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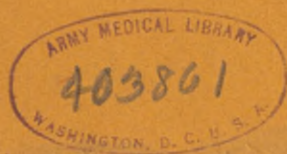
WASHINGTON, D.C.



**ABOUT  
FOSTER  
CHILDREN**

**SUGGESTIONS TO NURSES  
AND SOCIAL WORKERS  
FOR HELPING  
FOSTER PARENTS**

*Prepared by the  
New York City Committee on Mental Hygiene  
and the Bureau of Child Hygiene of the  
New York City Department of Health*



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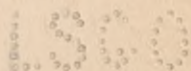
## ABOUT FOSTER CHILDREN

### SUGGESTIONS TO NURSES AND SOCIAL WORKERS FOR HELPING FOSTER PARENTS

Nurses and social workers who supervise foster children in boarding homes play an important part in the lives of the foster child, the foster family, and the child's own family. The greater the worker's understanding of family-child relationships, the more she can help towards harmonious placements. Special psychological problems likely to arise during placement are discussed here, with suggestions about ways in which the worker can help the children and the families in her care.

\* \* \*

*This pamphlet is written particularly for nurses and social workers. It is not intended for foster parents. A companion pamphlet TO FOSTER PARENTS: THIS IS YOUR FOSTER CHILD is available which can be given to parents by the worker. It summarizes briefly some of the specific suggestions for parents which are discussed more fully in this pamphlet.*



## ENTER: THE WORKER

When the social worker or the public health nurse enters a foster home, there are certain attitudes she wants to convey to the foster parents. She wants them to understand that she respects and approves the job they are doing, and that she considers it highly important. She wants them to know her as a person of integrity, someone to be trusted. She hopes that they will regard her as a confidant, and that they will talk over with her many of the questions which will inevitably arise. She will try to help them to make sound decisions, without imposing her own, and she will share with them some of the experiences of others which are likely to make things easier for them, and for the children in their care.

Because she is accustomed to look below the surface for the explanation of problems in human behavior, she will discuss with the foster parents ways in which they can do the same. Having some insight into the difficulties likely to arise, she will try to help all the people concerned to understand one another better. Some of the points of view which she will try to get across are discussed in the sections which follow.

## ALL CHILDREN HAVE EMOTIONAL NEEDS

All children need love and affection. They need security in family life and the privilege of being respected as a person. They need fun and adventure and the satisfaction of personal achievement. And they need the wise, friendly understanding of warm-hearted adults.

Children are sensitive. They cannot always put their feelings into words. Often they are impelled to act by feelings of which they are not aware themselves. They experience certain unhappy emotions—such as fear, jealousy, resentment, disappointment, frustration—and these feelings sometimes cause them to act in undesirable ways. It is these feelings which must be understood by adults who wish to help children.

### A FOSTER CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS

A foster child has the same needs as any other child—and he is likely to stumble into the same difficulties. Then, in addition, he has another set of needs and difficulties which are likely to arise out of the fact that he is not living in his own home.

*He needs to belong.* The sense of belongingness, of being wanted, of having a place in the world, has too often been the experience which a foster child has lacked in his earlier life. Or it may be what he now lacks, even though the foster parents are trying to give it to him. It is what he must have if he is to have the best chance to grow up into a mentally healthy, happy, competent individual.

“I’m nobody’s nothing.” That was the statement of one little four-year-old in a foster home. And that is the feeling which people who care about children want to be sure does not develop in the children for whom they are responsible.

*He is likely to be sensitive about placement.* Being placed out arouses strong feelings. It may require careful observation to discover just what these are. If the child is particularly sensitive, he

may feel discriminated against even when there seems to be no reason for him to feel that way. He may think that what is happening to him, such as some little deprivation or some refusal or reprimand, is because he is a foster child. The foster parents will need to convince him not only that life sometimes says "no" to every one of us, but, also—more important—that he has a place in their home and their hearts, and that they are not depriving him or punishing him because they dislike him.

