

BOOK OF METHODS

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(p6)

Boris had started himself in the field of education in the old country, Russia, where he devoted himself to teaching peasants how to read and write. For this crime against the society of his time--trying to educate those who wanted to learn--he was sentenced to an indefinite term in prison. He was offered the opportunity for freedom at one time but refused when he learned that there was a condition which forbade him from having anything more to do with learning of any kind--the only life he knew. For being this unreasonable, he was placed in solitary confinement in a man-sized cell, one so small that he could only get in a reclining position by pulling up his knees. He spent two months of this torture in his Russian prison. He was unconscious for an extended period, and was not expected

to survive for a long time. His father, a man of moderate wealth, was finally able to secure his release by assuring authorities that his son would leave the country. Boris did leave and made himself a success in America.

At a dinner party a few years after his becoming prominent at Harvard, Boris was introduced to the director of education in Russia who was visiting the United States. He pleaded with Boris to return saying that he would have a free hand in establishing a solid educational system. My husband indignantly reminded the Russian representative of his days in prison said that Czarist promises meant nothing. He was unwilling, he said, to ever return to Russia as long as a totalitarian government existed.

By this time, he had received his University degree from Harvard and was later awarded his Ph.D. in psychology and his M.D. from the Harvard Medical school.

My husband's knowledge of psychology was invaluable in the education of Billy. He was never left alone without the company of one of us. His early investigations into the ability to learn were made a game rather than a chore. He was made to feel like an adult from the very beginning. At one time, for example, I thought it about

time to teach William how to eat at the table. Nothing was said to him about it because he was only a few months old. Billy was merely brought to the table whenever the family ate. Food and a spoon were placed in front of him. He watched the rest of the family eat and although we included him in any of our conversations, we didn't try to teach him to eat in any way. After a few weeks, we noticed him getting impatient at every meal. Finally he picked up his spoon and began playing with it. Later, he attempted to place it in his mouth, but because he was still uncoordinated, he managed to hit every part of his face with his food except his mouth. One day, he at last managed to find it. He squealed with delight. He had learned how to eat. No one had taught him; he had reasoned it out.

The word, "reasoning," is the crux of our system. In true education it is not the amount of knowledge that counts but originality and independence of thought that are of importance. But our schools today are based on a system of regulations and office-like discipline. Individuality is frequently discouraged thereby suppressing originality. The result is the "average American," the clever businessman, the good artisan, the resourceful politician, but few scientists, artists, philosophers, or

statesmen.

My husband was no beginner in the field of education. He was known as one of the more prominent psychologists of his period. While at Harvard, he was a student of William James, Josiah Royce and Herbert Palmer. He wrote a book while he was a student, "The Psychology of Suggestion," with an introduction by Professor James. He was author of a score of other books and pamphlets on similar subjects (be specific here), and was a founder and for a time editor of the Journal of Abnormal Psychology. He later became an associate in psychopathology at the Pathological Institute of the New York State Hospitals. An unusual aspect of this position was that he did not have his doctor's degree at the time even though his job called for him to act as supervisor over a number of M.D.s.

While teaching at Harvard, along with fellow-Professor James, Boris leveled a blast at organized education which even reached his own University and the President of the renowned institution. His villification of accepted methods of teaching, "Phillistines and Genius," was commented upon editorially by almost every important paper in Europe and the United States--from The New York Times and Baltimore Sun to the Spokane (Washington) _____.

Although my husband was essentially a psychologist and psychopathologist, he considered psychology to be very closely allied with education. His attack on education resulted mainly from the amazing accomplishments we achieved with Billy. Then, too, I received most of my early education from Boris during the time that he tutored me for my college entrance examinations.

