

Fear Anger Dependence

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD
SEEING DEVELOPMENT

***Fear
Anger
Dependence***

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EDC School and Society Programs
55 Chapel Street
Newton, Ma 02160

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Introduction

This booklet is about three strong kinds of feelings — fear, anger, and dependence. We all have these feelings, and while expressing them is often healthy, sometimes it can be destructive. Children aren't the only ones who have these feelings. Students and teachers also know about them from personal experiences. A good many of the problems of working with children at a fieldsite are caused by these feelings, as people try to deal with fear, anger, and dependence in themselves and in others.

The preschool class is getting ready to take a trip to the fire station. The children are excited and happy. They have talked about what they expect to see at the fire house and they know how they will get there and back, and what adults are going along. Of all the children in the group, only Rusty hangs back. He is last to finish his milk and crackers and he can't find his jacket. When Walter steps back in the line at the doorway and bumps him, Rusty begins to push and shove the children standing near him. They are surprised and then irritated. Denise says, "Stop that, Rusty!" She shoves him back. Rusty bursts into tears. When you take him aside, he grabs your arm and holds on tight.

The fire station trip is exciting, but it may have another side to it. Rusty may not like leaving his school to go on trips. He may be worried about sirens and fires. He may have been through a fire. Rusty is an example of a child who, upset by his own feelings, upsets other children, too.

Think about how you respond to children when they are caught up in fear or anger or dependence. Sometimes we label such children's actions as "misbehavior." How often do you think "misbehavior" is caused by such feelings?

As children grow and develop, their feelings and behavior change. Their feelings are linked to their immaturity, to their physical make-up, and to their life experiences. The exact causes of fear or anger or helplessness in children are not always clear, but there are ways to help them feel better about themselves, no matter what causes their problems.



Lyn Converse

Fear



Lyn Converse



Betsy Cole



Burk Uzzle, Magnum Photos, Inc.

Although a child may be afraid because of a specific event that has happened at home or in the neighborhood, fear can also surface as a worried, upset feeling, something that everyone experiences sometimes. Young children may not even remember what they were afraid of when they were babies — like falling or the sight of a



Wayne Miller, Magnum Photos, Inc.

strange face or a sudden loud sound — but fears that bother them now are real and vivid.

As they grow, children seem to forget their early fears and replace them with adult fears about car accidents, fires, mugging, illness, poverty, bombs. Because adults have these fears, many dangerous situations can be avoided.

Children may be genuinely afraid of things that seem harmless to you, like bugs, the

dark, thunder, doctors, or things that exist only in their imaginations, like monsters. Many children are afraid of getting hurt; they haven't found out from experience that cuts do heal up and bruises get less painful. The moment of injury is frightening as well as painful.

Some young children were asked if they thought adults were ever afraid. They said they thought adults weren't afraid of the dark, or of insects, but that "mothers and fathers are afraid of tornadoes . . . and traffic accidents. . . ."

THINK BACK TO YOUR OWN CHILDHOOD. WHEN DID YOU REALIZE THAT ADULTS TOO COULD BE AFRAID?

DID THE REALIZATION MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO YOUR OWN FEARS?

People go through different stages; in other words, *what* one feels afraid or brave about depends partly on a person's age.

One summer, Tami — a year-and-a-half-old toddler — was taken on a trip to a country lake with her family. As soon as she reached the water's edge, Tami waded out into the lake. Her father went with her. Suddenly Tami stumbled into deeper water over her head. When her father fished her out, she was cheerful even though gasping for air. She insisted on playing in the water all morning. The next summer, her family visited the lake again. This time Tami began to hang back and then to shriek when her father led her to the water's edge.

It may be pointless to look for unusual experiences in Tami's life to explain her fear of water the second time. She was simply old enough now to be afraid. Some fear

actually develops, then, because children come to see and feel things in new ways.

THE MOST ADVENTUROUS CHILD ON THE PLAYGROUND MAY BE FRIGHTENED BY A STORY, OR THE DARK, OR A FIELD TRIP. WHEN IN YOUR WORK WITH CHILDREN HAS A CHILD'S FEAR SURPRISED YOU?

Reggie is four years old. He often plays with bigger children and holds his own with them. He tells his father one night that he can't get to sleep because he's afraid he'll have "those bad dreams." Later, Reggie confesses to his younger sister that he sleeps on his back "because if you sleep on your stomach, you might get stabbed in the back in your sleep."

In Reggie's view, he could not defend himself during sleep and therefore harm might come to him if he dropped his guard by going to sleep. The combination of stories he has heard, plus ordinary conflicts during the day with parents and other children, plus a universal fear of the dark, make him feel afraid.

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU USED TO FEAR AS A YOUNG CHILD.

THEN THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU FEAR MOST NOW.

CONSIDER THE DIFFERENT WAYS YOU HAVE DEALT WITH YOUR FEARS — THEN AND NOW.

HOW HAVE OTHER PEOPLE HELPED YOU — OR MADE MATTERS WORSE?

HOW YOU CAN HELP

When you deal with young children, look for ways of helping them feel better when they are afraid. Concentrate on making the child comfortable.

Three-year-old Johnny runs in crying from the playground. He looks frightened. He may or may not be able to tell you what's the matter. He needs to be calmed and comforted. Put your arm around him and talk with him quietly. An upset child gets very hot. Help him off with his coat; gently wipe his face. Actions like these can give the child a sense of being protected and secure — able to relax a little.

