PARENTING FOR EMOTIONAL GROWTH

WORKSHOPS

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

by

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The authors are indebted to Patsy Turrini who not only read and commented on our materials, but especially for proposing the model we used in presenting these materials. "Question asked by Facilitator, Answers by Participants, followed by Discussion containing what the authors' research and clinical experience lead them to believe to be growth-promoting factors", this model was proposed by Turrini. She envisioned these materials to be used at the Mothers' Centers—to which she and her pioneering work gave rise—in the hope of introducing child development optimizing knowledge accumulated during the past century by psychodynamic child researchers and clinicians.

The authors also thank Dr. Leo Madow for his help in reading these Workshops and for his useful comments and suggestions. His understanding of the workings of conscience and his appreciation of the value of parent education have guided us most fruitfully in developing these Workshops.
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WORKSHOPS

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM:
How to Optimize Their Growth in Our Children

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WORKSHOPS SERIES

INTRODUCTION

The materials presented in these Workshops are derived from Parenting for Emotional Growth: A Curriculum for Students in Grades K Through 12 (Paren, Scattergood, Duff, and Singletary, 1997). This Curriculum was developed and written in order to formally, educationally prepare our young for the job of parenting, a job which like any other demanding, complex and challenging job requires much preparation, knowledge and skill.

Our aim, in this education for parenting Curriculum, is to spell out principles of how to optimize the mental development and health of every child. We aim to achieve this by securing the most growth-promoting parenting of which each child's parents is capable. The child we have in mind is the human child, the Homo sapiens child, whether Chinese, Hispanic, Italian, Lebanese, American, whether Muslim, Protestant, Jew, etc.

Our parenting education work is informed by the work of many international psychodynamic mental health researchers and clinicians. Important among them, Freud proposed in 1939 that parents are the representatives of Society to their children, and that the greatest contribution psychoanalysis would make would lie in the application of what psychoanalysts learn from their clinical work to the rearing of the next generation (Freud, 1933). In 1978 we were much encouraged to pursue our then beginning work in parenting education by a communication from Anna Freud, who when she saw some of our early parenting education materials responded quickly and with enthusiasm to our strategies toward prevention in mental health by means of formal parenting education for school age children. She endorsed our conviction of feasibility and told us that not enough is being done regarding the application of what psychoanalysts have learned toward the rearing of the next generation.

In addition, in the 1970s, Margaret S. Mahler (1978) was convinced that the education of parents would serve to achieve the prevention of major psychological, emotional, and social problems of our time. Like Brandt Steele (see Krugman, 1987), Mahler recognized decades ago that child abuse had become an urgent social problem.

We assert that optimizing the child's mental health, and therewith adaptive abilities, by means of optimizing growth-promoting parenting can be done no matter what the family circumstances. Growth-promoting parenting can be achieved whatever the socio-economic conditions or strains, respectful of whatever the ethnic and religious

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mores and customs of each family, whether the family is intact or the parents are divorced, whether a single parent family, whether one parent works outside the home or both do, part time or full time, and whether the family avails itself of home substitute care-giving or daycare. None of the variations in all these home and family conditions modifies or makes unique requirements of the basic principles of growth-promoting parenting.

Similarly, whatever the child's inborn adaptive abilities and givens, from temperament variations to the wide range of biological givens from normal to dysfunctional and disordered, the basic principles of growth-promoting parenting are the same.

Basic principles of growth-promoting parenting can be spelled out better today than ever before. The Twentieth Century, among other things for which it will be remembered, is the era when we achieved the most advanced ever degree of scientific and humanistic knowledge and understanding of how the depth psychology of the human infant evolves into that of the adult, how the infant becomes the adult who adapts to society for good or for bad. Although more is to be learned, what makes for good or troubled mental health and development has been studied and detailed in this century more than in the entire span of the history of civilization. Our Curriculum is constructed to spell out in some detail central principles of development and how to optimize these in order to secure good emotional development and health.

THE GOAL OF GROWTH-PROMOTING PARENTING

Growth-promoting parenting is to optimize the child's inborn potential abilities to cope constructively with everything the child experiences whether it comes from his or her internal goings-on (e.g., fantasies and interpretations of events) or from his or her external environment (e.g., family life, neighborhood conditions, etc.). To optimize her or his own growth-promoting parenting, it is best for every parent to:

First, have sufficient information on the human child's basic emotional and physical needs. This is required to have a clear enough view of what will be expected of the parent as well as what to provide the child with over the course of development from infancy through adolescence.

Second, have sufficient information on the details and dynamics of every child's adaptive and emotional developments from infancy through adolescence, as well as of those variations that come with the uniqueness of each child. For example, a normal shy child's way of coping differs from those of an assertive-outgoing child. Such information is required to have some reasonable idea of a specific child's age-appropriate abilities and limitations and how to make the best of these.

