

The Child as a Member of the Family and Community

by

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CHILDREN do not think, feel and react as adults—physically, mentally and emotionally. A child is a growing, changing person with its own needs and potentialities. The first responsibility of parents, public health nurses and teachers in helping a child grow to his fullest capacity, is primarily to understand a child's needs, and the pattern of growth, keeping in view the individual needs of each particular child. Every child is a product of its own heredity, born into a special environment. There are certain factors which have a bearing on the development of the child's potentialities or capacities.

Notes : (1) Deficiencies in the mother's diet can prevent normal development of the child.

(2) An unfortunate emotional environment can keep a child from becoming a well adjusted adult.

(3) Deprivation of love and security have their influence in making the child feel unloved, unwanted. He may grow into a timid, insecure individual or into an aggressive, bullying person who finds it difficult to get along with other people.

During pregnancy the health of the mother should be maintained at a high level. The parents should always seek competent medical advice and be assured that they have a reasonable chance of producing normal healthy children. The midwife can give assistance by advising the mother about diet, and general health.

The Public Health Nurses and Midwives must understand, anticipate and be ready to give assistance on the many problems relating to the care of the mother and the child. The mother in gaining confidence in regard to meeting the child's needs, learns to nurse the baby properly, and to take care of it during its infancy and childhood. Both parents should be taught about the baby's physical and mental development. These are important aspects of the Public Health Nurse's teaching and guidance during the child's early life.

Most parents want their children ; they enjoy them, even when there are problems and worries and responsibilities in the family life. In a good family, children receive affection and feel the love and warmth of belonging, which is so important. Affection is shown not only in the care given to the children, but in the tone of voice, the hug, the arm around the shoulder. Further evidences are in the fun together,

the spontaneous laughter, the games around the table and the stories at bed time, and the willingness to listen. The child needs to feel that he is loved.

Many parents fail to prepare older children for the reception of a baby in the family. Because of this an older child may show anxiety and become insecure with false assumptions about the new baby. He may feel unwanted or jealous ; or he may return to all out grown baby ways.

Mothers should be taught the importance of giving solid food to children to meet the demands of his physical growth ; in India parents are careless about this. Nurses have an opportunity to guide parents about children's diet.

The home is the place where the child receives his first experience in community living. As he grows from babyhood to childhood, he learns to have his rights and wishes respected, while he respects those of others.

The child needs caressing, mothering and fondling. Comfort should be provided through gentle handling, cleanliness, warmth, exercise, food and affection. As a young child develops, he likes to do things for himself. He should be praised for his satisfactory achievements.

The child's pre-school years are the most important in character formation. A number of problems may be prevented, if parents had sufficient guidance during this period. The Public Health Nurse is in close contact with the child through Well Baby Clinics and home visiting and can follow through in giving further assistance to the mother about problems of pre-school age. The child-study group and courses in child development are available to parents in some communities. Numerous books and pamphlets are available to help parents gain a better understanding of their children. The nurse can assist parents with these resources and give assistance in interpreting content.

Parents usually worry over thumb sucking, masturbation, sibling rivalry, curiosity about sex, disobedience and irresponsibility. Through child-study groups or the reassurance of the nurse, the parents secure the consolation that other children behave in much the same manner as their own. The nurse should help parents to establish discipline and good habit in the child. The young child should be under medical

supervision and should receive the immunization for such communicable diseases as small-pox, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough and tuberculosis.

The child of today will be the citizen of tomorrow. The Nation is strong whose citizens are healthy, well adjusted and happy. So parents should be conscious of the child's needs and be ready to accept the help and guidance offered by nurses in bringing up their children.

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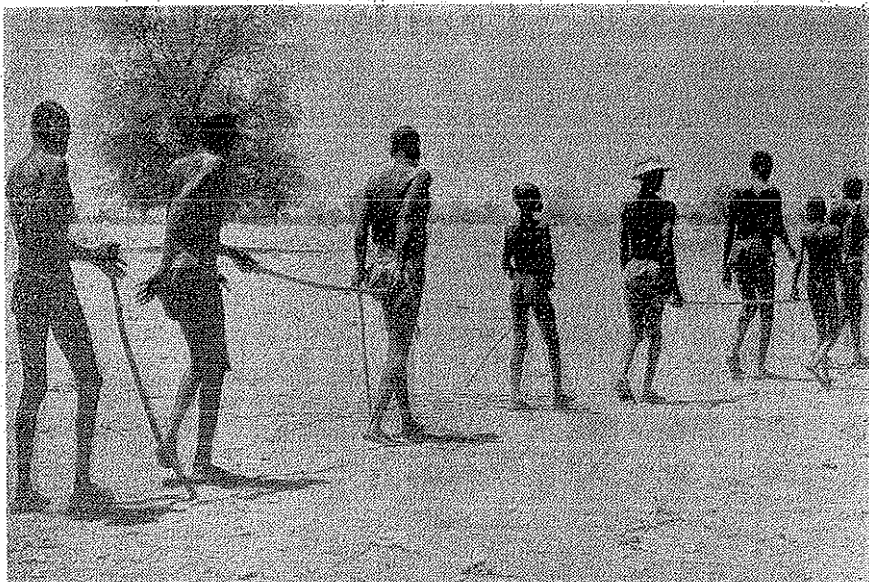
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