In any situation that arouses a child's fear, it is important to offer reassurance — of your protection, of the child's ability to take care of the situation, whatever seems called for — and not to criticize the child ("Now be a big boy"). For example: "I'll sit here with you until you feel better. Then you can tell me what happened."

To help children cope with their fears, you must respect their fears. Try to put yourself in the child's place. *Watch, listen, comfort, and reassure.* Try to help children figure out what to do when they are afraid.

One teacher has written this description of how she tries to do this:

Christine is almost five years old; she comes to our summer day care program and will begin kindergarten in September. She is tall for her age, serious, and we consider her one of the most mature children in the group. One day she was silent and tense. She couldn't relax at nap time. I asked her if something was wrong. Christine blurted out a story of a fight her mother and father had during the night — ending up with their throwing things at each other. I said to her: "Sometimes parents can get terribly angry at each other . . . I guess that must have been scary for you . . . the best thing to do is stay out of the way. . . ."

A STUDENT TOLD HER CLASS ABOUT A CHILD IN HER FIELDSITE WHOSE MOTHER HAD GONE INTO THE HOSPITAL. THE BOY WOULDN'T SETTLE

DOWN AND FOLLOWED THE STUDENT AROUND, NOT WANTING HER TO PAY ATTENTION TO ANY OTHER CHILD. WHAT IDEAS COULD YOU OFFER THIS STUDENT FOR HELPING THE LITTLE BOY COPE WITH HIS FEARS AND CONCERNS?

But many childhood fears come simply from all the strange new experiences of growing up.

Three-year-old Angelo is taken to the barber shop for his first haircut. His mother puts Angelo in the barber's chair and gives him a toy to hold. But when the barber with his white jacket and big smile approaches, Angelo starts to cry. His mother tries to hold him still while the barber snips off a little hair, but it's no use. Angelo's squirming and crying are too much for the adults. They give up.



Ken Kobre, Stock, Boston

Though fear is a normal part of living, children need help with it. Listening is a good way to help. If you really listen respectfully to what children say, then they can trust you with their thoughts and questions. It's usually a relief for a child to talk about being afraid, to know that other children are sometimes afraid too, and teachers and parents can feel afraid and still get along all right.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FEARS WHICH YOU YOURSELF LABEL AS "SILLY?" BUGS? ELEVATORS ? HORROR MOVIES? HOW MIGHT YOU HELP YOURSELF TO CONTROL OR LESSEN THOSE FEARS?

WOULD THE SAME TACTICS WORK WITH A FOUR-YEAR-OLD? WITH A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD? WHY . . . OR WHY NOT?

It is important to remember that calling children "sissy" or "cry-baby" does not get rid of fear; it only makes children feel embarrassed and ashamed. It is better to be matter-of-fact:

"It's okay — everybody feels afraid sometimes." Or: "When you feel better, we'll figure out what to do about this."

When a child is upset, figuring out what to do is crucial.

Rocky is crying in the doorway of the day care center after his father has said goodbye and gone off to work. Rocky needs to be reminded where his father will be and when he will return. "He's gone to work in the store — you know where that is — and he'll be back for you this afternoon after your nap."



Jeannette G. Stone, E.D.C.

Then Rocky needs something to do: work a puzzle or build with blocks — some kind of work that lets him figure out a problem and master it.

In some cases, the best way to help children is to find a way for them to help themselves.

Four-year-old Gina has been knocked down during a running game. The teacher helps her blow her nose after she is through crying, and gives Gina a piece of cotton with some antiseptic to swab her knee. "Do you feel better, Gina?" asks the teacher. "Yup," replies Gina. "Did you see? I knew how to clean my knee off . . . I did it all by myself."

Although fear is just a limited aspect of life for most children, there are a few children who suffer from constant fear and anxiety. Their lives are troubled: Family members become unhappy and disturbed, and they disappear or turn on these children or neglect them for long hours, even days. Such experiences can overwhelm children who are too young to defend themselves or to find help.

These children should never be criticized or discussed where they or other children may overhear. And it will not help them to be treated as different or disabled. They respond well to adults who find the strengths in children rather than the weaknesses. You might say to such a child, "I know it isn't easy for you, but you're strong I think you'll be all right."

Jerry is four years old and attends nursery school. He wears a worried look and always seems afraid of everything and everybody. One day, after his teacher has encouraged him to paint at the easel, another four-year-old, Debbie, stands nearby talking to him. "No, Jerry," she says, "use red there, not orange." Jerry looks at her, then continues to paint. "Gimme that brush," Debbie says as she grabs for his brush. "I'm gonna make it red." Jerry hangs on to his brush, glares at her, and says, "No!" (so softly that she hardly hears him). The teacher pats him on the back and says, "You're pretty tough, aren't you? . . . you can take care of yourself." Jerry smiles at this encouraging description of himself and goes back to work on his painting.

Jerry had been fearful and tense for a long time. When he first attended nursery school, he seemed almost paralyzed by anxiety. It takes a long time for children to learn new ways of behaving, and it takes a long time for adults to help them. Progress doesn't happen overnight. The teacher didn't just get Jerry to stick up for himself; she had been trying to encourage him and build him up in his own eyes for months. Her patience and faith in him over a long period have made a difference to Jerry.