Some children (not all, of course) are much upset upon first being placed in a new home. On the surface their childish grief may seem to last only a day or two. But it should not be misjudged for that reason, nor treated lightly. It should be handled delicately, with appreciation of the hurt which the child may be hiding, and without fear of "spoiling" him during those first few difficult days.

Experience with evacuated children in England has shown that often it is not so much the fact of separation from the parents which upsets the child, as the way in which the separation takes place. Many times circumstances make it impossible to soften the shock for the child. But sometimes the shock can be made easier. If the worker sees the child before placement she can help to prepare him for what to expect.

*His feelings are mixed.* The child may be feeling two opposite kinds of emotion at the same time. For example, he loves his own parents, but he may feel some resentment against them—resentment of which he is entirely unaware—because they are not taking care of him themselves but have put him

among strangers. He may, without realizing it, transfer to the foster parents some of the confused feelings he has experienced about his own parents. His anger may be directed against the foster parents, not as individuals, but as symbols of the deprivation he has suffered from his own parents. Then as he feels a growing love for the foster parents, he may also resent them because they are not his own parents. Perhaps his feelings are torn between his fondness for his own parents and his fondness for the foster parents. This conflict is likely to be increased if the parents and the foster parents happen to differ widely in what they expect of him, or if they criticize each other, or disagree, or if he feels hurt by one or the other. A child needs to feel loyal. And he does not always find it easy to sort out his loyalties. He may get all mixed up because one of his families does things one way, and the other does them another way. He feels—again without being aware of it—that if he goes along with one, he is being disloyal to the other. He needs help in straightening out his feelings.

A child also sometimes has mixed feelings about the fact that he is living in a boarding home. He may feel a little ashamed—and then, if his foster parents are kind to him, he may be ashamed of being ashamed. He may feel some self-pity and some bewilderment. Mixed feelings, which the child himself cannot understand, will make him uncomfortable. He may try to solve his problem by day dreams, by building up a glorious picture of his own home, by letting his imagination run on and on. Worker and foster parents can help by their understanding.

*He may have suffered emotional shock.* More than other children, a foster child is likely to have had some disturbing experiences. The very fact that it has been necessary for him to be placed outside his own home usually means that there were situations at home which were bound to react unfavorably on him. Perhaps the home has been unsatisfactory since his infancy. He may have been handed about among relatives, neglected, shamed; he may have been given too much responsibility, inconsistent discipline. Perhaps he has observed the illness or death of a parent, the breaking up of the home—and perhaps he has observed even harsher situations, such as quarrels, the mistreatment of a parent or brother or sister, alcoholism, or desertion. The worker and the foster parents will have a better understanding of the child's present needs if they understand not only what his past experiences and deprivations have been but also what they have meant to him.

There are certain facts about children which the worker will wish to keep in mind as part of her own background, but which she will not wish to discuss with the foster parents, because of the danger of arousing unnecessary anxiety. For example, some studies have shown that children whose infancy has been spent in an institution are inclined to have certain types of behavior problems as a result of this experience. In general, the institution children tend to show problems involving the overt expression of anxiety (restlessness, hyperactivity, inability to concentrate, etc.) and the overt expression of aggression (temper displays, impudence, destructiveness, failure to regard privacy rights,

antagonism and cruelty without cause, etc.). They also show longing for affection and response, and for the close personal relationships which they have missed in an institution. Children with earlier foster home experience, on the other hand, are more apt to have problems indicating passive anxiety and internal conflicts.

The worker might consider it inadvisable to discuss with the foster parents such points as these, lest the foster parents should begin to see behavior problems where none exist, or should attempt too much explanation to the child. But if the worker is aware of such points, it will help her to interpret the child's behavior to the foster parents. For example, she will be justified in pointing out that a child from an institution is apt to be literally starved for love. And she can trace back some of his present behavior problems to their origin in his past experience.

