

WHY KIDS COME HERE!

"A lot of kids come here because their home life isn't too good, and when kids have a bad home life they nearly always get into trouble.

Most kids get into trouble because they associate with other kids who have nothing to do, so they look for something exciting to do, like stealing a car or breaking into a house. This is the most stupid thing they could do, because no matter how good their luck is, they're going to get caught. Even if it takes a couple of years, they've got to make a mistake sometime, and when they do they're sprung.

The first time they will get a warning, and if they have any sense they will stop, because the next time they go before a magistrate they will probably end up in Wybra or Ashley depending on their age. And believe me coming to Ashley or any institution isn't fun and it's nothing to brag about to friends.

Take Ashley for instance — its no Devils Island, but then again it's not easy. You have to work, but most people get used to it. But the worst things about institutions is that you don't have much choice in whether or not you want to do something. In other words, you don't decide what you're going to do. They usually tell you! But the worst thing is that you lose your freedom (not entirely, unless you go in the secure unit — because sometimes you go on organised outings).

Once someone has been in Ashley or any other criminal institution for that matter, it's hard to keep out of trouble, and a lot of boys after leaving Ashley for good come back because they can't handle the outside world. And Ashley offers a shelter for them."

In closing, I must say that the word "boys" in the above article and in the name of the institution, is misleading.

These are young men in size, and in type of crime, however childlike some of their writings may be. They are on the brink of actions and decisions — their own and others — which will put them on shaky feet in the adult world, or else in prison.

Mr. Steve Biddulph
Psychologist

Wellington Street Clinic
Mental Health Dept. Tasmania
Churchill Fellow 1980

This booklet has been a useful experience for the boys. It has also been helpful to the adults working with them, as it has been a different means of communication and allowed us as adults, to view Ashley more through the boys' eyes than our own.

The boys I know personally, who have contributed, are aware of a feeling of achievement and personal effort rewarded by adult interest; as well as feelings of just sheer pleasure at producing a booklet entirely by themselves.

Steve's advice and encouragement has been supportive and enabling. In a situation where positives for the boys are often hard to see — this has been an important project. It has also induced a lot of productive thought — by us all.

(Miss) Pat Harris
Senior Child Welfare Officer
"Omaru" Community Youth Centre
Dept. Social Welfare
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Copies of the booklet "Life in Ashley" are available by writing to the Ashley Home for Boys, Deloraine, Tasmania 7304 and enclosing \$1.50 post paid.

EDUCATION ROLE IMPORTANCE IN PRIMARY PREVENTION OF CRIME

***Mrs M. Campbell-Smith**

This Conference, with its emphasis on the prevention of crime within the community, looks to the major institutions and the systems of social control at a time when the crime rate, especially among juveniles, is rising. Why do some people turn to crime?

The vast majority of cases probably arise out of the person having poor relationships, poor family background, arrested social development and an inappropriately developed value system. This can be expressed out of difficulties of the person's own integration of themselves — or of themselves with society.

If this is so, the most appropriate way to prevent this is to influence the factors that produce such socially aberrant human behaviour. The most potent influential areas are the home, the school, the peer group, the media, and the local situation in which they live. Obviously certain things only government can do, and to some extent moves have been made in recent times to do just this, but in the educational sphere there has not been a similar move that could have a beneficial effect.

One area in particular that has been given lip-service or has been ignored is that of growth of the self, and in the ability of people to relate to others. The growing emphasis on career qualifications is not being matched with a similar emphasis on the acquisition of social skills and information required for happy healthful living, both in and out of work. However, if our education system (whatever its philosophy or policy) does, in fact, cater primarily for the job market, to the extent

that vital aspects of social education are overlooked or deliberately ignored (particularly at a time when the role of the family as social educator has become significantly diluted by other influences), then it would seem inevitable that the social problems arising from the lack of knowledge and poorly developed social skills would affect the well-being of society as a whole.

All of us have certain basic needs, and the most important of these are the need to belong, to be wanted, and to be loved. For many, these needs are not met, and the consequent feeling of inferiority produces many forms of negative behaviour.