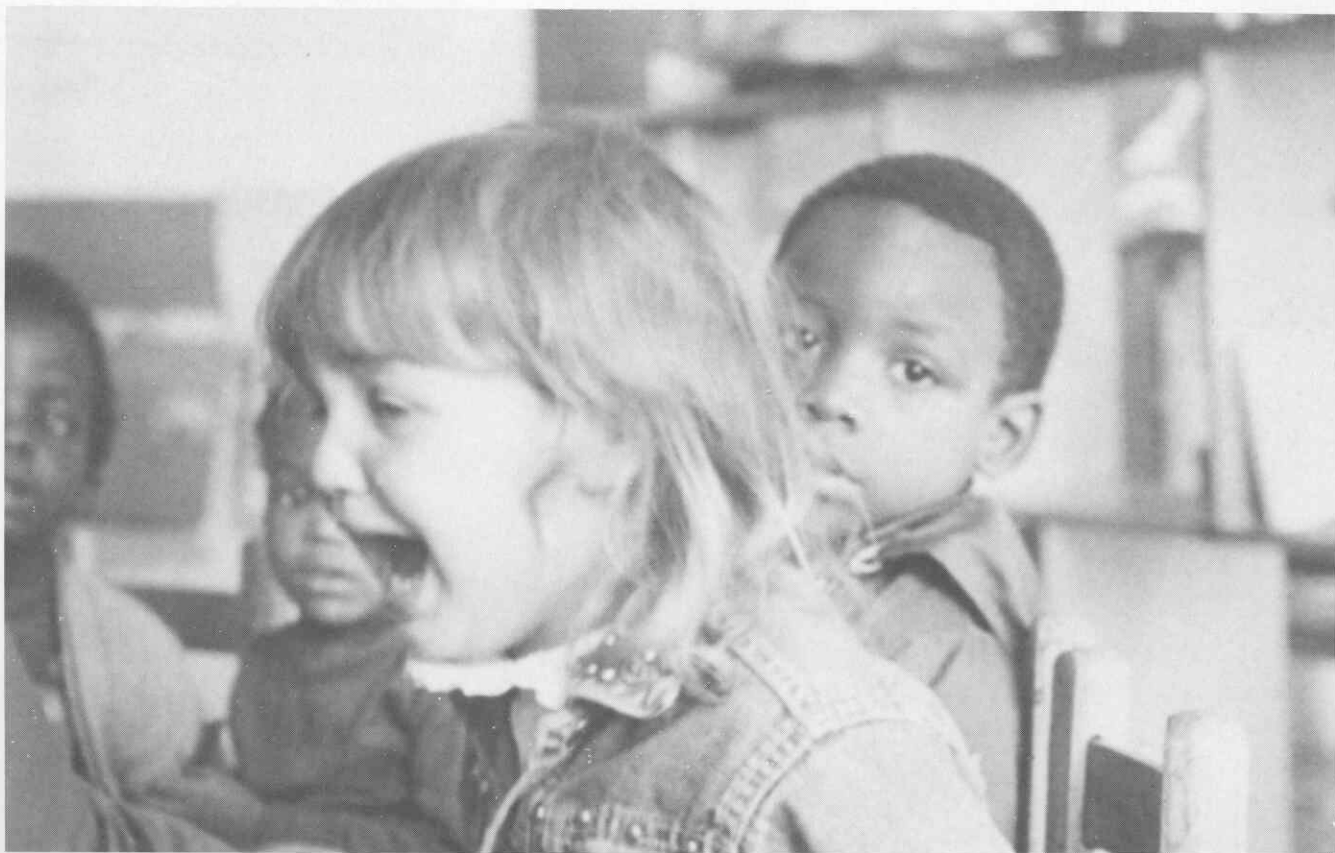


Jeannette G. Stone, E.D.C.

Anger



Donald Mitchell, E.D.C.



Josef Bohmer



Josef Bohmer



Josef Bohmer



Josef Bohmer

It is healthy for children to feel angry when they have been hurt or taken advantage of, when someone they love or feel responsible for has been attacked, or when they have been prevented from doing something they want to do. What children must learn about anger is how to be in control of it — to use it positively and not to allow it to control them.

Sharon is almost three years old. She has a new baby doll — a present from her mother who has just had her second child, a boy named Timothy. While her mother and Timothy are still in the hospital, Sharon asks her grandmother and father about her new baby brother. "When is Timothy coming home? How long will he stay here?" She helps get his crib ready, but on the day Timothy is due to be brought home, Sharon throws her new baby doll into a trash basket and stamps her foot on it. She says, "I don't want any babies around here."

Welcoming the new member of the family turns into resentment against the newcomer. But it's just as common to be angry at yourself — and then blame it on the nearest object.

Joe sits down at the work table at his Head Start center and slips his short fingers through the scissors. "I'm going to cut with the scissors. . . . I can cut good!" He grabs a piece of colored paper and struggles to cut into it. The paper twists and slips away. Joe: "I want to cut!" He finds the paper and tries again. Once more the paper slides away. The scissors jam as Joe snatches up the paper and stabs at it, saying angrily, "Cut, you stupid!"

Tempers rise when children get into a battle of wills.

Clayton: "I'm coming to play. I'll be the father."

Melissa: "No. We're fixing our playhouse. You can't come in."

Clayton: "I can too, if I want."

Melissa: "No. We can't let you in yet."

Clayton: "Yes . . . Teacher, make

Melissa let me in. . . ."

Clayton throws a block from the "house" down on Melissa's foot. Melissa grabs Clayton and pushes him.

THESE ARE ALL EXAMPLES OF AGGRESSION. WHAT DOES THE WORD "AGGRESSION" MAKE YOU THINK OF?