Third, and perhaps most important, every parent must have sufficient information on how to optimize, how to help the child "be as good as he/she can be", in

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the child's emotional and adaptive development. Both, a **basic general understanding** of how to optimize development and **individualization** of parenting, or tailoring parenting to each individual child, are needed.

**THE MODEL WE USE**

The model of human development, functioning, adaptation, and mental health, we use is a **composite** of much cumulative **psychodynamic** knowledge that has emerged from clinical work as well as formalized direct observational and laboratory research during this Twentieth Century. A number of specific areas of the child's development have drawn the interest of individual clinicians and researchers during the 1900s. At times, such special interests have gotten much attention and have even come to be in vogue, to be believed to be more important than what has been known before. In some instances, efforts have even been made to replace well substantiated explanations of important aspects of human development, functioning, and what can optimize or damage these, rather than to add to the existing pool of information about this very complex system, the mental-psychological domain of the human child. We do not believe that any one of the remarkable psychodynamic developmental theories we now have, each addressing a particular aspect of the child's mental life, is more important than the others. We have found that our understanding is increased by availing ourselves of a number of these models as we try as best as we can to optimize each child's adaptive and developmental potentials.

A century of intensive depth-psychological (psychoanalytic, psychodynamic) clinical work with adults and children has taught us that humans are complex psycho-biological organisms. Each is a single entity, the sum of a number of crucial sectors of experiencing and of development (i.e., of functioning at sequential levels of developing, coping, and stabilizing into increasingly more complex levels of functioning and of adaptation), which in their totality make up each person's qualitative mental health. Among the most crucial sectors of mental-emotional experiencing and development are those that pertain to one's own internal self, to one's human relationships, one's system of adaptive functions (including one's emotional and cognitive functions), one's evolving sexuality (which secures reproduction and the preservation of the species), one's aggression (which serves adaptation, securing one's mastery of oneself, of the world around and one's goals), and the gradual formation of one's conscience (which includes one's code of conduct and morality) and self-esteem. Just as we have found clinically that sexuality is not "the" most important sector of human experience, nor are the development and the vicissitudes of aggression, nor is the development of conscience and self-esteem, nor will a singular focus on attachment prove "more important than" any of the others. Each is enormously important and makes its unique contributions to our understanding of and our ability to help the total, single developing human being "become as good as she/he can be".

The **composite psychodynamic model** we use is one then, that has been developed piece by piece, has progressively become organized from 1905 to the present.
Even if the pieces are not as fully developed as some wish, each has been forged sufficiently both in the research laboratory and in the clinical situation to be usefully applied to effect the promise Freud made to Society in 1933: that the greatest contribution psychoanalysis—which itself has developed enormously in its content and scope since that date—would make would be the application of what we learn from the clinical situation to the rearing of the next generation. We believe we have come to a point where we can propose strategies to do just that. The composite model we have seen gradually evolve over the past 40 years, a model 90 years in the making, is likely to stand for centuries to come, continuing to further evolve as we come to learn more about the child's biology and psychology.

THE WORKSHOPS

Whereas the Curriculum Parenting for Emotional Growth: A Curriculum . . . was conceived and developed by Parens, Scattergood, Duff, and Singletary—and a group of collaborating researchers and clinicians—for students in grades K thru 12, the Workshops are developed for child caregivers of all kinds, be they parents, daycare caregivers and administrators, teachers, etc. The authors of the Curriculum and of the Workshops, as noted above, aim their efforts at the prevention of experience-derived emotional disorders in children. As we have documented (Parens, 1988, 1993), we have learned that there is much teachable knowledge that can, and we believe must, be provided to current parents and future parents that will significantly lessen the frequency and intensity of experience derived emotional disorders in children. As we emphasized before, our principal aim is to promote the development of good mental health and constructive adaptation in our children by optimizing the way they are reared, by aiming toward their being reared by growth-promoting parenting.

These Workshops can be used in a variety of ways, in total or in part, with leeway for individual implementation by the Workshop instructors and participants. And they can be used for caregiver training purposes with many different groups of "students" including parents, daycare workers, teachers (especially early education), nannies, etc. It is our intention that the Workshop instructors will use their creative skills to optimize the "fit" between any particular Workshop and the participants. It is, however, important that the Workshop instructors be well trained and sufficiently familiar with the subject matter; for this purpose they may want to refer to the actual Curriculum--Textbook and/or Lesson Plans--cited above, as well as Aggression in Our Children (Parens, Scattergood, Singletary, and Duff, 1987).

The major contents of the Curriculum have been divided into a series of sets of Workshops (Parens and Rose-Itkoff, 1998). To date these sets of Workshops are:

I. On The Development of Self and Human Relationships,
II. On Handling Aggression Constructively, and
III. On The Development of Conscience and Self Esteem.