[The ability to learn languages stemmed from a basic understanding of what every language is based upon. Looking through the Boston Library one day, my husband found a book explaining the word forms of the early Aryan language. Most modern tongues are based on this archaic form, and it was easy for Billy or my husband to enlarge their vocabularies merely by referring to the basic form. During the week that it would take either of them to learn a language, they would devote themselves entirely to that subject alone. Learning was not a matter of repetition to them, and it need not be for anyone. Too often we have regarded the child's mind as a vacant lot, a place where we could unload certain facts which would accumulate there. We labor under the delusion that stories and fairy tales, myths and deceptions about life and man are good for the child's mind. On such a foundation, it is difficult to

erect a proud monument. We forget the simple fact that what is harmful for the adult is still more harmful to the child. Surely what is poisonous to the grown-up mind cannot be useful food to the young. If credulity in old wives tales, lack of individuality, sheepish submissiveness, unquestioned belief in authority, meaningless imitation of jingles, memorization of mother-goose wisdom, repetition of incomprehensible prayers, uncritical aping of good manners, silly games, prejudices and superstitions and fears of the supernatural are censored in adults, why should we approve their cultivation in the young?]*

In public schools, education is nothing but a series of repetitions so that a number of facts can be dredged into a child's unwilling brain. According to our system, it is a matter of recreation. Learning can be fun, and it is when treated like a game.

A typical example arises when you teach a child to spell. In school, the typical process begins with rat, r-a-t, rat. Then comes cat, c-a-t, cat, and so on ad infinitum. The teacher is usually underpaid; she is tired of endless repetitions; and she probably can't help instilling some basic fears and feelings of insecurity on a child who is floundering--not because he can't do anything else, but because he

isn't taught to think for himself. Billie, on the other hand, learned to spell before he ever went to school. He did not memorize all of the words in the English language even though he was a proficient speller.

He didn't even memorize any of the words in any language. What he did was to learn the method of spelling so that he could apply his techniques to any new word that might come up. How did he do this at so early an age? It was simple. He made a game of it by using blocks. He learned that three letters placed in a certain way spelled cat. Then he learned that if the "t" were doubled and an "le" added he would have a new word with a different meaning. This approach was so effective that he never forgot to double a final consonant when adding a suffix beginning with a vowel. That's a simple rule AFTER it has been memorized. But Billie learned it without memorizing.

The block technique was only one aspect of a large pattern. Learning to Billie was always a game, no matter what subject he was working on. Education became a part of every action he engaged in although it was made such fun that he never realized it. Bedtimes were perfect for putting this scheme into effect.

All young children like to be

fondled and read to just before they go to sleep. Billie was started off with some of the most perfect fairy tales in existence--Greek mythology. The myths were presented to him in such a way that it was all fun. But underneath, he was getting a classic education, almost from the time he could first learn to talk and comprehend bedtime stories.

From mythology, it was easy to explain the system of the universe to the boy. Planets could be explained in terms of their names, which were taken from the Greek gods he had already learned about. From there, it was a simple matter to go to mathematics. Impossible for a child of three or four? The theorists might say yes, but the facts say no.

There are many ways to look at this early development of the child's mental capacities. How can it help the child? What will be the effect on you? And will the state benefit or lose out if children become educated earlier in life?

Let's take the child first because the purpose of the whole system is to help him. If the principles of the system are used, he gets the positive results of certain techniques.

With emphasis on minimizing the amount of time necessary for him to

learn, the youngster will get the benefit of more time to devote to playing. This will give him a better opportunity to strive for a healthy body as well as a superior brain. His thinking ability will not be dulled by endless repetitions, and everything he learns will be enjoyable as a game and a delight because it is the result of his learning, not your teaching. He will learn to reason things out, and by so doing will be able to apply a few principles to a great many things.

You as a parent will also be happier. With a happy child, you will have less on your mind to frustrate you and give you feelings of insecurity. Your child will become independent of mind more rapidly, and you can give him more responsibility at an earlier age. By being fully capable when he is younger, he will be able to become financially secure in his own right sooner than he ordinarily would have. He can start to work earlier, and he can advance more rapidly.

All of this will, of course, have a positive effect on the whole social and economic picture of the country. More people will be better educated at an earlier age. By avoiding long hours say of schoolwork and finishing school in two years rather than eight, the entire budget for education can be cut to a fraction of what it is now.