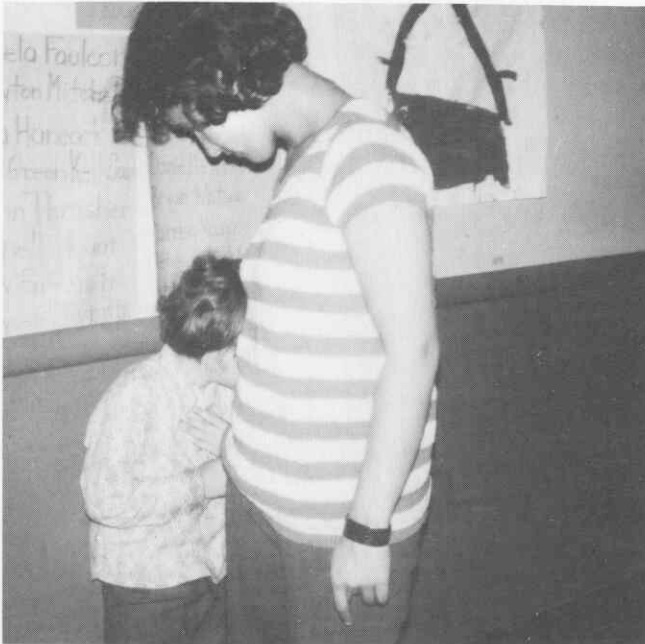
WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN A FRUSTRATED OR ANGRY CHILD STRIKE OUT AT AN OBJECT OR A PERSON?

According to the dictionary, aggression is an attack. One thing aggression does is allow a person to express anger, sometimes a very important thing to do. Aggression is also defined as vigorous and forceful behavior. Most Americans admire vigor and force; athletes and farmers, pilots, salespeople and lawyers all do well if they are vigorous people. Very young children, as well as older ones, tend to admire the strongest and most energetic children in their schools. The heroes in our society are often aggressive — in the sense that they behave forcefully and are adventurous.

The problem lies in the fact that in children, aggression so often takes the form of hurting other children or destroying property. Teachers, parents, and helpers don't mind when children hammer nails into wood during carpentry, or punch a punching bag. What they mind is children's pounding and punching each other or breaking something valuable. But growing

from impulsive behavior to mature, controlled behavior takes years.

Toddlers are rough and uncoordinated with toys and impulsive with each other. Then gradually, starting at about two, children learn skills and find ways of expressing in words what they feel. But during these learning years there is still much shoving, snatching, or screaming when they get mad. Less noisy but still irritating to many adults is the six-year-old child who seems to go on emotional binges and who cries out aggressively, "I hate you!" and possibly uses swear words in screaming at mother, babysitter, or teacher.



Jeannette G. Stone, E.D.C.

To people who work with young children, it sometimes seems that the children will never learn to get along without fighting. Most children in nursery schools and in day care centers will have to be disciplined from time to time for hitting someone. Some will need more control and discipline than others.

HOW YOU REACT TO AGGRESSION IN CHILDREN MAY VARY ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION AND TO YOUR STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN:

- A BIG CHILD HITS A LITTLE, MORE HELPLESS CHILD?
- TWO CHILDREN THE SAME AGE AND SIZE HAVE A FIGHT?
- A BOY HITS A GIRL? A GIRL HITS A BOY?
- A CHILD HITS AN ADULT? SWEARS AT AN ADULT?
- A CHILD SMASHES HIS OR HER OWN BLOCK TOWER OR WORK OF ART?
- A CHILD RIPS UP ANOTHER CHILD'S WORK?
- A CHILD CALLS A NEW CHILD INSULTING NAMES?

It is hard to figure out whether a particular child is aggressive by nature or whether something about how that child lives causes aggressive acts. A teacher describes Edie, a four-year-old girl in her fieldsite, as *always* throwing blocks, *always* arguing with other children, and *constantly* hitting.

What causes aggressive behavior?

If you were to ask seven different people that question in regard to Edie, you might get seven completely different theories:

"It's just a phase of her development; she'll out-grow it."

"Edie really feels unsure of herself; her low self-esteem causes her to strike out at everything and everybody."

Charles Moore, Black Star



"Edie's older sisters and brothers are mean and cruel to her. It's no wonder she's mean to other kids."

"Edie is just like her father. She has inherited his genes; they both blow up at the drop of a hat."

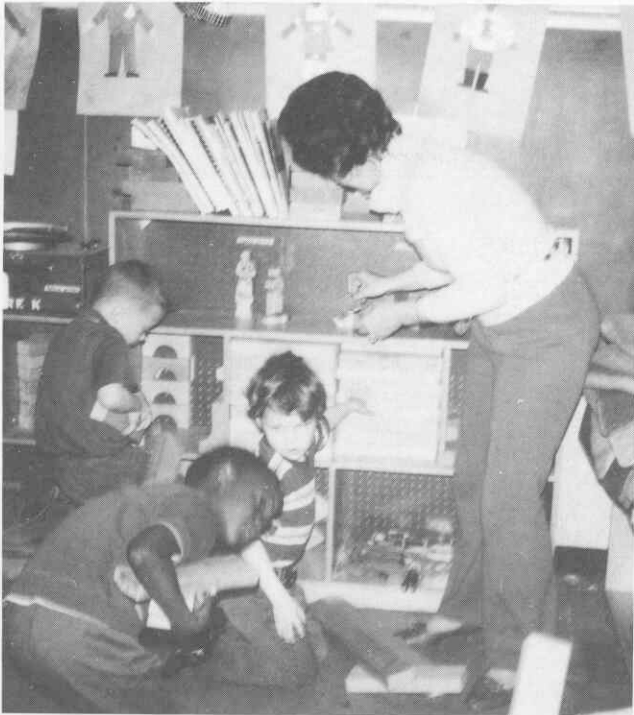
"What do you expect from a child who is growing up in a society where there is so much violence?"