There is an epidemic of inferiority in our society. From the moment children enter the world they are subjected to an unfair value system which reserves respect and esteem for only a few. Those who fail to measure up to society's standards — mainly in areas of beauty and intelligence — will have to cope with feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

What can parents do to protect their children from the agony of inferiority? How can teachers compensate for the unfair value judgements which damage their students? Are they aware that they may be compounding the feeling of inadequacy to a point of no return? What action and attitudes will enable us to help children develop a normal and healthy self-esteem. If you watch a child whose ego or feeling of self-worth has been damaged, you can see that the pain equals or even exceeds the intensity of physical discomfort. The frightening part is that the pain tends to grow into the con-

scious mind during the day and enter dreams by night. I feel to try and understand behaviour, we need to know the typical ways people cope with self-doubt and personal inadequacies, and then to offer learning experiences so that choices can be made by each individual to enable the development of a healthy feeling of self-worth.

Within any classroom can be seen children who adopt typical avenues of self-defence. One of the most common is to withdraw (Pattern 1) — to admit defeat to themselves. They may be known as shy or quiet, a snob, someone who because he talks little, just isn't thinking. This is possibly the least effective coping mechanism, with a high risk that an introspective adult will follow. Pattern 2: The same feeling in a more aggressive child, because his feeling of inferiority causes him to carry a chip on his shoulder, causes him to fight at the slightest provocation. Adolescence could cause a quiet withdrawn child to lash out, much to the amazement and disbelief of those close to him. Pattern 3: Another very common way to deal with inferiority is to laugh it off. Many skilled disruptors in class are boys who often have reading or other academic problems — few realise the underlying cause. Pattern 4: Then there are those who deny reality, who cope with a problem by refusing to believe that it is there. Many of our really difficult social problems have this coping mechanism at its core, e.g. alcoholism, drug abuse, violence. Pattern 5: "I'll conform". Those who adopt this defence are afraid to express negative mechanisms. Finally there is (Pattern 6:) compensation. This is a better way of coping with inferiority, but it takes courage, for some more than others. The easier path is to wallow in self-pity, to freak out, to run, to withdraw, to compromise.

Modern urbanisation has hastened the breakdown in our traditional way of life, and we have not updated a new framework to allow the young proper nurturing. At the moment, many have few guidelines and little opportunity to assess all available evidence and consciously learn to make responsible decisions based on sound knowledge — many are quite "mindless". Children who feel isolated at home and school will often become the victims of destructive pressures or make wrong decisions as they try to cope with their environment. The strength and effect of peer pressure, the home pressure, the physical pressure of overcrowding, the subtle media pressure influencing adolescent life-styles cannot be over-estimated (cars, parties, pop concerts, grog parties, sex, no adult supervision etc.) The most damaging pressure is when communication between the child and parent breaks down, because that forces the child to become an isolate, or communicate only with peers. It is then easy to multiply poor decisions and to "opt out", a time when promiscuity, drugs or crime may become a pattern. Hurt and bitterness can lead to a reaction against people against society, and in some instances to disillusionment and even suicide.

Not all children are badly affected by pressures — to some it is the spice of life — but there are too many who don't thrive for the problems to be ignored. Pressures will always be present, and there has been no era without them, but it is possible, and should be the task of the educators to positively help children to learn to cope.

The concerns of adults about the consequences of the behaviour of the young — pregnancy, V.D., drug addiction, alcohol abuse, theft, violence, vandalism etc. are the outcomes of unmet needs, the symptoms of frustration and unhappiness — They are not the concerns of the young who are extremely worried about acceptance, popularity, love, self-image, being wanted, having the feeling of belonging, etc., all very human and normal concerns. For too long the notion has been perpetuated that memorised data implies deep understanding, and that an awareness of the physiology of the body conveys an appreciation of how the total person

may constructively engage himself in the realities of daily life and human relationships. Man is multi-dimensional and needs to grow and mature physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. To date, the emphasis has been on the cognitive or intellectual development, and other areas have not received such marked attention. It has been assumed that the cognitive and affective areas of learning are separate, but there is a substantial body of research now that indicates that the development of cognitive and affective skills is reciprocally and intricately inter-related.

