhood proves helpful or harmful in their adult life. Look at the spoiled child, and particularly let the mom look thoughtfully at the child she is spoiling. Without inquiring into why and how the child is being spoiled, it is clear that when, later on in life, that child attempts to dominate an unsympathetic environment by the behavior of a spoiled child, a method which was successful in childhood, he or she encounters rebuffs, disappointments and frustrations that lead to defeat in the struggle for emotional and social existence. If he wishes to survive, he must "unspoil" himself. It is extremely difficult and painful to erase a deeply ingrained behavior pattern and substitute a new one which is its direct opposite.

Even before its birth, there is in every living thing a potential or innate possibility and promise for growth and

development. Since it operates so mysteriously, it might be called the X quantity. See how beautifully it functions in the growth of the physical structure of a child. When the baby-to-be is in the womb of the mother, its various organs and parts at first are so undifferentiated that only an expert can tell what is going to be what—liver, spleen, spinal cord, fingers, toes, teeth. However, the buds of these organs, nourished by the same blood, grow into organs and tissues vastly different from one another. It would seem that there existed in the organ buds the power of selecting from the blood the proper kind and in the proper amount of those factors that will insure normal growth.

After birth, the baby is still quite incomplete, with a small nervous system, tiny organs, muscles and bones, eyes that cannot focus, legs that cannot walk, vocal cords that cannot speak, and many other parts that function only partially.

Again the doctrine of the X potential operates, and from the blood nutrition delivered to this small but compact structure, seemingly there is selected what is needed to produce eventually full-grown organs and parts, each one being quite different in structure and function, but interlocking and working together to constitute the smoothly working machinery of the human body. An interesting comparison may be made. If there is the physical potential for maturity, likewise there is a potential, or X quantity, which works toward the attainment of emotional and social maturity and security. The chief purpose of emotional growth in any child is to give it the opportunity to make for itself a workable personality, so that the conditions and demands of adult life may be met satisfactorily, so that the child may have an even chance of meeting his fellow men on even terms, finding satisfaction and happiness in life and standing up to its rebuffs. At least, we have some idea of the nature of the psychological potentials which soon show themselves in children. I repeat that since the shaping of childhood environment is largely in the hands of adults, and particularly parents, it is the important obligation of parenthood to see to it that the environment contains in sufficient quantities those things that may be reasonably expected to bring

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the buds of the psychological potential into full flowering.

There is no formula for building an emotionally normal child. There are seven things, however, that a child must have if he is to grow into a mature adult: a desire to move, a readiness and willingness to imitate, an alert response to suggestion, a reasonable amount of the love of power, a strong leavening of curiosity, a dash of childhood savagery and a spark of romancing. These important potentials must be satisfied to integrate the personality of a child and to build it satisfactorily. Properly handled and blended, they are the foundation stones of maturity.

In building a child's personality, the opportunity for physical motion must be provided and the inborn desire to move must be encouraged. That is how a child learns. A baby is largely responsive to sensation. It answers by a certain kind of response the stimuli that come through the route of the five ordinary senses, the stimulus of hunger, the stimulus of temperature differences,

the stimulus of pain and stimuli from various organs of the body demanding satisfaction.

You have probably heard a mother boast that her child is quiet and well-behaved. It is a stupid boast. Psychologically speaking, a quiet child is not a normal child. A quiet child is being deprived of the opportunity of getting its first growth of mind. The sensations that flow into the personality of a child through the route of motion are as necessary to its mental growth as the milk which it receives from its mother is for its physical growth. Encourage the desire for motion in your children, and, above all, allow that desire to continue into adulthood.

The second and probably the most important and dynamic psychological potential is imitation. It is important because here the child imitates mostly what is close to him—his mother and his father. The ability to speak one's native language, aptly called the "mother tongue," is acquired largely through a process of imitation. The

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child hears certain sounds first from its mother, then from other adults in the vicinity. In the beginning, the sounds are meaningless. Gradually there is an association between the sounds and the happenings that follow them. Thus they acquire meaning for the child and are repeated first as a word, then as a group of words.

The imitation of parents by children and in early life the imitation of the mother are the powerful twin driving forces of identification and idealization. One strengthens and reinforces the other. The parents are put on the highest pedestal of the ideal. Not only do the children pay them the tribute of imitation but unconsciously they desire to merge themselves completely into them.

It would seem superfluous for parents and others to ask, "What shall we give children to imitate?" The surroundings should contain in liberal amounts those qualities the imitation of which may be counted upon to build sound, mature, enduring personalities—honesty, straightforwardness, truthfulness, courage, reflection, judgment, decision, tolerance, patriotism, the outlines of a pattern of service to the community and the nation, and, since the world has become much more compact and accessible, at least some stirrings of internationalism. It seems like a large order, but these are only some of the specifications needed to make a citizen of the nation and the world. It is equally important that the early environment of children at least be relatively free from the opposite of these character-building attributes. The suitable pattern for the imitation of children to be wrought by parents and others might be expressed in a formula of daily living in which there is at least a reasonable balance between taking and giving, between the acceptance of privileges and the performance of duties.