"Edie seems overactive by temperament; it just spills over into aggression."

"Edie is growing fast and is testing out her new sense of power."

It could be that several forces combined in Edie's life explain why she acts the way she does.

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Jeannette G. Stone, E.D.C.

A group of children is building a complicated structure with blocks. According to schedule, the teacher announces clean-up time. They protest, "Just a little bit longer?" She urges them to put the blocks away. Clean-up gets noisy and rough as the children start shoving the blocks around.

Ask yourself what would happen if the teacher said, "If you don't clean up better than that, you can't play with the blocks tomorrow." What would happen if the teacher said, "It's hard to stop and clean up when you're busy building, but we must go to the playground now . . . and don't forget that we get to use the big slide today . . . here, let me help you with the blocks."

WHAT ELSE MIGHT THE TEACHER DO IN THIS SITUATION?

HAVE CHILDREN EVER REACTED AGGRESSIVELY TO SOMETHING YOU SAID OR DID?

WHAT DID YOU DO?

The block corner may often be a scene of conflict as well as of cooperation. It so often happens that just as the last block is placed carefully on the highest tower, the structure weakens and crashes — or, worse, someone bumps into it. Adults can help the children figure out what to do.

"Curtis, I don't like it when you knock down people's buildings. And yelling won't help much, Brian. Come on, let's put it together. Let's start with the big blocks on the bottom, the way it was."

Also, the adult can help put anger into words.

"That's enough, Brian. Stop hitting Curtis. Tell Curtis you are mad. Tell him to leave your blocks alone. Listen to him, Curtis."

But aggressive behavior is not all "bad." There are many children who are aggressive in perfectly acceptable ways. They can argue with each other and take it if they lose the argument. They like to try hard puzzles or climb up highest on the jungle gym. They defend themselves if someone pushes them around. They can say: "Let me do that — I can do it myself." Or: "Mom, I want to wear my blue shirt instead of this one." Or: "Wait a minute, I'm not finished with that." They are forceful in letting others know their needs and ideas, but not forceful in hurting others.

WHAT EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE AGGRESSION CAN YOU THINK OF FROM YOUR WORK WITH CHILDREN?

HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY FEEL ABOUT AGGRESSION? CAN YOU REMEMBER BEING PUNISHED OR REWARDED FOR ANY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR?

HOW DO YOU EXPECT A TEACHER AT YOUR FIELDSITE TO HANDLE CHILDREN'S AGGRESSION? WHY?

PREVENTING AGGRESSION

Adults can help children by preventing some trouble in the first place. Here are several ways to channel energy and prevent angry behavior.

Aggressive Play: climbing, tumbling, boxing, singing and dancing. These work wonders if they are supervised with care and good humor and are done in an appropriate play space.



Josef Bohner

Water Play: it is not only relaxing, but it fascinates children. They get involved with bubbles and measuring cups because they like to experiment.

Handwork: children can express aggressive impulses when they use crayons, mold with clay, or work with sand or paint.

Fantasy Play: children act out experiences and feelings when they play "pretend." They often talk about their wishes and hoped-for adventures.

Another way to prevent angry outbursts is to get to know each child. Take the time to talk and play with each child when you can. A quiet conversation (not prying, but being honest and friendly) lets the child know you are really interested.

Keep an eye on children for signs of illness and fatigue. Children can get very cross and unstrung when they don't feel well. At such times they need to rest or do easy work.

No matter how adults work to prevent aggressive conflict, it does break out, and must be dealt with. It helps children feel safe and learn how to handle their anger if adults stop misbehavior firmly without unleashing their own anger.

Look at the children you work with, as individuals and as a group. Tune in. Try to understand their feelings and behavior as they go through the day. Children need your help when they are in the grip of angry feelings. They need a chance to tell you how they feel and to sort out why they are angry. It takes children a long time to learn to put their feelings into words and to listen to the other side when they are mad.

Dependence



Edward T. Joyce, E.D.C.



Bob Vose, Black Star



Ivan Massar, Black Star



Doug Wilson, Black Star

Young children still need others' help in taking care of themselves, and no one outgrows the need for love and attention from others. Yet young children are learning to care for themselves in a number of ways and need opportunities to practice. Our problem as teachers and helpers is knowing how much and what to do for them — giving them enough help but not too much, and giving them help at the right times. How much should they do for themselves? In what ways should they be learning self-reliance?

None of the following questions can be answered simply. Discuss them with your classmates and your family.

WHEN DOES A PERSON NO LONGER FEEL DEPENDENT ON HIS OR HER FAMILY? ARE BOYS AND GIRLS DIFFERENT IN THIS?

WHEN IS A CHILD TOO OLD TO CRY WHEN HURT OR WORRIED?

IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN TO BE OUTDOORS ALONE?

WHEN DOES A CHILD LEARN TO GET DRESSED WITHOUT HELP? HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO LEARN TO USE ZIPPERS AND SHOELACES WITH SKILL? (AND QUICKLY ENOUGH TO SATISFY BUSY PARENTS AND TEACHERS?)

SUPPOSE YOU KNOW THAT RICCARDO, WHO IS FOUR YEARS OLD, DRESSES HIMSELF COMPLETELY EVERY DAY. DOES THAT TELL YOU THAT HE IS AN INDEPENDENT LITTLE BOY?