Teachers now laboring six and seven hours a day to drum cold facts into unwilling heads can relax on a four-hour schedule and help more students develop a happy harmony between a strong body and an able mind. More students will have additional help from the same number of teachers. Because the training period will not be as long, instructors can be better paid without increasing their schedules. There will be no need to decrease the number of teachers, but they can be better paid and have the benefit of their endeavors spread for a greater amount of good.

(P13)

CHAPTER 2

The early development of your child's mental capacities is governed by your actions. Too often, a youngster's thinking power is stymied by an impatient parent, a busy parent, or one who is thoughtless.

Let the experience of experts guide you in your attitudes. Psychologists know that the infant's brain is an organ the same as his heart or stomach. It must be treated in accord with what it is. A child with an inferior heart, for example, is limited in his actions. He can't play football, climb ladders, or play hop

scotch. A youngster with a brain that is defective for one reason or another must also be developed differently. His thought processes are slower, and the ability to learn is hampered.

A child with a healthy body on the other hand requires a different type of development. Without exercise, his muscles and tissues will deteriorate. He must continually fulfill the needs of his energetic body to keep it in its good condition.

The brain is no different. As an organ of the body it must get its regular exercise to keep it in good working order. There can be lapses for short periods, but any extended interruption in its function will decrease its efficiency.

There is a common fallacy that the brain in a young child should not be exercised because it is a delicate organ that will become distorted. But its reasoning power in later life is derived from the effectiveness of its earlier use. Consequently, the brain is weakened by lying dormant too long the same as the human body is weakened by lying in bed too long. A perfect example is the increasing weakness of the convalescent, who must learn to walk anew following an extended period of muscular disuse.

The too, because the brain is the

superior organ, it helps develop the other organs and increases the opportunity to unleash tremendous physical and mental energies. It is up to you whether the brain will become the filter of the body, dictating every action, or whether it will make the best use of its vast potential.

With the brain instigating reason in all directions, such activities as sport can be performed at a higher level and with more dexterity. Reasoning helps motor coordination and makes muscular activity more efficient.

Adults in contact with children must recognize the functions of the brain BC the youngster may develop the idea; it must not be instilled in him.

Older people believe that fame and fortune go hand in hand with happiness in our culture. This is unfortunate when it remains the only ideal for many people who cannot achieve the goal because of the flighty hand of Dame Fortune.

Surely there are other goals of human service--godliness, creative work, and efficient behavior. A goal is something that each person establishes for himself. The unattainable must be modified or changed to prevent a personality distortion through frustration.

During the child's years when he is between one and six, the brain absorbs more than at any other period in life. If grammar schools accepted children of these ages, it would take four years or less for these children to acquire a complete elementary education usually requiring eight years. This is neither sensational nor absurd. My son, for example, finished the entire eight year course in five months, working a maximum of two hours a day during that period.

Four hours a day will cover all the aspects of a normal day at the schoolhouse. That reference to "all the aspects" should be taken in a broad sense. Remember that physical activity is as important as mental activity in achieving a suitable balance of the healthy mind and body. Two hours, then, should be spent on sports and playing. The remaining two hours can be devoted to a formal pursuit of method and education.

Most people would now assume that the task of learning is actually a function of the home and that homework should therefore be increased. But the opposite is actually true. With this method, no home assignments should be given.

"Go home," the pupil should be told, "and think about what you have learned today."

Next morning, a half hour of the study time can be used in answering questions the child on have thought about it in reference to what they learned the day before. The pupils will thereby accumulate a knowledge of fact with the ability to reason.

With the child's new found ability to think for himself, his talents may sometimes lead themselves into incorrect conclusions. These will, of course, result in actions that are unsatisfactory to the adult. When the average parent or teacher sees any undesirable behavior of this sort in a child, his usual attitude is to stop the action abruptly. This frequently takes the form of a raised voice, a slap, a sound shaking, or a spanking.