#### A YOUNGSTER CAN BE BAFFLING

Experience tells us that when a child is first placed in a new boarding home, it is not at all unusual for him to show certain behavior problems—sometimes fairly serious ones. More often than not, such problems are only temporary (even though “temporary” sometimes drags on for what seems like a long time). If the foster parents are prepared for some problems, they may take them less seriously. Instead of being overwhelmed and fearing that the placement is a failure, they will be more ready to plan with the worker ways of helping the child.

*He may show problems, or he may not.* It is possible to do a great injustice to a child by assuming that he is going to have, in his new environment, the same difficulties he was described as having in some other environment. Perhaps his previous difficulties were chiefly due to his relations with the very person who has described him. It is important not to "pigeonhole" a child—not to label him.

It is also important to be prepared for the possibility of problems. He will not *necessarily* have any. But he *may*.

*He may seem set in his ways.* Perhaps he will hang on to the things he brought from home—even torn and dirty things. Perhaps he will refuse new things—and new ways of doing things. In the young child, this may be an expression of his tie to his own home and his desire to cling to memories. With the older child it may be an expression of his refusal to be disloyal to his own home. It may also be a sign that he does not yet feel at home with his new family. He should never be ridiculed or forced.

*He may seem indifferent.* If he does not talk about the things that one would expect him to feel most keenly about, this does not mean that he has forgotten them. The time may come when he can talk about them, if he is free to be himself—or it may be that he never will talk about them. Sometimes a child is unresponsive because he has had so little love in his life. If he has never received affection, he may not know how to give it nor even how to accept it.

*He may show almost any form of exaggerated*

*behavior.* Is he restless? overactive? inconsistent? Does he tell tall stories? use shocking words? eat poorly? cry a lot? Is he too quiet? too mannerly? afraid to play with older children? Is he a perfect little angel—so good that he doesn't seem human? (Look out for a reaction!) Or perhaps he is demanding, jealous, afraid of not getting his share. He may be constantly carrying a chip on his shoulder. All of these are signs of his struggle to adjust. Minor illnesses may be another—frequent colds, sore throats, slight intestinal disturbances, or mysterious upsets which require a doctor—these are not unusual. If the foster parents are prepared for little complications, they will neither take them too seriously nor pass them over as being of no consequence. They will use them as cues to indicate the kind of child they are dealing with, and to point the way in which they can be of most help to him.

*He may show some really troublesome behavior.* For example lying, or stealing, or running away. These sound bad. But they are often not as serious as they seem. They are probably only a passing phase—even when the phase seems to take quite a while in passing. The worker will help the foster parents not to be unduly upset, not to take drastic steps nor use strong measures, to go easy on the punishment. The important thing is to look more closely into *how* the child is feeling, and to figure out *why* he is behaving this way.

Bedwetting is another problem common among children first placed out—in fact it is more common among all children than is usually realized.

It is a great nuisance. But punishment and direct measures rarely help. Bedwetting may go back to any one or a number of causes, and it is usually necessary to understand the child quite well to know why he does it. The best treatment is to do all the things that make him feel comfortable, loved, and wanted. Above all, shame and ridicule are to be avoided. (These are *never* good ways of handling *any* problem.) He should have enough responsibility, but not too much. And he should be able to feel that the adults around him will help him, and that they have confidence that he will get over the habit.

Sex play is another problem which often troubles foster parents. Psychiatrists tell us that it, too, is far more common among all children than many adults realize. It is often a sign that the child is disturbed or unhappy. If it takes the form of play with other children, it may sometimes be helped by answering the child's questions and explaining that certain things are just "not done." If it takes the form of playing with himself, the problem should not be handled directly, but an effort should be made to see that the child has more satisfactions. In rare instances it may be serious enough to require consultation with a specialist. In most cases, however, the foster parents can handle it themselves if they do not become unduly anxious.

