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Doctors say the more often youngsters eat a good oatmeal breakfast, the better they grow!



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would have accepted his father's questions as routine; in all likelihood, he would have been eager to talk about the party. Later on, he will distinguish between questions that are merely conversational, as these were, and those that call for specific, informative answers. Right now, he resents being quizzed like a child, particularly when his father loses his temper. But, childlike, he lets his resentment show by being evasive and then emotional about it.

It is widely understood that the psychological and emotional problems of the child who is on the threshold of adolescence have their background in the changes that are taking place in the body at this age—which may vary from the eleventh to the fourteenth year, as a matter of fact, depending on the individual child. Foremost among these oncoming changes, of course, is puberty, when rapid development of the reproductive organs is accompanied by other transformations associated with sexual maturity, and by active changes in all parts of the body. As these new forces begin to stir within the child, new emotional drives and impulses, new fears, inevitably are born and begin to emerge. Whether or not the awakening of interest in the opposite sex is apparent, as puberty gets under way the developing sex impulse will find some expression, whether it be assertiveness, or withdrawal, or moodiness—or all these and others, too, in rapid sequence.

Later, when the physical changes are more apparent—when the boy's voice has changed to a man's and the girl's figure has changed to a woman's—it is easier for parents to recognize that their own attitudes must grow with the child. The most successful parents are those who can anticipate these changes and offer real understanding and love to the son or daughter who for the time being is lost in the no man's land between childhood and adolescence.

Fred's father would not have been bowled over by the dinner-table episode if he had realized that one of the first manifestations of the reaching toward independence, which is a natural and proper part of the weaning process, is sensitiveness to questioning. Parents do need to know where teen-age children are, at least in a general way, but any appearance of cross-examination, and above all of sarcasm, should be avoided. When Fred was in a happy mood, the father could go into the matter with him impersonally, explain that

just as he and mother leave word where they will be, so they can be reached if anything should happen, they expect Fred to do likewise. This is a rule of family expediency, and an invasion of privacy.

Possibly the most difficult fact for parents to face is that the break with childhood inevitably means the beginning of a transfer of authority from themselves to outside sources. Now home rule must give way sometimes to the custom that prevails among the child's contemporaries. Of course basic concepts of right and wrong must remain unchanged, and rules involving considerations of rights of other people must not be relaxed. But such things as bedtime hours, bathroom rules, rules of dress, "dates" and other minor regulations can be extended without harm to conform to the prevailing custom, even when parents do not approve of the custom. I know some parents who stubbornly insist on enforcement of outgrown rules, with the mistaken notion that some real principle is involved. Usually, the result is that the child is rejected by his friends and becomes unhappy outcast—at a time when his greatest need is for companionship and understanding.

On the other hand, parents who are willing themselves to make concessions in minor matters, who make it plain that they will let their offspring to have a fine time and impose only such restrictions as are absolutely necessary for their welfare, find that youngsters accept these quite happily.

In addition to understanding, tolerance and suspended judgment in the face of the often trying behavior, preadolescents need guidance that will turn their supercharged energies into wholesome channels. Fortunately, most school authorities understand this need, and athletics, hobbies and school-sponsored social activities are usually provided in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades.

Parents cannot do better than to encourage, but not force, participation in these activities. They should welcome the appearance of social urges, and make the best available for informal parties that will benefit them. Those who join with the children in many family and community projects as possible will help make the always difficult passage from childhood to adulthood as nearly smooth as it can be for their offspring. Good boys are more easily "caught" than taught. As I told my friend, "Whether you like or not, Fred is growing up. Why not let him and enjoy it?"

"I'M THE HOUSEKEEPER WITH TEN THUMBS"

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This situation between the children is a principal cause of grievances and uproar. The household rule is that whoever is playing with a toy has a right to keep it till he is through. But Alan, older and stronger than Ann, took away her toys so often that she would begin to scream if he so much as stood near her doll carriage or her side of the shelves. Now he has resorted to wheedling her out of her toys. Then, too, Ann has had to learn fast to keep up with Alan. Her vocabulary is almost as large as his, even if her pronunciation isn't quite so good. She can catch a ball better than he can. Where he is slender, headlong, serious and easily upset, she is a pudding of a child with beguiling pretty ways and a disposition hard to ruffle. Ann is likely to gain a point without half trying. Alan is likely to try too hard to succeed. Peggy, out of her own experience as her father's favorite in opposition to her brother, takes Alan's jealousy of Ann to heart and is letting it in hand. Besides applying Gesell and the pediatrician's advice, she and Bob have reassured about the children in front of

in my room awhile?" . . . "I think that's a very good idea. Now go in there and do it there." But other punishments are worse. Before Peggy mops the playroom linoleum she sweeps all the toys that are lying on the floor into a pile. The children pick them up and put them on the shelves. Any remaining go down the incinerator chute—a punishment that works like a charm. Only occasionally some such drama as this enacted in the playroom: Peggy: "Children, may I ask a personal question? Who belongs to the Star Toy?" No answer. No action. Slinky meets his appointed fate.

Peggy's emotional concentration on the children works out so that, for all her fussing, she doesn't let them run over her. She has spunk enough for three women of her size; with the result that, in spite of her special disadvantages, Alan and Ann are only as bright as buttons, but forthright and affectionate. Still Peggy regards her constant presence as a handicap to them. She longs for a back yard where she could let them loose in safety and they could be self-reliant. It is as hampering to them as that they have been with her to the house.

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