The first two sets of Workshops are especially geared toward children from 0-3 years, though these can be improvisingly extended up in years by participants and instructors;

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the third set of Workshops spans from infancy through early adolescence. In addition to these 3 sets of Workshops, others to follow include a set on *The Emergence and Handling of Sexuality in Our Children*, a set *On Optimizing Adaptive Abilities and Becoming a Responsible Member of Society*, and a set on *Basics of Early Child Development* (optimizing patterns of feeding, of sleeping, self care and regulation).

In order to be effective, the Workshop instructors must, of course, be sufficiently familiar with the material presented in the "Discussion" sections of these Workshops. Instructors would be best informed by reading the *Textbook of The Curriculum* (Parens et al, 1997) from which the Workshops contents are drawn. As with any other educational effort, the better knowledgeable with the subject material, the better will they field the questions, address the participants' expressed concerns, and integrate participants' concerns and interests and duly emphasize the salient points of each Workshop. We would hope that during Workshop sessions all the text materials under the "Discussion" sections are covered during the course of answering the questions proposed. Additional questions by the participants would be most welcome, indeed ought to be sought, and addressed *ad lib* as best as can by the Workshop instructor. Likewise, it is highly desirable that additional information be added (via examples, case vignettes, etc.) depending on the participants' grasp of the material, interest, life experiences, etc.

Workshop instructors may want to add additional role plays, interactive exercises, etc. and/or to spend more time on one area of interest or another. It is important to make these Workshops "come to life" to the participants and to encourage active discussion between the Workshop participants as well as with the instructors. It is also important that the Workshop instructors make the materials as applicable to the participants' everyday needs and concerns as possible. For this purpose examples derived from the participants' experiences are most useful.

These Workshops are intended for educational purposes and are derived from the comprehensive education Curriculum. They are not intended to be used for formal psychotherapeutic purposes except for Parental Guidance in the course of doing psychotherapeutic work with children and adolescents. This is so even though participants and instructors may, indeed, find that the Workshops materials invariably touch on intimate feelings and memories the parents have of their own childhood and of their own parenting efforts. Nonetheless participants may want to share varying experiences they have had with their children and parenting and, as we said, this should be appropriately encouraged. Workshop instructors will find, though, that this can take up much time and, therefore, should be weighed against the time allotted for any particular Workshop.

Workshop instructors should bear in mind that parents need special attention and support as they learn how to be effective parents. Empathy (trying to read the parents' feelings), support and respect for parents is, of course, highly desirable during the Workshops as parents become more familiar and comfortable with their role as parents who are learning from their children what they need and want. We believe, and say so to the parents, that to be a growth-promoting parent one needs to be "perfect" 75 % of the
time. It is normal and natural to "make mistakes" as a parent; making mistakes within an overall loving, respecting, and sympathetic parent-child relationship need not necessarily hurt the child. In fact, in such a relationship, how the mistake is handled between the child and parent and what kind of dialogue occurs and develops between them can be highly growth-promoting!

Finally it should be said that these Workshops are meant to be information-imparting and useful. They are intended to provide parents with much information about normal children and their normal needs that can and should be a part of the parents' knowledge base when interacting with their children. Good, growth-promoting parenting is now well known to be the most powerful means to lessen the frequency and mitigate the intensity of *experience-derived-emotional disorders* in children.

We hope that these materials will be useful in a multitude of settings with vastly differing audiences. **Instructors must be cognizant and respectful of, and attuned and sympathetic to ethnic specific mores and customs** of the Workshops participants, and could usefully refer to local idioms, proverbs, lullabies, cultural heroes, etc. to illustrate any points further. It is important that Workshop instructors, where possible, come from the participants' communities, and that both instructors and participants will come from all walks of life, all socio-economic levels, ethnic groups and from all nationalities. With respect paid to our differences it is our intention that full attention be paid to what we all share in common which is the present and future well-being of our children. Growth-promoting parenting aims to optimize every child's inborn givens, to make every child a reasonable and responsible member of society. With this it aims to achieve a better life and a better world for all children, and it is our job to do all we can to achieve this end.

**REFERENCES**


Psychiatric Institute, Philadelphia, PA.


*Volume 1: The Textbook (7 Modules):*

- Introductory Unit, pp. 68.
- Unit 1 -- 0 to 12 Months: *The First Year of Life*, pp. 153.
- Unit 2 -- 1 to 3 Years: *The Toddler Years*, pp. 169.
- Unit 3 -- 3 to 6 Years: *The Preschool Years*, pp. 112.
- Unit 4 -- 6 to 10 Years: *The Elementary School Years*, pp. 74.
- Unit 5 -- 10 to 13 Years: *Prepuberty*, pp. 61.
- Unit 6 -- 13 to 20: *Adolescence*, pp. 107.