The searching demands of the realms of personal understanding are not easily mastered, and the recognition of their importance has been slow. We are living in unique times, there has been no previous generation that we are aware of, where customs, traditions and attitudes have not been handed on, with a few modifications, to the younger generation, with a consequently stable society. In these revolutionary times the baby and the bath water have been thrown out — have we time to learn to live with the pressures and stressful change — to adapt as man has in earlier eras. Many parents are actively seeking supportive help, and look to the school. The school has, in its relationship to the home and family, a role — and a very vital one — if the parents are not coping and the school negates its responsibility, there is no other institution that can accept this responsibility. If together, we do not help children find guidelines for themselves, we will miss a vital opportunity, and leave the next generation to wallow with indecision in a mass of conflicting values. We will reap even more evidence of negative coping behaviour than we are at present.

We know our ability to learn is a sequential process. Emotional growth and our ability to develop our own value system is also a sequential process. Therefore, it is important to recognise the gradual upward development in all dimensions, and to cater for these with suitable learning experiences.

For quite a while now there has been talk about "educating the whole child", "teaching for life, not just living". In fact, most teachers would say that they want to help children become more:

responsible	friendly
confident	self-aware

but very little has been said about just how to achieve those goals.

I would like to propose a way in which schools could introduce a very valuable programme with a far-reaching effect. It would cost no more than teaching any other core subject, e.g. English, Maths, etc. (despite the fact that cost has been put forward as a major reason for avoiding commitment to the value of affective education. My proposition is not an "airy-fairy" theory, but one tested and proven by my own and others' experience in the classroom over more than twenty years.

It is this. Allocate time in the curriculum for each class in the school to meet as a group once a week for 30-40 minutes in Grades V and VI Primary, and students can concentrate on the affective area, learn to communicate — really listen, learn to co-operate as a group, understand themselves in relation to others, learn that their needs are also those of others, have an opportunity of meeting their "here and now" emotional and social needs, reduce tension, etc. It is a time allocated for developmental experiences, arranged by a specially selected and trained teacher, to challenge constructive thought, care and concern for others, responsible decision-making, when they are not told what to think, but learn how to think. As one child said: "To come to terms with yourself and to think about life". Within most schools, so many things are said to be happening but in actual fact they are spread so thinly through the curriculum, they rarely occur. Take sex

information — so many children pass through the system completely ignorant of the factual side of conception and contraception, and as for the emotional handling of a relationship, that hardly rates a mention; yet this is what forms the basis of good marriages and parenting, lack of it is at the core of many of our present social problems.

The class groups are rarely cohesive when they first meet in these discussion groups, but by Grade 10, because of increased skills in perception, awareness and communication, there is a warmth and acceptance that encourages a feeling of belonging and in which a personality is encouraged to grow.

Many people find it hard to talk meaningfully with another, to really listen and perceive with understanding the attitudes of another within the groups. Simple communication skills can be taught and should be an integral part of total education. With these groups little equipment is needed, the most valuable component is a well-trained and dedicated teacher group leader because the emphasis is on interaction, not entertainment. The ideal group of from 8-12 with an adult would be impossible in terms of school time and money, and interestingly this size is not necessary for the majority of children. These are not problem groups, but people with growing needs even though some members of the class group could have problems.

The overall significance of this is that the needs of the group at large are met, small groups that need individual attention can have those needs met, and individuals who have particular personal needs can, at a suitable time, have individual counselling, so each person is free to move to the next level of emotional growth. Many children have emotional blocks which are never removed and as they grow, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to relate meaningfully with another. Those who are hurt and lonely often turn to anti-social groups or involve themselves in anti-social behaviour. The greatest single factor in emotional disturbance is that of frustration. The school's contribution to this — the experience by the children of unconcerned authoritarian adult domination, the relegation to the lowest grades, being regarded as failures, the no-hopers and forced to work at subjects in which they have no interest, is worthy of investigation.

The primary school is a place where invaluable preventative work can be done. In Grades V and VI children are eager to learn about life, however too often emotional damage is almost irretrievable by this level. Nature is very unkind in allowing boys and girls to get out of step in their growing years; in today's society it places on them one of the most hurtful stresses. Unless class groups are taught to understand the differences and the reasons underlying them, some of the deepest mental damage can occur during these years.