This punishment is no more than a short cut for the adults. It is the lazy way of solving a problem, and it is detrimental to the health and mental development of the child. Shock has been substituted for reason by the adult.

A more satisfactory result can be attained by explaining to the youngster why his behavior is undesirable, dangerous to himself or others, damaging, disturbing, etc. Rather than condemn, substitute an alternative or merely distract.

The result of any sort of punishment is fear, which cripples the mind and body of child and adult alike. Thinking is inhibited and originality is killed. Physical progress is also limited. A perfect example is the increase of psychoneurotic cases during wars.

Knowledge and understanding are fear's worst enemies. Awareness by the child himself of his role in life and what is worthwhile will aid him in developing his powers of reason without being unduly limited.

Most children develop physically without a commensurate mental development because parents are unable or unwilling to devote the time to help teach. A burned child will stay away from fire. But why must he be hurt before he can acquire this knowledge? There is no reason of course.

A little effort in the side of the parents will give the child an understanding and awareness of such pains before they occur. In explaining something like this, however, remember that a bit of information such as that of heat burning the human skin cannot be absorbed with any meaning because it is an isolated fact. What have you told the child about his skin? how it breathes? and how it is fed by what he

eats? Does he know what a service soap and water perform for his skin, or has he learned to dislike it because the habit has interfered with a game he is playing or a new discovery? If you both have an understanding of the workings of the body, you will save much time and effort. A child who understands that his skin must be clean so it can breathe and stay healthy to avoid rashes he knows are uncomfortable will find new pleasure in a bath. He will have discovered something new as the result of his reasoning powers.

A good approach to an understanding of the body easily is through the skin--particularly if you are frightened about the explanation. It is not a burden, although it can be made into one. Make a game of it instead. A child can learn about his skin easily--by touching, looking and feeling it.

Sensations originating at the surface of the body can be explained almost as a fairy tale to the child. The words must be simple, and the teaching must be enjoyable. Understanding brings precautions. Certain of these precautions will keep the doctor away.

Knowledge of the human body at any early age is important because understanding aids the fullest

utilization of powers and prowess. To me, one of the mysteries of the ages is that educators do not teach children a sufficient amount about their own bodies.

For children to have a complete approach to life, they should have a basic understanding of the mechanism they inhabit. Reasoning can be complete when a child begins to learn what his body is constructed of, why and how it happens to be formed in this matter, and how he can best learn to develop this body which must serve him for his whole life.

Health habits of any kind should, of course, be explained. Many adults of encouraged unhealthy practices of eating, sleeping, and other habitual forms of existence. Many of these are not the result of ignorance as much as the reluctance to give up previously established habits that have become a part of the personality.

The habits can be changed; but how much better it would have been had they never been developed at all! Likes and dislikes are learned. Why not guide the youngster to learn what is beneficial while rejecting whatever is destructive.

Early understanding will lead to reasoning which will serve as the child's guide. Soon, your duty in

guiding will be replaced by the child's ability to reason for himself. In expending a little more energy at the beginning, you will be able to more than compensate at the end. The task of developing the child into a mature human being will be more quickly turned over to the child himself.

The method is not restricted to health habits alone. The whole pattern of education is based on the proposition that the child must educate himself by reasoning, using gems of knowledge that are offered by the adult.

Of primary importance with this system is that the parent must go to the child. For the adult to sit on the floor is very important because of what it represents. A new child is more easily reached when he is approached on his own level--figuratively and literally. We cannot and must not assume that all young children will be amenable to our training immediately. Behavior problems brought on through previous years of insecurity and inconsistencies result in the aggressive, destructive, poorly-controlled behavior often encountered in confused children.

Some children will require time to get reoriented to a new environment of

ease in place of strain; love and kindness in place of reprimands and impatience; consistency for inconsistency; and guidance in place of didactic statement of improperly explained facts.

Here is an example of showing a new path to a child. This incident actually happened, and it demonstrates how you can give a youngster a glimpse into a new exciting land of knowledge and truth.

Even though I had met this little girl, age 4, the other evening, I pretended to forget her name.