*Volume 2: The Lesson Plans (7 Modules) [Incomplete]:*

- Unit 1 for Grades K - 1, pp. 76.
- Unit 1 for Grades 4 - 5, pp. 119.
- Unit 1 for Grade 9 and up, pp. 108.
- Unit 1 Laboratory Manual for Grade 9 and up, pp. 269.
- Unit 2 for Grade 2, pp. 110.
- Unit 2 for Grade 6, pp. 137.
- Unit 2 for Grade 10 and up, pp. 198.
- Unit 2 Laboratory Manual for Grade 10 and up, pp. 354.
- Unit 3 for Grades 7 - 8, pp. 125

Further Lesson Plan Modules being developed.
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GUIDELINES FOR WORKSHOP INSTRUCTORS

Introduction

These Workshops are developed for child caregivers of all kinds, be they parents, daycare caregivers and administrators, teachers, etc. We emphasize that our principal aim is to promote the development of good mental health and constructive adaptation in our children by optimizing the way they are reared, by aiming toward their being reared by growth-promoting parenting.

It is important that the Workshop instructors be sufficiently familiar with psychodynamic schools of thought and the contents of the specific Workshops. For better familiarization they most likely will find the Workshops source materials useful. These sources include Parenting for Emotional Growth: A Curriculum for Students in Grades K Thru 12 1 (the Textbook and/or the Lesson Plans) as well as Aggression in Our Children 2. From these come the materials presented in the "Discussion" sections of the Workshops. The better acquainted with these or similar materials, the better they will be able to not only field the participants' questions, but especially to address the participants' child rearing difficulties, concerns and interests, while at the same time emphasizing the salient points of each Workshop.

In the following Section we will suggest a set of guidelines that we hope will prove useful to the Workshop instructors. These guidelines are drawn from our experiences in conducting educational parent-child groups, from our developing Parenting for Emotional Growth, A Curriculum for Students in Grades K Thru 12, and most recently from presenting some of our Workshops to a widely diverse population in rural Appalachia. In the Appalachia project, the Workshop instructors Cecily Rose-Itkoff, M.A., M.F.T. and William Singletary, M.D. prepared for this event in

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collaboration with Henri Prens, M.D. The guidelines are derived from our shared impressions.

These Workshops can be used in a variety of ways, in total or in part, with flexibility for individual implementation by the Workshop instructors and participants. And they can be used for caregiver training purposes with many different groups of "students". We leave it to the Workshop instructors to find ways to optimize the "fit" of the particular Workshops used and the participants' needs and level of training.

We suggest that it will be helpful to the instructor to bear in mind that these Workshops are models; that is, they can be individually tailored to suit the particular audience that is being addressed. For example, while discussing material under the "Discussion" sections additional questions from the participants can be integrated along with examples drawn from their life experiences. Doing this, the Workshops are more likely to spring to life and take on an immediacy which is most responsive and helpful to the participants. The questions from the participants will typically be "experience-near" and the ways by which the instructors respond and engage the participants in a dialogue can further make the material useful and emotionally meaningful to the participants.

As with any educational and communicational effort, the Workshops are most helpful to participants when the instructors "speak" the language of the group and when they sympathize with the everyday and specific dilemmas, hardships, hopes and aspirations of the participants. Materials are always better taken in when participants are encouraged to raise questions, voice opinions, disagreements, etc. and the instructor, at all times, has a receptive stance toward the input of the participants. It is productive when the instructor conveys to the participants that they can all learn from one another and that the instructor is ready to learn from them.

The following guidelines were useful to us and are offered here as suggestions for optimizing the use of the Workshop format with various audiences.

**Guidelines**

1. As Workshops go, each Set of Workshops in this Series is rather large, consisting of about 8-10 Workshops each. Ideally we would like to see all the Workshops contained in this Series planned over a number of months. Many of you will not be able to present so long a Series except in a long standing parenting educational and/or support setting. Therefore, Workshop selections will need to be made for presentation.

   Each is sufficiently integrated to be able to stand on its own; this applies more readily for some Workshops than for others. The Workshop instructors' task will be facilitated by learning from the participant-audience prior to Workshop time what concerns, difficulties, interests are most pertinent to them. In this way, the selection of Workshops can be more suitably geared toward your particular audience.
2. The instructor will be best prepared the more familiar he/she is with the Workshop materials. Toward this end, instructors are encouraged to become familiar with the *Parenting for Emotional Growth Curriculum Textbook* and *Lesson Plans*. It may be helpful for instructors to pull out the most important themes and "sub-themes" in each Workshop and to articulate them in the instructors' own information imparting manner. These themes can then be emphasized at various appropriate times during the Workshop and can also be reviewed during the final phase of the Workshop. As in all teaching, the firmer the grasp of the subject matter, the easier the presentation, and the freer will the instructors be to attend to participants' interests and to accommodate to the participants' pace of taking in of the materials.