Lying, stealing, truancy, bedwetting—these are among the more common problems in the early days of placement. They will probably improve as the child gradually becomes more comfortable in his new home.

## LOOK FOR DEEPER REASONS

"He just wants attention." Or, "He's trying to get your goat." One often hears remarks like this offered as an "explanation" of annoying behavior. Actually they "explain" nothing—they only describe the behavior. The true explanation comes only with an understanding of *why* the child demands so much attention, or *why* he wants to "get your goat." Has he been hurt by some of his earlier experiences, and is he trying to protect himself from further hurts? Is he afraid, but trying to cover it up? Is he confused, bewildered? Has he missed out on the love and attention, the fundamental emotional satisfactions which all children must have in order to be happy?

Foster children—even more than other children—are likely to have complicated reasons for acting as they do. They cannot always see with adult eyes the reasons which made placement necessary. They may, quite without being aware of it, feel as if their own parents had let them down. They may feel distrustful of all parents, perhaps of all adults. The worker needs constantly to be aware of factors such as these which may be the real explanation of difficult behavior.

## A NOTE ABOUT FATHERS

In the following sections, the role of the foster mother is stressed more than that of foster father. This is because it is usually the foster mother who takes care of the child most of the time, and because usually most of the worker's contacts are with the foster mother. The foster father, how-

ever, is just as important in the home as the foster mother, and the worker should let the family know that she realizes this. Often it is the foster father who sets the entire tone of the home, and the very fact that he is away a good deal gives more significance to the time he is in the home.

The same is true where the child's own father is concerned. His feelings may be just as important as those of the own mother. The stress placed on the role of mothers throughout this pamphlet is solely a matter of expedience, and does not represent lack of awareness of the importance of fathers.

#### HOW DOES THE OWN MOTHER FEEL ABOUT PLACEMENT?

What people *think* and what they *feel* are not by any means the same thing. Thinking and feeling constantly interfere with each other. Our *reason* tells us one thing, our *emotions* another. If the own mother at times seems unreasonable and makes things difficult, it will help to stop and think what her deeper feelings may be.

*Her feelings are also mixed.* For instance, suppose she feels a little bit guilty because she has had to place her child in a boarding home. Her judgment tells her that the child is better off. Her feelings tell her that she is not being a good mother. So, quite without realizing it, she may be trying to prove to herself that she is a good mother. She may look around for things to criticize. If she can find a few details of which she disapproves, it will in a way justify her as a good mother. She can think "I would never let that happen." She will try to

convince herself that she would have been a better parent than the foster mother if only she had had the chance. If the own mother finds fault, the foster mother will feel hurt. The worker can help the foster mother realize how natural it is for the own mother to feel as she does, and help the foster mother to accept a certain amount of criticism.

The way the child acts may increase the own mother's conflicts. Suppose he makes a terrible scene every time she leaves after visiting him. She will want to stay away to spare the child, but she will be all the more eager to come again to reassure herself. Or suppose the child acts indifferent. This may make her feel worse. She will fear that she is losing his love. She will feel hurt, jealous. She may think that the foster family is "trying to turn him against her." She will be torn between her feelings of relief and satisfaction that the child is getting along so well, and her wish that things were not quite so smooth, in order to prove that she is still needed. Some of this confusion may cause her to be inconsistent with the youngster—perhaps shower him with affection one moment, and scold and nag the next, or visit constantly for a while, and then irregularly or not at all.

*She is not always aware of her own feelings.* None of us are always aware of our own feelings. The own mother may not realize that she feels a certain amount of "guilt." She may push down her fears of losing the child's love. She may never realize that she is actually jealous of the foster mother, who has a home of her own. And yet any or all of these feelings may be present, and if they are they will cause complications.