To feel accepted is of high priority — if as a boy you are just not interested in girls, or as a girl not interested in boys, you stand every chance of being ridiculed and put down by the more outspoken class members. This does not help the ego at all. Showing off, loud laughter, playing practical jokes, or going very quiet and walking off on your own — are all ways of throwing a screen round hurt feelings. If you are not accepted by those you look up to — if you don't get any recognition for work, if those at home take little notice of you — is it any wonder you tend to drop out. Television — the plug-in drug, is a powerful dictator of behaviour; I don't think many parents know what the disco and pop groups offer their children. 13-14-year-old girls terrify many boys of their age with their expectations — older boys expect "fun" with younger girls, who are excited by their attention. There is a special element of excitement if supervision is light, and brawling or fighting may occur, which incites almost hysterical behaviour. Alcohol is expected at parties for this age. What are they learning? What are they really wanting? The

need to be accepted is especially prone in those who feel unattractive.

Boys who do not gain acceptance by girls of their own class tend to gang up and act in a very aggressive "don't care" manner. Home itself is not always a comfortable place. There is an alarming increase in disturbed families. Parents who fight physically and verbally, who separate, who have de facto relationships, who are without partners, who have swapped partners etc., often create very disturbed children. Their quarrel is not the child's. A child wants to love and be loved by both parents, but is often torn between the two. The amount of energy and control needed to shut off the memory of an all night fight etc., and cope with classroom learning must be tremendous. For many, the class group time is a great relief. To learn that others have difficulties too, and that others are learning to accept a situation and to cope effectively with it, is a help.

At each age level a class group is able to think and talk about themselves and their emerging feelings — unconsciously they are meeting an important need by learning to communicate meaningfully, and so learning to understand and control themselves, and more importantly, gaining a better knowledge of their own attitudes and values. It is not easy to be like a child when many are more adult. It is not easy to be more adult in appearance and feel like a child. It takes courage to look inside and seek the answers to the questions — Who am I? What can influence me? How can I control those influences so that I benefit and can be who I want to be? But the result is a more mature young person better equipped for more effective decision making.

Many of the parents of today are wrecking the parents of tomorrow — both need help. The school needs to help tomorrow's parents to be more effective in understanding their own personality development in their development of a sense of responsibility and in their ability to make sound decisions particularly in their personal relationships where an understanding of values is so important.

Helping a child discover reasons for wanting to achieve in this chosen way is not complicated but it does take time and people. Can we promote the child as the active organising centre for education? Our educational institution appears to have lost sight of the student in the huge superstructure it has created. Instead of being so concerned with the application of learning, can we encourage the acquisition of knowledge based on growth and maturation — help the development of a more mature person and one who really knows himself in relation to others.

Experience has shown that relief of emotional tension in children and removal of emotional blocks can lead to improved learning ability and broader educational progress, thus making the whole school process more effective. I have shown you how this has been found possible in a special kind of group activity within the school class as part of the curriculum.

If we are to have a worthwhile society, then some emphasis and some resources need to be devoted to the development of the more acceptable human qualities, and it would seem the only place where all members of the population are present at least at some stage in their life, is the school.

Whatever society has failed to do the schools are expected to remedy. In so many cases this is an impossible task. However, for children who can be seen to be at risk whilst they are at school, more could be done by appropriate teacher selections training, by giving constructive attention to the home, by individual counselling, by reducing tension and encouraging effective decision making, normal growing needs of all students can be met but for many of those "at risk" a positive contribution can be made to the prevention of the growth of delinquent and pre-delinquent attitudes.

If this is not attempted the outcome could well be a further

er increase in the very things causing this Conference concern.

If the school has a role, it is one where this area of education should have at least equivalent importance to any other subject. The school is an obvious place. It has not been doing it. Can it? The answer is an unqualified YES — if it chooses to — by introducing into the curriculum a subject area which will promote improved relationships with others and improved growth of the self as an integrated person.

If schools do this, learning will be enhanced, individual lives will be more constructive, and the community will gain immeasurability.

**(Mrs M. Campbell-Smith, Scotch-Oakburn College, Tasmania, is also a Committee Member of the Tasmanian Branch A.C.P.C.).*

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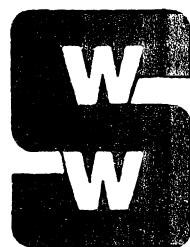
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