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Parents' Problems

By DONALD M. MAYNARD

Threats of Punishment

Should the refusal of a ride to Sunday school be held as a constant threat of punishment over children in one's neighborhood and should I ever accept that ride again even after an apology?

The answer to the first question is an obvious "no." In fact, threats of any kind are poor disciplinary measures. It would seem especially undesirable to associate Sunday school with the idea of punishment. Unfortunately, too, for some children, the inability to get to Sunday school might not be deemed punishment.

The answer to your second question is obviously "yes." It's a pretty small person that will not accept a sincere apology in good faith and try to let bygones be bygones.

The Generous Soul

How can I help my daughter to be less generous without making her selfish? She allows people to impose upon her—helps classmates with their work, lends books she needs herself, uses her time to do things for others that they should do themselves.

Here we apparently have quite a different problem. In this case, we must discover the satisfaction your daughter is getting out of letting people impose upon her.

It may be that she lacks self-confidence, thinks she isn't attractive, especially to boys, isn't as popular as she would like to be, and in general feels inferior to those of her own size.

She has discovered that by putting herself out to help others she gains the attention and approval she so desperately craves.

If this is the situation, you need to be patient and understanding with her. Encourage her to develop skills of her own that will secure the respect and admiration of her peers; help her make herself more attractive; have young people frequently in your home so that she may have a wholesome social life; and in every possible way strive to give her confidence in herself. Fathers can be of help here by complimenting their daughters upon their appearance.

Suppose the above picture doesn't fit your daughter at all. What then? It may be that she is just one of the generous souls that, although often imposed upon, nevertheless brings much more happiness than gloom to the world. Do not be too disturbed about it.

You may, however, want to help her see that it is not wise always to do for others that which they should do for themselves. By being too generous and helpful she can keep her friends from developing the inner disciplines they so sorely need.

Remind her of one of the queer quirks of human nature, which is that we are likely to care less for those who go out of their way to help us

than for those whom we ourselves go out of our way to help. In other words, one way to get persons to like you is to let them do things for you.

That "Silly Age"

Must our children, age 5-8, go through a "silly age" when they greet visitors with a funny face instead of a courteous "how do you do," when they punch holes in the bread instead of eating in a mannerly fashion, etc.? I want my children to have fun, but I want them to be well bred.

A certain amount of so-called "silly" behavior is more or less normal for children and as a rule should cause parents no alarm. Whether such behavior is desirable or not depends largely upon the reasons for it. There are at least three:

1. There is that type of silliness which occurs when children are tired or have been unduly excited. At the close of a busy day, for example, brothers and sisters may get hilarious and giggly. They shout with glee at inane remarks made by the others; they make funny faces and laugh uproariously; they may bounce up and

down on the sofa or bed, or throw themselves around on the floor with abandon, landing in all sorts of grotesque positions. Should visitors arrive at such a time, they almost certainly will be greeted by a funny face. This type of silliness is not to be considered undesirable unless the frequency of its occurrence suggests that the children do not get sufficient rest or have too many exciting experiences.

2. Children sometimes are silly because they do not know what to do or say or consequently are embarrassed. If they have not been taught how to greet guests, or even so have had little experience in doing so, the funny face may be simply an attempt to cover up their embarrassment.

3. Children get tired of doing everything the same way all the time. They like to experiment and many times their experiments seem silly to adults. Nevertheless, a certain amount of learning by trial and error is essential if children are to develop normally. Sometimes this deviation from standard behavior is for the purpose of seeing what the reaction of the parents will be. Punching holes in the bread may belong to this category. If your child sees it doesn't bother you and you make no comment about it, he probably will stop doing it in a short time.

You must not expect "adult manners" of children, however.

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