## A WORD ABOUT THE FOSTER MOTHER'S FEELINGS

Often the most difficult idea for a foster mother to accept is the realization that no matter how fond she becomes of a foster child, he can never be her own. This is another point on which reason and emotion do not always agree. She may argue and reason with herself, tell herself that she knew from the beginning that he was someone else's child, but her feelings sometimes get the better of her. She may feel hurt if the child does not accept her completely, and she may feel resentment against the own mother for her claim on him.

This is how one foster mother expressed it. She described a heart to heart talk with her foster son, and then said:

"We both learned something. Joey began to understand better why it was necessary for him to live in a foster family where he could get proper care until his own mother got well. And I—I learned that I could never be a real mother to Joey—that I could never take the place of his own mother in his heart. But I *could* be his good friend and advisor.

"After that night I stopped trying to be a mother to him. It wasn't easy for me, but gradually I realized that I could never really own Joey, that I had only borrowed him for a while."

Caring for a foster child just cannot be the same as caring for one's own. There is not the security of blood ties, and of ownership, either legal or psychological. The child's love—instead of being taken for granted as it can be in his own home—must be waited for and won, often against his will and that of his parents. Unless he is a tiny infant, he comes with many habits already well established, and a personality which one must strive to get ac-

quainted with and understand. The foster mother must face these facts realistically if she is to succeed as a constructive—and not a confusing—force in the child's life.

The foster mother may feel a little hurt if the child does not at once seem joyous and happy in his new home—if he seems ill at ease, or does not appear to appreciate his new opportunities. It may help to remind her that taking a child to a new home is like transplanting a flower or a plant. Perhaps the soil is better, and there is more sun, and the entire location is more suitable—but even so, the plant is likely to droop for a few days until the roots take hold. So it is with a child who is transplanted.

Still another feeling which the foster mother may have, without ever having stopped to analyze it, is one of slight scorn for any mother who places her child out to board. She may think that if the mother cared enough for the child, she would somehow manage to keep him with her. This too is an attitude which is quickly conveyed to the child. The complications it is likely to cause in his feelings are obvious. If the worker becomes aware that the foster mother has such a feeling, it would be well to discuss it. It will also help the foster mother to feel more tolerant if she stops to think that this situation is not of the mother's own choosing. Perhaps the foster mother thinks that she herself would have chosen some other solution, but she cannot get around the fact that whatever is the reason for the placement, from the point of view of the own mother placement must represent making the best of a bad situation.

Possibly too the foster mother will think that the own mother is not a very "good" mother. If the child is allowed to sense this attitude on the part of the foster mother, it is likely to cause conflict in his feelings, because he will resent the implied criticism of his own mother no matter how well justified it is.

If the foster mother is inclined to be critical of the own mother, the worker may wish to point out that the own mother is the kind of person she is because of her life experiences—just as the foster mother is the kind of person *she* is because of *her* life experiences. The foster mother has the opportunity, at least to a certain extent, to manipulate the life experiences of the child in her care so that he will turn out to be the kind of adult she can admire. Such a task is one to be undertaken with humility.

#### WHEN THE TWO MOTHERS UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Certain conflicting cross currents between the mother and foster mother are inevitable. These will be decreased if the mother and foster mother understand themselves and each other. For example, each one needs to understand how natural it is for the other to feel possessive of the child—that is, to feel that the child is part of her and that she is responsible for his well-being. And each one needs to realize that actually she would not want it to be any other way. Certainly it is desirable that the mother retain her feelings of possessiveness towards the child. If she did not it would be an evidence of a poor relationship between the two,

and the child would be the one to suffer. At the same time it is desirable for the foster mother to feel at least a certain amount of possessiveness, because that goes along with the feeling of genuine affection. If she did not feel somewhat possessive, it would probably mean that she had no real warmth for the child. She would be cold, unresponsive, indifferent. Without real love for the child—and the accompanying possessiveness—she would find him only a burden, and would either not be willing to put up with the extra work and nuisance, or would do it solely for the money. The own mother would not want that to be the situation. And so if each one realizes that the other's possessiveness, though perhaps irritating at times, is part of the picture and fundamentally desirable, each will be less likely to resent it.