Workshop instructors can expect that participants may ask questions and raise topics for exploration that tap the instructors' entire range of expertise. Instructors need not be able to answer all questions; it is expected that any instructor might not know a particular answer at the time a question is asked. It is perfectly professional to not know an answer and to say so. Furthermore, if time permits, an answer may be provided at another time after some research by the instructors.

3. In conducting these Workshops, especially when done directly with caregivers, it is important that the instructors convey a non-judgmental attitude, aim to supplement knowledge, and re-enforce the strengths already existing within the participant group.

4. Information is much better received and assimilated when the participants know that such information and whatever informed suggestions instructors make are derived from proven child development research complemented by decades' long clinical findings rather than when they are presented in an authoritarian and dogmatic manner.

5. We all rear our children in highly individualistic and extremely personal ways. This is why there often is disagreement among parents in how to deal with specific child rearing situations. And because we invest emotionally so much in our children and the ways we go about doing so, we are all very vulnerable to feel hurt by any criticism or disapproval of our parenting efforts. This is so whether the criticism comes from one's own mother, uncle or neighbor. But it is especially hurtful when criticism comes from "an authority" in parenting education. Disapproval by Workshop instructors is painfully felt by participants—and may even lead to withdrawal from the Workshop. For these reasons it is important to not approach any participant, any question, or any discussion from a position of criticism or disapproval. It is always best to be respectful and to accept disagreement. In fact, we welcome disagreement since disagreement, when well addressed, can lead to a greater degree of clarification of points made.

6. We have found over many years of parenting education with persons who are already parents that making suggestions for a better way of handling any given rearing situation than the one proposed by the parent, that such suggestions are better accepted

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when they are coupled with discernible parenting positives already seen in the particular parent. For instance, "The point you made earlier about (whatever it was) is really on the mark. And, I'd say growth-promoting, to be sure. Here though, you might find it helps your child better to set limits with loving firmness, for this reason (specific reason given)."

7. As mentioned before, these Workshop materials are intended for educational purposes. They are to be used to educate the participants about growth-promoting parenting and how to optimize their child's development. Although the contents of these Workshops can be used in a therapeutic setting in the form of Parental Guidance, these Workshops themselves are not planned to be used for therapeutic purposes and instructors are best advised to use both an educational attitude and their expertise in guiding the discussions.

8. Finding the appropriate balance between personal disclosure and educational goals can be a delicate matter, especially where the subject matter is highly personal as it typically is with many of these Workshops. Skillful collaboration between Workshop instructors, where applicable, and a clear understanding of the purpose of the Workshop should be helpful in this regard. It can also be clarifying to the participants if the educational nature of the Workshop is clearly stated while also encouraging their active involvement. The instructor must use his/her best judgment as to whether and when to introduce things about herself/himself or her/his family.

9. Because the Workshops will likely touch upon personal issues in the participants' lives the Workshop instructor is best advised to have access to information regarding referrals and follow-up in order to be further helpful to participants when and if appropriate and requested.

Knowledge of local agencies and services can also be highly useful. For example, while in Appalachia we were asked for specific advice regarding adjunct services for various cases and were fortunately able to turn to the local sponsors of the Conference to supply this valuable information to the participants when asked.

10. Where there are two instructors in any given Workshop, dividing tasks and labor between the two may be most beneficial. For example, one instructor may guide the formal discussions while the other may direct interactive exercises, role plays, etc. One may be better able to address overt specific, clinical issues while the other may be more attentive to nuances and un-addressed topics. Instructors may want to alternate who has the "Instructor" role and who the "Facilitator" role as well as other tasks.

Parental Guidance is an educational method that can often be highly useful in working with parents of children we see in psychotherapeutic treatments. H. Parens has been teaching this method now for several years to child psychotherapists and psychoanalysts. It is somewhat similar to what S. Fraiberg called Developmental Guidance (in Clinical Studies in Infant Mental Health. Published in 1980 by Basic Books, New York).
These Workshops, of course, can be lead by one instructor quite well and the Workshops are actually written with this in mind. But, depending on the size of the audience, the task may be quite taxing. A skillful team of instructors who work well together can be quite more productive and less taxing on each instructor.