Toni and her sister Barbara stand in the doorway of the fieldsite. Barbara: "This is Toni. She's supposed to be in here. She's scared. But I have to go to my room now. Okay, Toni? You'll be okay." Barbara pats Toni's shoulder and leaves. Toni really seems afraid. She stands there with her jacket on, looking down. Then she looks all around the yard, and back to the door. What is Toni feeling? It isn't hard to imagine. She has never been to school before this morning. She has left the familiar world of her home. Now her sister Barbara is gone. Toni is somewhere in the heart of one of the biggest places she has ever seen. The huge yard and hallway, the noise of so many children, the sight of so many unfamiliar faces are all frightening to her.

Even though Toni's mother told her this morning that she is a "big girl," Toni doesn't feel very big. One teacher said to such a child: "It's hard to come to school for the first time, isn't it? But you'll be all right."

If you were to ask five other teachers about Toni's behavior, you might hear five answers as different as these:



Alex Webb, Magnum Photos, Inc.

"Toni has had a hard time at home and she probably doesn't trust strangers. She will need a long time with a kind, warm-hearted teacher, to feel secure at school."

"Maybe Toni has been overprotected at home. She needs more experiences of being on her own."

"Toni looks pale. I wonder whether she might have been exposed to that virus infection that's going around. I think she might need a check-up."

"It's hard for anyone to start school right out of the blue without a chance to get used to it gradually."

"Toni's just acting that way to get attention."

It could be that several forces combined in Toni's life explain why she acts the way she does.

Young children have lived only about a third or a quarter of your lifetime. They do many things so well that they sometimes fool us into overestimating them. We have to remind ourselves that they may not really be as independent as they like to act.

Julio likes to be called a big boy. He strides when he walks and likes to climb the tree in his front yard. But he runs to his parents' bed when he wakes up after a bad dream.

Brenda gets into her snowsuit all by herself and dashes out of her apartment before she realizes that she has to go to the toilet.

Children act their age. They may seem to be full of strength one minute, and clinging and dependent the next.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

It may not be easy for you as a student at your fieldsite (or with small sisters and brothers at home) to be patient with young children acting their age.

One day at his fieldsite, Carl, a high school student, pushed a lonely little girl, Helen, on the swings. Every day after that, Helen found Carl and clung to him, begging him to push her on the swings again.



Dave Robinson, E.D.C.

HOW CAN A STUDENT WORKING AT A FIELDSITE BE FRIENDLY TOWARD CHILDREN WITHOUT LETTING THEM BE TOO DEPENDENT?

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS CARL COULD HELP HELEN PLAY ON HER OWN OR WITH OTHER CHILDREN? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION? WHAT HAPPENED?

A teacher who has taught nursery school and day care children for years — and watched some of them grow up — feels that people can be somewhat relaxed about children who seem overly dependent.

Of course they get used to depending on adults for just about everything — food, shelter, safety, learning how to do things, learning right from wrong . . . that's what parents and teachers and big brothers and sisters are for. But the children get over it. If a little boy is hanging on you, let him hang on. Take him around the playroom or yard with you, instead of pushing him away — that only makes him *more* insecure. If you accept him and let him stay close, he'll feel more sure of himself; and after a while, he'll go off on his own. It's the only sensible way to treat such a child. Sometimes the little girl who seemed impossibly shy and helpless when she was three years old turns out later to be just the opposite. Children change. . . .

A high school student, Dolores, says that she has had good luck working with children who cling to adults. She shows such a child something interesting — a new doll, a library book, an attractive puzzle — and then sits down herself, nearby. She doesn't push; she talks gently to the child from time to time, not being critical but being friendly and encouraging. Dolores also tries to encourage other children to join her, and then she makes conversation that draws the children to each other. "Yes, Linda, I'll read that book again. Nan can sit here on my lap, too, and hear the story. Nan, have you seen this book that Linda likes so much?"

Consider how feelings of dependence affect a child's behavior when school is no longer new:

One day in nursery school, Monica misses her teacher, who is sick at home. Monica drifts around restlessly, then sits by herself and refuses to play.



Jeannette C. Stone, E.D.C.

Would it help to insist that Monica play with the other children? To take her home? To punish her? To explain what is wrong with the teacher and suggest that Monica paint a picture for her? Do any other solutions occur to you?

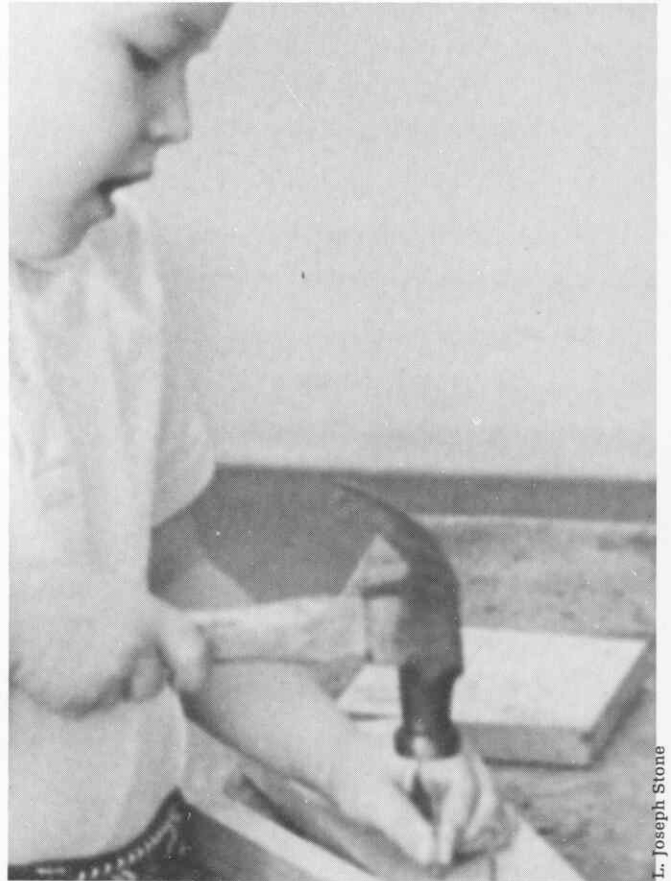
Children sometimes feel dependent because they have such mixed feelings about growing up. They want to be big now, but they are able to sense that it isn't always going to be easy to be older. Children want to have new experiences, but they also like things the way they have been. That movement — of trying to be more grown up, then falling back on the comfort of being little — makes growth seem to proceed by fits and starts.