"Hello. What's your name?"

"Oh, you forgot," she replied. "I told you last night."

I frowned unhappily. "I'm a dumbbell, I guess. What do you think of that? Do YOU know what a dumbbell is?"

"Yes," she laughed, delighted at having an adult admit to such a thing.

"Ethel, what you been doing," I continued.

"Oh, you didn't forget at all," she said.

"No? Maybe I was playing a joke. Do you like jokes?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed. Ethel was

now an equal because of the simplicity of my approach. I tried to make my eyes smile so the little girl would feel welcomed by a patience that puts children at ease with adults.

The conversation took a turn as it so often does with children.

"I'm very hot," she said.

"But you don't mind, do you? Would you like me to tell you a little story about being hot?"

"Yes," she went on. "Tell me a story. The sun makes me hot. Whenever it shines, it makes me hot." The topic changed abruptly. "You know I didn't mean it when I called you a dumbbell," she said. "I am really the dumbbell because you didn't forget my name at all." Back we go to the previous topic. "You know, when the clouds are covering the sun I'm not hot."

"What are clouds made of; do you know?" I asked.

"Oh yes, I know."

A man was standing nearby. "This man and I would like to know what the clouds are made of."

The little girl thought a minute. "Well, I guess it must be something thick and heavy. I know it must be thick and heavy because it keeps out the heat. Oh, I don't know. You tell

me what it is."

"How can I tell you when I'm a dumbbell?" I asked seriously.

"Oh," she apologized. "I didn't mean that. Tell me what a cloud is made of.["]

"Would you like to know about the sun, how it hides and all?"

"Oh yes," she replied.

"I'll tell you a little story about the sun." I decided to go into the planetary system based on Greek mythology. "The sun is the father and the earth is one of his nine children. He lives thousands and thousands of miles away from his children. How far away do you think we are from the sun?"

"Oh, a long way," she said.

"That's right. And the father wants to keep in touch with his children and find out how they are and what they are doing. So he sends out thousands of messengers."

"What are messengers?" The questions begin.

"Have you ever seen a boy bring groceries to your house or a telegram? That is what a messenger is. These little messengers make you hot because they get so hot from running back and

forth from the earth to their father, the sun. When you feel hot, it's because these messengers are kissing your skin. They are healthy, aren't they? But only when you don't have too many visiting you at one time and give you a sunburn. Now, would you like to know what clouds are really made of?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll tell you," I replied. "They're made of water."

"Water? Why doesn't it fall down?"

"It does when it rains, doesn't it?"

"Well," she persisted, "how does it get up there?"

"Remember the messenger I tol[d] you about who got so hot from traveling back and forth?"

"Yes."

"They draw the water from the rivers, lakes, and oceans."

"I don't see it," she said.

"No, do you know why you don't see it? Because the water is turned into little bits of wet that we call particles."

This last was too much for her. That's one reason I used a big word.

"What is a particle?" she asked. This question was actually instigated

by the use of indirect suggestion.

"Have you ever seen steam?"

"Oh, yes," she replied. "My mother cooks tea and there is steam."

"Well, that is what happens to the water that gets kissed a lot by the messengers. It turns into little particles that have been heated by those hot messengers and then it starts going up because hot things always rise. And the farther up it goes, the cooler it gets, and as it gets cooler it begins to stick closer to other particles, and together they make big drops of water. And what do you think happens when the drops get heavy enough? The drops fall, and we have rain. What do you think of that?"

"Oh, I never knew that before."

"Did you like that little story?" I asked.

"Yes, I did. I like stories like that."

The little girl's mother came by then, and the two of them were off. The whole incident took only ten minutes or so and illustrates how easily you can use your surroundings to invent a story which will enlighten as it amuses. Whenever a child comments on anything natural, you can always tell a little story. Get the child's interest and give him an idea

to seize upon that will stick with him
even if he forgets the superficial
material.

* Manuscript indicates insertion of this paragraph here.

[Typed by Leon Hansen.]

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