11. It is invaluable to the success of the Workshop to set a congenial learning atmosphere. All educators know this, of course. How the participants view the instructor will depend, in part, on how the instructor portrays him or herself. One instructor may prefer to introduce herself by her first name when addressing the participants and welcome them to do the same. This particular point will, naturally, vary from one Workshop instructor to another and may depend upon a number of different factors. Some participants feel more comfortable if the instructor takes a more formal stance which is, in part, denoted by the use of "Dr.", "Ms." or "Mr.". We feel that a professional and helpful stance is always warranted and should not be compromised and that perhaps the use of names can be left up to the preference of both the Workshop instructor and the participants as well as the local custom.

12. While in Appalachia we dressed casually for our work attire but did not dress too informally. In other words, we wanted to dress similarly to the participants (and were told ahead of time that the participants would feel more relaxed with us if we did that) but did not want to convey the impression that we were there to simply take it easy. The seriousness of our work with them was neither diluted nor accentuated by our appearance and we felt that if our choice of attire could further put the participants at ease, we were glad to do that.

13. Being on site away from home, we made ourselves available to the participants throughout the conference. We ate meals with them, socialized with them and even enjoyed some recreational activities together. This of course has to be determined by both invited instructors and participants. When Workshops are conducted in the instructor's home town, one can make oneself available without participating in out-of-Workshop activities. What is important here is not the actual activities, of course, but the instructor's stance in relation to the participants.

14. How the members of the group interact among one another is a critical variable. Group composition can vary widely depending on size, experience, educational levels, ethnic mix, etc. There may be widely varying audiences (as we had in Appalachia) and there may be more homogenous groupings. It may be very useful to screen the group beforehand, if possible, or at the time of the Workshop, to ascertain the group mix as well as what the group's interests and concerns are and the nature of their experiences (personal, professional, etc.) Where possible, the program coordinator can do this and share the results of this process with the instructor while planning the Workshop event.

In Appalachia, we found that some participants wanted to spend more time role-playing and in small discussion groups while others preferred to cover as much of the didactic material as possible. Some members asked for a private viewing of the audio-

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visual materials that we had brought with us and reviewed them after the conference had formally ended. Others voiced the opinion that they would have preferred more time spent on actual skills-building methods. Such issues need to be resolved at the discretion of the instructors even at the risk of displeasing some participants.

15. Joining with the group effectively can also be accomplished through non-verbal means. For instance, in Appalachia we arranged the chairs in a semi-circle to facilitate conversation among the participants. We did not sit behind the table set up for us but pulled our chairs out from behind the table and closer to the participants; we used the table as a place on which to put our teaching materials. In these concrete ways we hoped to be more receptive and available to the group.

16. Workshops are much enhanced when they can be made personally meaningful to the participants. An instructor who feels comfortable doing so can occasionally use personal examples from her/his experiences as a child, as an aunt or uncle, or as a parent; doing this seems to increase the positive interaction between the instructor and participants and also illustrates points and concepts in a tangible manner. Many participants appreciate this teaching method and hear and even accept the material better because it informs the participants of the fact that the instructor has had pertinent experiences which gives more reality to the instructor's information. Likewise, anecdotes either from one's personal or professional life can best illustrate certain principles and increase the participants' understanding of the subject matter.

17. Workshops can be made more lively when the instructor feels comfortable illustrating certain child behaviors, as making young child sounds (e.g., types of infant's cries) or demonstrating particular attitudes and gestures. At times the instructor may choose to emphasize a point by such intoning of a sound or acting out an expression or gestures in an illustrative manner; it usually makes the point more dramatically. Although this is not a requirement, participants generally are engaged by and enjoy the instructor's attempts to illustrate dramatically even if they are amateurish! The instructor can also enlist the help of willing volunteers to assist in such illustrations. An important didactic point can be made more clear through the use of illustration and example.

18. Similarly, if the Discussion text can be augmented by inserting a particular point of much relevance to the participants, such should be done and a good illustration may be very useful to do just that. Generally, participants enjoy learning through examples and the sharing of these; the instructor can use his/her judgment to improvise upon this theme.

In such ways further issues may also be added to the discussions as needed. For example, with a particular group committed to the benefits of breast feeding it is wise for the instructor to ask the group if they think that positive feeding experiences can also occur between a parent and a bottle-fed baby. Lively and productive discussion usually follows this question.

19. Workshops, like with any audience, require of the instructor to be attentive to
how the group is responding and feeling. For example, if participants appear restless, inattentive, unusually quiet, etc. it is often helpful to check with them to see if the material is making sense, if they would like to review a particular point, etc. It can help to briefly review the point that you are making and then to move to where the group's interest lies at that particular time. Although this point is debatable, we feel that it is most important to make and retain an emotional connection with the group and that the actual didactic content is secondary at those moments.

20. When discussing Workshop issues it may be particularly helpful to the participants if specific ages and developmental markers are indicated. It can help participants register the material better when specific age ranges are denoted. Discussion can also focus on differences between age groups and what a parent can realistically expect at a certain age range in terms of the child's emotional and cognitive development.