Four-year-old Stuart says, "Today I'm not gonna be big . . . I'm tired of being a big boy for a while. But being big is the best. . . . When you get big you can do what you want to do. . . . When I get big I'm not going to be afraid of anything and I'm not going to cry . . . but not now. . . . Sometimes I wish I didn't have to grow big. . . ."*

Stuart senses that many skills are necessary to reach adulthood. Trying to learn those skills can be discouraging. Perhaps you know a child like Darren:

Darren is trying hard to pound a nail into a piece of wood. He pinches the nail tightly between two fingers and holds it in place on the board. Bang — he brings the hammer down on the nail. The nail and board fly into the air. Surprised and a little mad, Darren calls, "Could you help me?"

Darren is asking for help with a skill he wants to master. He is asking you to stop, give him time, reassure him. The way you help would depend partly on whether this is the first, or tenth, time he has asked for help. Would you act the same way in either case? Would you act differently if the would-be carpenter were a girl?



L. Joseph Stone

Is there a way to show Darren how to hammer that nail so he can do it himself next time? Discuss the following ideas. Which would you choose? Why?

1. Let Darren watch you while you hammer the nail correctly.
2. Explain to him how to do it.
3. Tell him to figure it out on his own.
4. Explain one step and have Darren try it. Then move on to the next step, and so on, until it is done.
5. Have another child work alongside Darren and show him how to hammer.
6. Use your hands to guide his, as you both hammer the nail. Talk with him about what the two of you are doing.

*From a compilation of Stuart's comments by L. J. Stone, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY INDEPENDENCE? HOW MUCH INDEPENDENCE DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A CHILD?

IS THERE A CHILD YOU WORK WITH WHO YOU SOMETIMES FEEL IS TOO INDEPENDENT? IN WHAT WAYS?

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DO WITH OR FOR CHILDREN WHICH YOU THINK MIGHT CAUSE THEM TO DEPEND ON YOU? IF SO, WHY DO YOU DO IT?

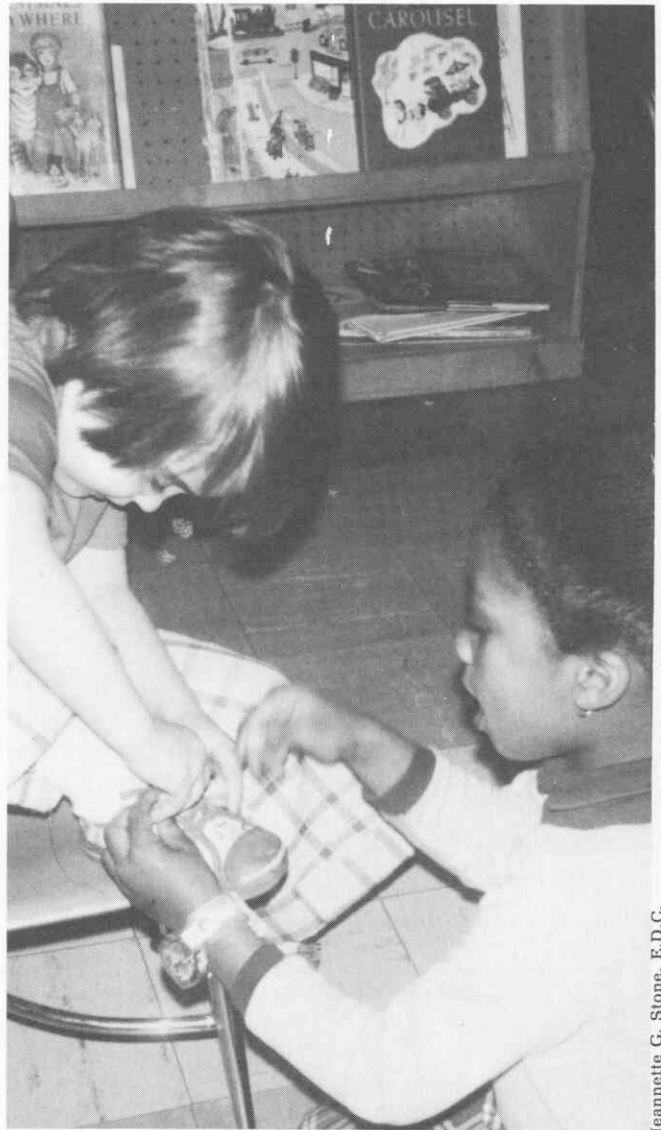
DEPENDENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Dependence — needing others — doesn't disappear; it changes as children grow into adulthood.

"It made me feel good when Mr. Adams called to see if I could drive him to the hospital when he injured his back. I was glad he felt he could ask me to help. And I realized that other people would be willing to help me out too, when I need it."