The third important channel through which a considerable part of their surroundings flows into the molds of children's personalities is suggestibility. Suggestibility is an impetus or inclination toward this or that behavior pattern, the stimulus being given by something, literally anything, the child observes or senses in its environment. Suggestibility is much more subtle than imitation; it is far less concrete

and direct. From the environment, the child gets a certain hint or clue, and it is likely to take that hint and behave accordingly, particularly if the source of the suggestion comes from the mother or the father. Normal children literally drink in suggestions of all kinds from hundreds of sources in the environments in which they live, and these suggestions over a period of time help to produce the behavior patterns that shape their personalities.

This technique of suggesting growth and maturity can be used in endless ways to lead our children to adulthood. Suggestibility is a psychological weapon of great strength and usefulness in helping shape the personality of a child. It is flexible and double-edged. It must be used with bold strokes that will add worthwhile mature traits to character formation, and it must be turned broadside against any suggestion of those things which would jeopardize the building of a grown-up man or woman.

The childhood love of power is a more or less unconscious wish or drive to dominate the immediate surroundings. Within the limitations of preservation from harm, usually everything is done to keep a baby satisfied, comfortable and happy. The small piece of humanity does not need any conscious process of reasoning to sense its power over its environment. He soon learns that making a certain kind of noise called crying stimulates the adults in the vicinity into fussing and scurrying about energetically in their efforts to relieve an unpleasant situation.

But baby dominance is all too short-lived. Too soon comes the bitter disillusionment. The time must come when the child has to learn the painful lesson that adults and even other children have rights that must be respected and frequently conceded. Inevitably in each child there comes the conflict between the demands of society, meaning at first his mother and the family circle, and the wish to retain and later regain the power of babyhood. Truly it is the tragedy of childhood, but it is part of the growing-up process that must be carefully handled by the parents.

How should this critical development phase of childhood be managed? A common error is to overemphasize it

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by too much attention. It is a mistake to take either of two extreme attitudes. In one there is too much severity. The child is brought brutally face to face with the harsh fact that the days of power are over. He is punished severely for the least attempt to regain his baby domain. Many children who have been subjected to this extreme become so warped in their personalities that throughout their lives they remain frightened and defeated; others may project upon society the ill usage they received during childhood and become bitterly antisocial and dangerous personalities.

The other extreme in handling the love of power is the spoiling process. Unwise adults often permit children to hang onto their babyhood power overlong. Sometimes this spoiling is pseudo-scientifically camouflaged as "letting children express themselves." Often an only child or perhaps a favorite child is allowed to remain in the highly artificial position of continuing to exercise dominance. Other children are made to concede beyond all reasonable limits. Sometimes one or the other parent is forced to give in. Finally the day comes when the spoiled child must face the actual conditions of life. It is too late. He cannot conform. It is almost inevitable that he will be defeated by life. The habit pattern has been deeply inlaid. There are futile attempts, reminiscent of childhood, to gain the center of the stage, but the world counters by cold or cynical indifference. If he persists, there is active opposition and retaliation. The final result is either a bitterly disillusioned retirement from the world of adult emotional relationships or perhaps the learning, over a long period of time and in a sad and trying way, of a lesson that could have been learned with far less difficulty during childhood.

There is little doubt that the human species is indebted for its survival to the fact that every normal child is an animated question mark. Were it not for the potential, or X quantity, of curiosity in human beings, we should have none of the benefits of modern life, from the wonder drugs penicillin and streptomycin to the gadgets in our homes.

Science is simply applied curiosity. The real scientist is as curious as a child, and his curiosity differs from that of a child chiefly in that the scientist has specialized information that gives purposeful direction to the eternal questioning in his mind. Beyond that, just like a child, he takes things apart and puts them together, in order to see what makes them work.

Only a small part of early education is supplied in school. The bulk of it comes from outside the formal confines of the schoolroom, answering the "why" almost continuously on the lips of children. So there is no escape for parents or, for that matter, anyone else who has intimate contact with children. The curiosity of the young should be and must be satisfied. It is dangerous to block it. If you have tried to shut off the flow of a brooklet by building an earth dam, you know how other channels have been made by the force of the water to find an egress. This is exactly what happens to attempts to dam the curiosity of children. They find unsatisfactory and often harmful channels of information. The questions of young children must be answered simply, directly and truthfully. Older children should be directed to available and authoritative sources of information. Knowledge acquired

through personal effort adds significant layers to the personality.

