

KNOW THY CHILDREN

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The child who deviates from the normal may be precocious, he may be a genius, or he may be an unfortunate mental defective with arrested mental development, a low or high grade imbecile, an idiot, or he may be mentally diseased, a psychopath. Are we prepared by education and experience to know and to distinguish clearly those symptoms which handicap the child and which cause him to act differently from the other children of his age group?

The child may be suffering from physical defect—enlarged tonsils, adenoids, deviated septum, poor teeth, badly arched palate, poor hearing, defective vision, anemia, cardiac irregularity, dysfunctioning glands, etc., and because one or more of these physical defects exists, the child may not be able to respond properly either intellectually or emotionally to ordinary stimuli and he cannot act in a normal, healthy, joyous, child-like way. Are we prepared, by training, education and experience, to detect quickly these existing physical defects and to sympathize with these physical handicaps which cause the child's abnormal actions and reactions?

Intelligent parents, who are watchful of the child's well-being, have learned to appreciate fully the value and necessity of having their children examined regularly by physicians, dentists, ophthalmologists and other specialists, so as to discover possible physical defects in their children, and in order to give them proper prophylactic and medical care either to prevent physical defects, or to cure existing physical ailments. Teachers in our public schools have also been trained to look for possible physical defects as causes of abnormal behavior,—laziness, lack of attention, poor muscular control, irritation, lack of the power of concentration, and restlessness. Precautions are now taken to provide children in our schools with proper adjustable desks and seats and other hygienic and sanitary appliances, with a proper amount of well diffused natural

or artificial light, with standardized cubical air space for each child, with proper hygienic color schemes of window shades and classroom walls, with dustless chalk and erasers, with well ventilated clothing closets, rooms and halls, so that physical obstacles to hygienic and economic learning may be removed. Boards of Health, through their own medical inspectors and nurses, are now making regular inspections of children in our public schools, noting and recording their physical defects and cooperating with school authorities and parents, in order that these defects may be removed as promptly as possible. Physical training, gymnastics, athletics and hygiene, form a large part of the daily program of every school. In short, educational authorities have now fully recognized the wasteful process of endeavoring to develop a sound mind in an unsound body. Great forward steps have been taken to improve the bodies and the general physical health of our children.

But what has been done to remove the psychological obstacles which are more deeply rooted than the physical and which cause many children to lag far behind their classmates in school, leading to discouragement, failure, abnormal behavior and fruitless effort on the part of both teachers and parents? It is only within the twentieth century,—indeed only within the last decade,—that serious attention has been given to the scientific measurements of the minds of children. The *Binet-Simon intelligence tests* have been revised, and we are now in possession of numerous scientific tests which enable us to determine, with a fair degree of accuracy, the intelligence level of children. Numerous other scientific tests are now being developed and applied to determine other characteristics of the child mind. Psychometric testing and recording have now developed a special scientific technique. We have discarded the chronological ages of children in favor of the mental age of children as determined by scientific intelligence tests. The twelve-year-old child may mentally be only eight years old, and vice versa,—the eight-year-old child may mentally be twelve years old. The ratio between the mental age and the chronological age of a child gives us a quotient which is now technically known as the *Intelligence Quotient* or *I. Q.* of the child. Thus the twelve-year-old child who measures

only 8 years mentally has an *I. Q.* of $8/12$ or $.66\text{-}2/3$, while the eight year old child who has a mental age of twelve, has an *I. Q.* of $12/8$ or 1.50. The first child is classed as a border-line defective child, while the second child is classed as an exceptionally bright or mentally gifted child. Professor Terman, one of the leading authorities in America on the intelligence levels of children, states that "a child with an *I. Q.* of 66 should be kept out of regular classes, and will not be equal to the work of the fifth academic grade of our regular public schools, while the child with an *I. Q.* of 150 is so intelligent that he too will be seriously hampered in an ordinary classroom. He can do more intensive and more rapid work than his classmates, and he will do excellent academic work both in high school and college."

The first great step has been taken in recognizing the different mental levels of children at different ages. The next step will be to re-classify our children, re-organize our schools, make more homogeneous groupings of children of equal mental ages, provide courses of study which shall be differentiated both as to quality and quantity of work, so that all children will be subjected to equal mental tensions for their varying mental abilities. The exceptional and gifted child will not be held back and form habits of laziness and irritate both teacher and parent, because the average normal child cannot keep mental pace with him, and the dull or mentally retarded child will not become a burden because he will not be asked to perform unsuitable tasks.

With this clearer perception of the fundamental meaning of the intelligence quotients of children will come the fuller appreciation of the fact that adult judgments of children's acts must be reserved and postponed until at least a psychometric test has been given to the child to determine his mental level. Then, if the child is found to be below par mentally, i. e., if his *I. Q.* is less than 100, the intelligent parent will seek expert guidance from trained psychologists, psychiatrists, and, if necessary, from psycho-analysts. Intelligent parents and teachers no longer scold children for their weaknesses, but seek to discover and remove the causes of any abnormal behavior. The unfortunate child cannot be blamed for his poor heredity, nor can we continue to sin against him by forcing

him to live in an unwholesome environment at home, or by compelling him to perform tasks in school or out of school, which are totally unsuited to either his physical or mental capacity. Absolute standards of child behavior can no longer be maintained in child training. The theory of relativity is just as true in the realm of mind and spirit as it is in the realm of time and space. We have a perfect right to expect relatively much from the child who has more than normal intelligence, but we must expect much less from the child with an *I. Q.* of 60 or 50.

We have been educated to consult experts for physical ills, and we must now learn our full duty and seek expert treatment for mental defects and for mental diseases which heretofore have neither been recognized nor understood and which caused great annoyance to the child and to the unsympathetic parent or teacher.

With this newer scientific approach to the behavior problems presented by children, has come the modern viewpoint, that children are not bad, but simply misunderstood. "To know all is to forgive all." Let us apply ourselves intelligently and endeavor to understand the children whom we desire to train and educate.