"I like to think I'm pretty independent, but frankly, I'm glad I have neighbors who are willing to help out — like helping me start the car when the battery is dead, or covering for me at home when one of the children is sick and I'm at work."

What do these statements by an adult tell you about dependence in adults?



Jeannette G. Stone, E.D.C.

As a child finds out how to take care of him- or herself, and feels good about it, independence begins. But no matter how independent a child feels and acts, he or she will always need to turn to other people for help; needing help from others and giving help to others is part of being alive.

Observation Form

Copy this form and use it
for looking at fear, anger, and dependence
in young children.

time _____ place _____ date _____

The child:

What was the child doing?

What seemed to be the child's mood at the time?

What was the immediate event that seemed to arouse the child's feelings?

How did the child handle the situation?

Who or what was the "target" that the child directed feelings toward?

Did the child use play as a way of handling his or her feelings? How?

Others:

What did other children do?

What did the teacher do?

What did you do?

If you wanted to do something else, what was it? Why didn't you?

Analysis:

If you need more information about this child or the situation, what do you need to know?

Could any undesirable part of this experience have been prevented?

Is this behavior typical of other children you know who are about the same age?

What kind of growth would you like to see happen as this child gets older, so that this kind of situation can be faced with more of a feeling of self-control?

What will you do next time?

FEAR, ANGER, DEPENDENCE

Written by:
Jeannette G. Stone

Contributors:
Norma Arnow
Ilanthe Thomas

Special thanks to:
Phyllis Praeger for
a preliminary manuscript.

Editor:
Marcia Mitchell

Designer:
Patricia A. Jones

Cover Design:
George Price

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Director:
Marilyn Clayton Felt

Curriculum Coordinator:
Ruth N. MacDonald

Module Head:
Susan Christie Thomas

Project Manager:
Kathleen L. Horani

Senior Scholars:
Jerome Kagan, Professor of Human
Development, Harvard University

James Jones, Assistant Professor
of Social Psychology, Harvard
University

Freda Rebelsky, Professor of
Psychology, Boston University

Special Contributors:
Ronald and Peggy Lippett
Human Resources Development Associates
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Jeannette G. Stone
Director, Early Childhood Center
Sarah Lawrence College

Consultants:
T. Berry Brazelton, Pediatrician
and Clinical Assistant Professor,
Harvard University

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Professor
of Human Development and Family
Studies, Cornell University

Jerome S. Bruner, Watts Professor
of Psychology, Department of
Experimental Psychology, Oxford
University

Betty H. Bryant, Nursery School
Director, Center for Child Care
Research, Educational Testing
Service, Princeton, New Jersey

Courtney Cazden, Professor of
Education, Harvard University

Joan Goldsmith, Co-Director,
The Institute of Open Education/
Antioch Graduate Center

Patricia Marks Greenfield, Associate
Professor of Psychology, University of
California at Los Angeles

John Herzog, Associate Professor of
Education, Northeastern University

David Kantor, Director of Research and
Development, Boston Family Institute

Eli H. Newberger, Director, Family
Development Study, The Children's
Hospital Medical Center

Beatrice Blyth Whiting, Professor of
Education and Anthropology, Harvard
University

Developers:
Norma Arnow
Wendy J. Barnes
Ellen Grant
Rogier Gregoire
Toby Grover
Patricia Hourihan
Margaret Janey
Karlen Lyons
Lucy Lyons
Pamela Matz
Jim McMahan
John Nove
Judith Salzman
Ilanthe Thomas
Juliet Vogel
Sandra Warren
Dennie Wolf

Filmmakers:
Henry Felt
John Friedman
Mark Harris
Lynn Smith
David Vogt

Production:
Patricia A. Jones
Scott Paris

Parent Education:
Louis Grant Bond
Naarah Thornell

Teacher Education:
Michael J. Cohen
Marjorie Jones
Edward Martin
Barbara S. Powell
Emma Wood Rous

Film Staff:
David Barnett
David Berenson
Frank Cantor
Elvin Carini
Edward T. Joyce
Allegra May
David Nelson
Charles Scott
Dan Seeger
Charles White, Jr.

Editors:
Marcia Mitchell
Marjorie Waters
Nancy Witting

Design:
Myra Lee Conway
Roz Gerstein
Diana Ritter
Michael Sand
Karen Shipley
Judy Spock
Alison Wampler

Evaluation:
Geraldine Brookins
Martin Chong
Catherine Cobb
Joan Costley
Sherryl Graves
Aisha Jones
Eileen Peters
Caren von Hippel

Regional Evaluators:
John R. Browne
Karen M. Cohen
Judith McMurray
Mark Walker
Kaffie Weaver

Regional:
Field Coordinators:
Florence J. Cherry
Thomas A. Fitzgerald
Andrea J. Love
Annie Madison
Janet Rayder
T. David Wallsteadt
Dianne H. Willis

Support Staff:
Marylene Altieri
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Ruth Kolodney
Pamela Ponce de Leon
Maria Rainho
Denise Weaver

Distribution Coordinator:
Steve Westlund

EDC SCHOOL AND SOCIETY PROGRAMS

Director:
Janet Hanley Whitla

Senior Associate:
Peter B. Dow

Project Directors:
Marilyn Clayton Felt
Anita Gil
Earle Loman
Nona P. Lyons
Ruth N. MacDonald
William Southworth

Director of Evaluation:
Karen C. Cohen

Director of Field Services:
Dennen Reilley

Director of Publications:
Anne Glickman

Director of Teacher Education:
Rita Dixon

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