Occasionally difficulties may develop if the child tries to play the mother and foster mother against each other for his own advantage. The mother and foster mother should be aware of such a situation and avoid letting antagonism grow up between them. They will need to stand together—not against the child, and not to protect themselves—but to work out their mutual problem for the best welfare of the child.

Sometimes the mother and foster mother expect things from each other which neither is willing to give. The foster mother, for example, may expect the mother to take the child out part of the time to relieve her. The mother may resent this. Or the mother may be looking to the foster mother as a kind of mother-person for herself, someone who will take an interest in her, help her. The foster

mother may neither understand nor wish to encourage any such feelings of dependency. It is important for the responsibilities of each family to be clearly understood from the beginning.

It is not unusual for the own mother to give the foster mother a great deal of information about the family in their first contacts, and then regret it later. The foster mother may be friendly and sympathetic, and try to draw out the own mother. Hearing only the own mother's side of the story, the foster mother may pass judgment on certain members of the family—judgment which she will possibly revise later. Actually it will make for a better relationship if the foster mother discourages too many confidences. In any event it is essential for the foster mother to hold in strictest confidence whatever the mother does tell her, and reserve judgment as much as she can.

#### THE REST OF THE FAMILY ARE IMPORTANT

Families sometimes think that it would be fine to have a foster child as a "companion" to their own, but they fail to take into consideration the rivalry that is usually involved. They assume that because they want another child, the child they already have will also want him. They may say to the first child, "Wouldn't you like a little brother?" and he will probably say, "Yes." Perhaps the child does in a way want another brother or sister, and perhaps the two of them will be companionable. But even so there is likely to be a certain amount of jealousy. This is natural and to be expected. Any newcomer usurps some of the rights and privi-

leges of the first child. Any newcomer is regarded as a rival. If parents are prepared for some jealousy, they will be better able to prevent it. One important measure in prevention is to be sure that all members of the family are consulted before deciding to take another child, and that all enter into the planning for the child.

One member of a family who does not approve of the new child can make things so uncomfortable for him that he never feels really at home. It is a wise precaution to make sure that taking a foster child is a family-plan, not just a mother-plan.

#### TEACHER, SCHOOL AND NEIGHBORHOOD ARE IMPORTANT, TOO

Once in a while it will happen that the school is not very friendly to foster children. The teachers may look upon foster children as "different." And to some people "different" means "undesirable." Perhaps the teachers have had unfortunate experiences with some foster children, and so anticipate trouble with all such children. They may even say to the foster mother, "Why do you keep this child? He should be in an institution."

There are usually reasons for this attitude on the part of the school. As has been mentioned before, because of their life experiences, foster children as a group are likely to have more problems than other children, and therefore as a group they may possibly cause more trouble. Obviously they come from homes that are broken either temporarily or permanently, or else the children would not be placed out. And it is well known that children

from broken homes are at a disadvantage in many ways. They have often been knocked around from pillar to post before they were settled in their present boarding home. And they have often been "deprived" children—that is deprived both of material privileges and of the affection and security which is their due. The teachers may not know these things, or knowing them, may not have stopped to think about the relation between these experiences of the child and his behavior in school. They also may not have stopped to think about how disturbing it is for a child to be in a completely new environment—a new home and a new school all at once.

Here is the point where both the foster family and the worker can play one of their most important roles: the role of interpreter. If the foster mother, or the worker—or possibly both—will go to talk with the teacher and principal, they can explain something about the child, why he is as he is, and what they are trying to do for him. They can work with the school to try to make it a more constructive experience for the child. The school will appreciate their interest in the child and their understanding of the school's problems.