21. If instructors are addressing participants who generally face similar difficulties (e.g. raising children in an economically depressed environment) the instructor may find it advantageous to emphasize particular points rather than others. For example, in Appalachia socio-economic factors often came up during the Discussion and expression of the participants' reactions and solutions were encouraged. "What qualities make good parents?" was frequently raised and were these qualities primarily of a material nature, of an emotional nature, or what? That is, we talked frequently about whether buying children toys and giving them many material gifts is the most meaningful way of promoting a positive parent-child relationship or whether those "emotional gifts" of respect, understanding, empathy and love are more mental health promoting and socially adaptive. It is noteworthy that many parents from all socio-economic environments tend to give more weight to the importance of material giving than do mental health professionals. We need to convey to parents the enormous value and power of emotional giving to the child's developing mental health and well-being.

22. Using a blackboard or flip-chart can be useful in emphasizing certain points. Hand-outs are usually welcomed by the participants and can increase their ability to absorb the material through the activities of listening and writing. They are often glad to have something in their hands to bring away from the Workshop and this can further enhance recall.

23. Reviewing the Curriculum Lesson Plans (for High School Grades) and choosing various exercises to be either utilized verbally or in writing can be supplemental to the Workshops. This depends on the instructors' preference. In the Appalachia project we chose to use one written exercise from the Lesson Plans in an oral manner and found that this was highly effective especially because it was done with dramatic intonation and gesture. This empathy-enhancing exercise was used to increase participant appreciation of this crucial parenting ability and optimized the educational potential of this Workshop.

24. Finally, and not the least important, instructors are best advised to use all available methods to convey to the participants their respect for their ideas, life experiences, innate wisdom, ethnic specificity and local customs. It is critical that

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participants feel acknowledged and respected by the instructor. There is no place in our work for judgments and criticism.
WORKSHOP # 1

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE -- Part I:
BEGINNINGS OF "CONSCIENCE PROPER"

Question: What is the conscience?
Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: The conscience is an internal (within our own psyches or souls) mental-emotional system of rules of conduct which each of us gradually forms over years of development and which exerts pressure on us, from within ourselves, to behave according to these rules of conduct.

We think of the human conscience as having two inter-related parts or sets of standards, "the conscience proper" (meaning the "conscience itself") and "the ideal self".

1. Our conscience proper holds the rules and standards, the "Do's and Don'ts", by which we guide and govern our own conduct, for instance, "Thou shalt not kill!"

2. Our ideal self has to do with the standards we hold up to ourselves as what each of us feels to be ideal conduct and behavior, and our ideal self-image as a total person.

We feel anxiety when our conduct/behavior falls short of either our conscience proper or our ideal self. But even more important, we feel guilt when we don't comply sufficiently with our conscience proper, and we feel shame when we fall short of complying with the rules we have set up in our ideal self.

We shall discuss the Conscience Proper in this Workshop and the Ideal Self in Workshop #2.

Question: Why is it important that we develop a conscience? What purpose(s) does it serve?
Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: At the very end of the 19th Century, Thomas H. Huxley (1825-1895), an eminent English biologist, proposed that the beginnings of conscience are intimately connected with survival needs. Huxley believed that the drive for pleasure in humans is very powerful and that the need to limit uncontrolled self-indulgent behaviors is essential for the survival of the family--the smallest communal unit.

Using Darwin's Laws of Evolution, Huxley (in Evolution and Ethics, 1893) believed that conscience formation is inherited, that it is "written" in the genes. This is because humans have to develop a sense of what is regarded as right and wrong in their cultures in order to survive in that culture. They have to feel some reaction within themselves when they do or if they are about to do something wrong. This, he proposed, could well be the primordial, inborn, beginnings of a sense of guilt.

Huxley also added that children develop a conscience in order to survive biologically. Being dependent on her/his parents for a long period of time, the child...
comes to feel that he/she must heed the parents' rules of behavior and please them to avoid punishment and, worst of all, the risk of physical (and emotional) abandonment. Developing an awareness of what are "right" and "wrong" behaviors in the eyes of their parents and then themselves and developing a sense of guilt regarding wrong behaviors enabled human beings to survive biologically.

The child's "conscience proper" comes to contain not only the standards set by his/her parents and society but also the prohibitions against desires and wishes that we all have and that, unless restrained, would make it impossible to survive in a civilized society.

Can anyone among us question the large need for every child's developing a reasonable enough conscience in this day and age when so much societal violence is witnessed by each of us everywhere around the globe? Is it that there is less societal morality in our century than before, or has this been the case over centuries past and we are now, by virtue of TV and the ease with which we can see what happens around the globe, able to see that it is there? No doubt other factors play a part as well in our seeing better than before the large need for an increasing level of responsible morality, not hyper morality, in society. Do we not as parents need to insure that our children develop a sufficient degree of such responsible morality?