Some parents, otherwise quite intelligent about their children, still balk at their manifestations of sex curiosity. They cannot accept the fact that it is normal for sex curiosity to be deeper and stronger than any other kind of curiosity. The reasons are simple enough. Sex is one of the strongest of human traits, strong enough to be classed as an instinct. Naturally, it begins to unfold early in life.

The second reason is an artificial one stupidly manufactured by adults—concealment. The subject of sex is clothed in mystery and far too generally considered out of bounds for children. Too often there is a hush-hush air when a child wanders into an adult discussion of sex. There is an abrupt silence and frantic gesturing and pointing at the little intruder. Always remember that curiosity held

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JUST ONE OF THOSE DAYS

By Isabelle Bryans Longfellow

Some days are silken threads I
smoothly weave
From early satin dawn to velvet
night,
And, effortless, my skillful hands
achieve
Their various ends through
patterns of delight.

Some days are threads which
tangle at the touch;
I fumble the designs I know so
well,
And all my powers seem captive
in the clutch
Of hindering hands, around me
like a spell.

Thus sore beset by ways of
witchery,
Somehow, I never seem to hesitate
To credit perfect tapestries to me,
And charge the tangled
merchandise to fate!

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back, checked, made difficult of satisfaction, is redoubled at once.

What should be done about sex curiosity? I do not think there should be formal lectures to groups of children. I believe the answer is to be found chiefly in the home atmosphere. If this is such that children do not hesitate to ask natural questions about sex almost as readily as they ask other questions, then the right foundations are being laid for useful and helpful sex information. This is perhaps the most important environmental heritage that can be given to children. The "nervous breakdowns" of adult life are very complicated and difficult to unravel. In direct ratio to the symptoms, I believe they contain the aftermath of more ignorance, misinformation and bad-habit formation about sex than any other ingredient.

A sixth potential through which a child's growing personality is fed is savagery. What is childhood savagery? It has been thought to represent the recapitulation of the long epoch of primitive savagery, one of the steps of the human species on the long way toward our present plane of civiliza-

tion. Irrespective of its origin, however, it is an important phase of emotional growth, presenting an ideal opportunity for teaching love of nature and self-reliance, and accumulating reserves of health and strength which will be much needed later on in life.

I believe, too, that the phase of savagery is the time during which the spirit of competition should be developed. In my discussion of progressive education, I pointed out that there is a tendency in some of our schools to abolish all competition. I agree it is right to minimize it. Children should not be lashed to merciless rivalry. Nevertheless, I am inclined to think that later in life every child will meet situations that are best prepared for by fostering in childhood some desire to win. In adult life as we live it, it is impossible to escape competition. In the games and activities of childhood, teach honesty, fair play and unwillingness to take unfair advantage, but leave to the child some satisfaction in victory. Modern life has recognized the claims and needs of savagery. These are normal outlets for animal spirits.

Finally, there is a personality potential I call romancing. It is the telling of untruths that are not lies. Only if unduly prolonged does it become lying. Romancing is the budding of the imagination. In children it often comes out in the telling of tall tales to which Baron Munchausen's stories could not hold a candle. Never should romancing be brutally crushed. If, in effect, you say to a child, "That is a lie and you are a liar," then you are distorting or even destroying something potentially beautiful that is just beginning to grow. Children must be taught truthfulness, but it must be done gradually, tactfully and skillfully. For one thing, the romancing time is the time to introduce the child to good romantic literature. Here outlets will be found for the rapidly growing imagination.

It is best to adopt a middle-of-the-road policy toward the romancing of your children by not being too obviously and admiringly credulous. It may be true enough that the romancing of children contains some of that precious, cobwebby stuff of which great poetry is made, but there is no need to believe you have borne a genius. Statistics show that great liars are much more common than great poets. On the other hand, it is not wise to be too derisively skeptical of the adventurous stories you hear from your children. Probably romancing youngsters do not expect to be believed. They want and need an audience which will not scornfully humiliate and belittle them. If normal youthful imagination is turned back, deprived of its expressive words, there is danger that it will accumulate as excessive daydreaming and fantasy. Naturally, while listening to the fanciful outpourings of an offspring, you must have one eye fixed on the need of inculcating truthfulness. You must help a child to arrive at the conclusion that a good story is still good without the necessity of pretending that it actually happened.

There are other potentials, but I have given the important ones. Children do not just grow up. The growth of their emotions as well as of their flesh and blood is deeply rooted in the environmental soil of the home. From this soil the emotional plant must draw its sustenance, and the direction and nature of its growth are determined early, and frequently cannot be changed. The psychological potentials must be carefully nurtured and tended if maturity is to be the end result. THE END