Occasionally persons in the community, too, may be a little resentful of the idea of a "boarding child." As with the school this usually goes back to lack of understanding on their part. They may in their own minds associate "foster child" with the idea of either illegitimacy or poverty, and they may be thinking that such children are "no good." Here again the worker's and the foster parents' role is that of interpreter. They can make it clear

that many foster children come from homes just as fine as those of the community in which they are now living, but that their homes have been broken by misfortune. Or if the child has perhaps come from an inferior home, foster parents and worker will, by what they say and do, convey to others their conviction that who a child's parents were, or what the parents' incomes were, have little to do with the potential value of that child as a citizen. When foster parents and worker respect the child they will not need to apologize for him, and others will respect him too.

#### THERE ARE NO RULES TO COVER THESE POINTS

Certain problems which arise are so much part and parcel of the whole situation that it is hard to make suggestions about them. Their solution will depend on the interrelations of all the people concerned.

*What should the child call the foster mother?* He should call her what he wants to call her, and not what some one else tells him. Sometimes both the own mother and the foster mother have ideas about this which do not satisfy the youngster. If he does not know what he wants to call the foster mother, he should be helped to make up his mind, and not be told flatly one thing or another. Usually the matter should be discussed before or at the time of placement.

*How often should the own family visit?* Although there are different practices with respect to this question, authorities are coming more and more to realize the importance to children of know-

ing at the time they are placed out that they are not losing their own parents. Plans and explanations should be made in advance to bring this reassurance to them. Some agencies consider it advisable to encourage visits by the child's family even if the visits are definitely disturbing at first. They admit that the child may be temporarily upset, but they feel that in the long run his adjustment will be better because the shock of separation has not been so great. They also believe that the own family will be better satisfied if they are encouraged to visit freely.

Other agencies think that the child makes a better adjustment if he sees his own family infrequently at first.

In any event it is well to plan ahead with both families so that the child knows how often to expect his own family. If the own family inclines to visit less often than appears desirable for the child's sake, the worker or foster mother might encourage them privately to come more often. It is very important however not to express criticism of them in the child's presence for failing to come often enough.

#### AVOIDING FRICTION AND HURT FEELINGS

Experience tells us that certain things which sometimes result in injured feelings are fairly easily avoided by a little thoughtfulness. Here are a few pointers which the worker can suggest to foster parents:

*Criticism of parents.* Anything which causes divided loyalties is a potential source of trouble.

Criticizing his own parents or even the parents of his friends will make the child think less, not more, of the foster parents. It may make him turn against the foster parents completely. One boy of 13 was expressing this idea when he said that he ran away "because I didn't like the way my foster mother talked about that other boy's mother."

*Discussion of money.* If the parents do not pay enough—if they are late in paying—if they squander their money—just don't talk about it in front of the child. There are at least three reasons, all very important: first, it is a criticism of the parents—and the reasons for avoiding that are clear; second, it is likely to give the child the impression that his parents do not care enough for him to pay his keep; and, third, it is also likely to give him the impression that the reason the foster parents have taken him is to have the money.

*Threats.* "I'll send you back home"—"I'll tell your father"—"I'll tell the agency"—"They'll take you away from me if you're not a good boy." These are threats which are uttered only too easily in moments of irritation or defeat. The child may appear to be unaffected, but such threats leave an impression, often a painful one. He has already lost one home (or more) and now he is being threatened with losing another one. Anything which undermines his security is destructive for him in the long run.

*Favoritism.* Since the one need most important of all to the foster child is the need to belong, he is likely to be even more sensitive than other children to any sign that another child in the family is more favored than he. It may be necessary to

go a good deal out of one's way to make sure not only that the foster child actually *is* not discriminated against, but also that he does not *feel* discriminated against.

*Standards.* Homes vary widely in what they expect of a child with regard to table manners, language, and the like. Manners which seem gross and crude in one home may be taken for granted in another. Language which is shocking to one family may have quite a different meaning in another family. Before you reprimand a child, be sure you understand what has been expected of him before. Don't scold. Don't nag. Help him to absorb the new standards gradually.

