

# PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE OF INFANT AND CHILD

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NEW YORK  
**W·W·NORTON & COMPANY, INC.**  
*Publishers*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The scientific material, upon which the convictions set forth in this small hand book are based, has been gathered in the Maternity Ward of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Harriet Lane Home for Crippled Children, at the Heckscher Foundation, and in many private homes.

In our experimental work at the Johns Hopkins Hospital we received the whole hearted cooperation of Dr. J. Whitridge Williams, Dr. Adolf Meyer, Dr. Kenneth Blackfan, and the late Dr. John Howland.

We are under deep obligations to the Trustees of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial who by a grant to the Institute of Educational Research of Teacher's College made possible the work of Dr. Mary Cover Jones at the Heckscher Foundation.

Many individuals have helped to shape either our work or our conclusions. We are under deepest obligations to Dr. Leslie B. Hohman of Phipps Psychiatric Clinic, The Johns Hopkins Hospital; to Dr. Mary Cover Jones of the Psychology Department of the University of California; Dr. Karl S. Lashley of the Institute for Juvenile Research, Chicago; Dr. Kenneth Blackfan now of the Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School; Dr. John J. Morgan of Northwestern University; Dr. Alvin Johnson, and Dr. Horace Kallen of the New School for Social Research; Dr. H. M. Johnson of the Mellon Institute; Professor Patty S. Hill, Teachers College; to Dr. George Dorsey and to Dr. W. I. Thomas.

We have received many valuable suggestions on the editorial side from Miss Anne B. Juenker and Miss Janet Cunningham of the J. Walter Thompson Company, and from the editors of McCall's Magazine who published a part of this material.



of the body but the behaviorist does not know enough today to do a thoroly satisfactory job. We have only just begun to believe that there is such a thing as the psychological care of infants and children.

A great many mothers still resent being told how to feed their children. Didn't their grandmothers have fourteen children and raise ten of them? Didn't their own mothers have six and eight children and raise them all—and they never needed a doctor to tell them how to feed them? That many of grandmother's children grew up with rickets, with poor teeth, with under-nourished bodies, generally prone to every kind of disease means little to the mother who doesn't want to be told how to feed her child scientifically. But thousands of mothers have found in Dr. Holt something as valuable as the Bible. The 28 editions of his work abundantly prove this.

Parents—mothers especially—resent still more strenuously any advice or instructions on how to care psychologically for their chil-

dren. What parents want advice on how much affection they should bestow upon their children or any word about how their children should be handled and treated hourly in the home? "I can't take my child up in my lap! I can't let my children sleep together! I can't let my child play around me all I want to! I can't slap him or scold him if I care to! I have to begin talking sex to him the moment he is born! Who ever heard of such a thing?" And do not think this is a backwoods attitude. On the main streets of every city, village and town you find just such parents. You find the same resistance in the homes of college professors and in the homes even of pediatricians. Even in the homes of "advanced" mothers—mothers who are listening eagerly for words of wisdom about the care of their children you find the complaint—"The behaviorists are on the right track but they go too far."

It is a serious question in my mind whether there should be individual homes for children—or even whether children should know

their own parents. There are undoubtedly much more scientific ways of bringing up children which will probably mean finer and happier children. I suppose parents want their children to be happy, efficient, well adjusted to life. But if I were to offer to take any mother's child and guarantee it such an upbringing, and were even to convince the mother at the same time that she was unquestionably unfitted to bring up her child—that she would inevitably bring up a weakling, a petted, spoiled, sullen, shy youngster who would grow up a liar and a thief—would she give up the child to me? No, the social pressure to have a child, to own a child, to be known in the community as a woman with a legitimate child, is strong—it is a part of our *mores*.

The home we have with us—inevitably and inexorably with us. Even though it is proven unsuccessful, we shall always have it. The behaviorist has to accept the home and make the best of it. His task is to try to get the



mother to take a new view of what constitutes the care of an infant—of her responsibility for her experiment in child bearing.

Since the behaviorists find little that corresponds to instincts in children, since children are made not born, failure to bring up a happy child, a well adjusted child—assuming bodily health—falls upon the parents' shoulders. The acceptance of this view makes child-rearing the most important of all social obligations.

Since the most serious faults in the rearing of children are to be found on the emotional side I have put especial emphasis upon the growth of emotional habits. The other two phases taken up are day and night time care and the kind and amount of sex instruction that should be given.

One of the many criticisms which may be argued against the book is the fact that I have written principally to mothers who have leisure to devote to the study of their children. The reason I have chosen these more fortunate mothers as my audience, grows out

of the hope I have that some day the importance of the first two years of infancy will be fully realized. When it is faced, every woman will seriously question whether she is in a proper situation to have a child. Today we debate whether we can buy a motor car—whether the house or apartment is big enough to keep a dog—whether we can afford to belong to a club. But the young mother rarely questions whether her home can house a child or whether her husband's salary or weekly wage will stretch far enough to feed another incessantly hungry body. No, she has the child and we all rush to congratulate the pair and smile and smirk over an occurrence which takes place two and a half million times each year in the United States of America. The having of a child should be a carefully thought out operation. No mother has a right to have a child who cannot give it a room to itself for the first two years of infancy. I would make this a *conditio sine qua non*.

When the 25 million American homes come

to realize that the child has a right to a separate room and adequate psychological care there will not be nearly so many children born. *Not more babies but better brought up babies* will be our slogan. The idea that our population must sustain itself and show an increase is an old fetish growing out of tribal warfare. Why should we care if the U. S. birth rate begins to decline—even more rapidly than that of France? There are too many people in the world now—too many people with crippled personalities—tied up with such a load of infantile carry-overs (due to faulty bringing up) that they have no chance for happy lives.

The purpose of this small volume will be accomplished abundantly if it contributes in any way to help the serious mother solve the problem of bringing up a happy child—a child who never cries unless actually stuck by a pin, illustratively speaking—who loses himself in work and play—who quickly learns to overcome the small difficulties in his en-

vironment without running to mother, father, nurse or other adult—who soon builds up a wealth of habits that tide him over dark and rainy days—who puts on such habits of politeness and neatness and cleanliness that adults are willing to be around him at least part of the day; a child who is willing to be around adults without fighting incessantly for notice—who eats what is set before him and “asks no questions for conscience sake”—who sleeps and rests when put to bed for sleep and rest—who puts away 2 year old habits when the third year has to be faced—who passes into adolescence so well equipped that adolescence is just a stretch of fertile years—and who finally enters manhood so bulwarked with stable work and emotional habits that no adversity can quite overwhelm him.

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New York

March 1st, 1928



care, shower physical comforts upon them. The children are not allowed to draw a breath unscrutinized. These mothers are prodigal of their affection, raining love and tears upon them constantly. For them love is the keynote of the psychology of child-rearing.

In happy contrast to these two types of mothers, there is a third group—the modern mother who is beginning to find that the rearing of children is the most difficult of all professions, more difficult than engineering, than law, or even than medicine itself. But along with this conviction comes the search for facts which will help them. The search reveals almost a bankruptcy of facts. *No one today knows enough to raise a child.* The world would be considerably better off if we were to stop having children for twenty years (except those reared for experimental purposes) and were then to start again with enough facts to do the job with some degree of skill and accuracy. Parenthood, instead of being an instinctive art, is a science, the details of

which must be worked out by patient laboratory methods.

Will you believe the almost astounding truth that *no well trained man or woman has ever watched the complete and daily development of a single child from its birth to its third year? Plants and animals we know about because we have studied them, but the human child until very recently has been a mystery.* Radium has had more scientific study put upon it in the last fifteen years than has been given to the first three years of infancy since the beginning of time. How can we get facts on how to rear children unless we make the studies necessary to obtain them?

It is true that mothers since Eve have watched their children come into the world and begin to grow up. They know the child can cry at birth. They know that as time goes on more and more things around the house make it cry. When it cries a hundred times a day, as many millions of them do, we say it is "spoiled." And we put the blame on the child

rather than upon our own shoulders where the blame belongs.

The mother knows the infant can smile and gurgle and chuckle with glee. She knows it can coo and hold out its chubby arms. What more touching and sweet, what more thrilling to a young mother! And the mother to get these thrills goes to extreme lengths. She picks the infant up, kisses and hugs it, rocks it, pets it and calls it "mother's little lamb," until the child is unhappy and miserable whenever away from actual physical contact with the mother. Then again as we face this intolerable situation of our own creating, we say the child is "spoiled." And spoiled most children are. Rarely does one see a normal child—a child that is comfortable—a child that adults can be comfortable around—a child more than nine months of age that is constantly happy.

Most mothers perhaps feel quite naturally that all infant and childish activities, whether



“good” or “bad,” are due to the unfolding of the inborn equipment of the child; and that they as parents haven’t much to do with the process of growth.

But in the last few years there has come a social Renaissance, a preparation for a change in *mores*, a scrutiny of age-old customs that bids fair to become much more of an epoch in history than the scientific Renaissance which began with Bacon in the 15th century. This awakening is beginning to show itself in mothers who ask themselves the question, “Am I not almost wholly responsible for the way my child grows up? *Isn’t it just possible that almost nothing is given in heredity and that practically the whole course of development of the child is due to the way I raise it?*” When she first faces this thought, she shies away from it as being too horrible. She would rather load this burden upon heredity, upon the Divine shoulder, or upon any shoulder other than her own. Once she faces it,