#### SOME HINTS TO SMOOTH THE ROAD

Foster parents will work out for themselves many ways of making matters run easier. Here are a few which the worker can recommend to start with:

*Pay attention to how the child is received.* This may affect his attitude throughout his stay. He is going to be afraid whether he shows it or not. Make him welcome. Don't rush him into showing response. This may be a moment of greater emotional stress for him than he shows.

*Receive him quietly.* It may be a temptation to have the neighbors and friends come in the first day to celebrate his arrival. Spare him! He may already be self-conscious and confused. Do not put these extra social demands on him. Settle down to regular routine as quickly as possible. Have the

celebration later—on an anniversary of his arrival, perhaps, or a birthday or a holiday.

*Respect his feelings for the past.* Don't probe into it if he prefers not to. Don't close the door on it if he wants to keep it open. If he wants to talk, let him. Accept the fact that his past has been different.

*Respect his loyalty to his own home.* His own parents are important to him even if you may not approve of them. Don't try to take their place in his heart.

*Avoid frustrations when possible.* Everything we have learned about children in recent years has emphasized the importance of sparing them experiences which make them feel unloved, deprived, lonely, at an early age. Later they have to learn to take it. But when they are little, protect them from such experiences if you can.

*Use household tasks constructively.* Give him responsibilities in line with his age, not too many, not too few. See that he gets recognition for carrying them out.

*Let him have his prized possessions* and a place to keep them.

*Provide him with clothes like those of the other children,* or have it clearly understood that the own parents will provide them. This is especially important for foster children.

*Give him a small allowance.* This teaches responsibility and gives dignity.

*Point out to other members of the family little*

things they can do to help him feel more comfortable.

*Avoid stressing orderliness and obedience for their own sake.* Untidiness and disobedience in small matters are often inconvenient and annoying, but usually not so important as a number of other traits which give evidence of emotional maladjustment.

*Answer his questions truthfully.* Talk frankly with him.

*Avoid threats,* especially those which undermine his security.

*Use punishment sparingly.* Punishment frequently defeats its own ends. It is not the same as "discipline." The purpose of discipline is to teach the individual to discipline himself. Punishment rarely does this. Constructive discipline makes punishment less often necessary.

*Don't push him beyond his capacity.* Help him to find the true level of his ability. If he is retarded, accept his limitations. Give him other satisfactions to make up for those he cannot have.

*Expect occasional problems.* Try to give them their proper weight. Do not minimize the really serious ones. Do not worry over the trivial ones. A good book on child care will help you to know what to expect and how to handle difficult situations constructively.

## RECOMMENDED READING

### IN QUEST OF FOSTER PARENTS: A POINT OF VIEW ON HOMEFINDING

by Dorothy Hutchinson. N. Y. Columbia University Press, 1943. 145 pages. \$1.75.

### WAR AND CHILDREN

by Anna Freud and Dorothy T. Burlingham. N. Y., International Univ. Press, 1943. 191 pages. \$2.00. Paper ed. \$1.50.

### YOU, YOUR CHILDREN, AND WAR

by Dorothy W. Baruch. N. Y., Appleton-Century, 1942. 243 pages. \$2.00.

### THE PARENTS' MANUAL: A GUIDE TO THE EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

by Anna W. M. Wolf. N. Y., Simon & Schuster, 1941. 331 pages. \$2.50. (Especially recommended).

### BABIES ARE HUMAN BEINGS: AN INTERPRETATION OF GROWTH

by Charles A. and Mary M. Aldrich. N. Y., Macmillan, 1938. 140 pages. \$1.75.

### LIFE AND GROWTH

by Alice V. Keliber. N. Y., Appleton-Century, 1941. 245 pages. \$1.50.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PEDIATRIC PRACTICE

by Benjamin Spock, M.D., and Mabel Huschka, M.D., New York State Committee on Mental Hygiene, 105 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y. 1942. 51 pages. 25c.

### INFANT CARE

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