**Question:** Are children born with a ready-made conscience?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** No. There is much evidence now that the human infant does not have a ready-made conscience at birth. Many mental health professionals today assert that our conscience is not inborn. It must develop.

Many child development researchers and child mental health clinicians hold that the development of conscience is virtually entirely the product of the long term interactions children have with those they value emotionally. The "conscience proper" develops--as does the "ideal self". Conscience development or conscience formation gradually becomes organized especially and predominantly within the context of one's experiences with one's parents and other figures of authority to whom the child is sufficiently emotionally attached.

Conscience formation begins from the earliest months of life on, and goes on for about 30 years.

The degree to which the child is emotionally attached to his parents and the quality of these crucial attachments work together to lead to the degree to which and the kind of conscience any given person develops.

**Question:** Does conscience development occur in School? In the Home? In Church? In the child's peer group? From neighbors?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** All of these make meaningful contributions to the development of conscience. Each has its input, and each has its timetable, i.e., when it has the greatest impact on conscience formation. No doubt the largest input, that which has the longest, the earliest, and the most organizing input, comes from the child's own home. There, it
is from the child's relationships with the members of her/his family of origin. It is for this reason, that addressing the development of conscience in Workshops to optimize parenting is warranted and here undertaken. These Workshops concern themselves solely with what parents can do to optimize their children's conscience formation.

To be sure, religious teachings, peer group experiences, school rules, regulations and what children learn, neighborhood goings-on, also make more or less substantial contributions to conscience formation. However, they come into play in the development of conscience at a quite later date, are not as central as one's family in early and even in later life, which makes them less powerful as determiners of an individual's conscience development. We shall touch on these in Workshop # 5, "Developmental Stages of Conscience Formation".

Our focus in these Workshops, of course, is on what parents can do to optimize their child's development.

Question: Sticking then to family life, what are the earliest contributors (i.e., experiences and what they bring) to the child's conscience formation? There are a number of them.

Answers from workshop participants. Elicit examples.

Discussion: Yes, there are a number of major contributors to conscience formation that play their part from the beginning of life. Let's list them and then let's take them up and talk about them one at a time. Here are some:

1. The internalization of parental dictates. This is the process of buying into what our parents tell us what we can and what we cannot do.

2. Identifications with our most valued caregivers, our parents and perhaps one or two other very valued others, including siblings.

3. Limit-setting and battles of wills. Limit-setting, that big bug-a-boo of child rearing, is a major workshop for the child's learning what she/he can and cannot do. Battles of wills invariably result from parental limit setting. And battles of wills lead to a major arena and opportunity where parents can influence the character of a child's conscience formation. We'll talk about what we mean, why and how these influence conscience formation.

4. Toilet training is also an important developmental task and opportunity for the child's learning what he can do, cannot do, must do, must not do, etc.

So far, we've talked about factors that help a child learn what he/she can and cannot do, must and must not do. This is at a comprehension level children understand well, that some things are good and some are bad. But a sense of morality is more than knowing what one can and cannot do, what is good and bad. A sense of morality has to include knowing what is right and wrong, what is decent and reasonable and what is neither of these, what is uplifting and hope-rendering for family and society and what is hurtful and destructive to these.

This shift in the development of a sense of morality from perceiving things as good and bad to perceiving wishes and behaviors as right and wrong occurs especially under the influence of a remarkable human experience: experiencing love and hate toward the same person(s). This we call ambivalence.

Ambivalence has a complex early development. During the first six years,
ambivalence can usefully be thought of as evolving in two basic conflicts of ambivalence. This, we'll explain later.

Let's take them up one at a time and look at when these impact on the child toward developing conscience.

In this, Workshop #1, we shall talk about the internalization of parental dictates, identifications, and toilet training. After talking about the development of the Ideal Self in Workshop #2, in Workshop #3 we'll talk about limit-setting and battles of wills, and about ambivalence.

**Question:** What is the earliest evidence one sees in children's behaviors of beginning internalization of parental dictates and when do these first appear and continue to impact on conscience formation?

**Answers** from workshop participants. Elicit examples they have to share.

**Discussion:** The earliest elements of this contributor to conscience formation become visible in children's behaviors during the last quarter of the first year of life. They are readily visible in the less than one year old's behavioral responses to the parent's (or other caregiver) telling the infant to not do something the infant is in the process of doing. Observing the infant closely, one can see that the infant gradually learns that a particular action is not allowed; the child's behavior gives evidence that he/she is internalizing the mother's dictate. (Instructor: give example of a toddler's step by step going from doing something the mother then prohibits to somewhat resentfully but acceptingly not doing it in spite of the inner pressure to do so.)

Except with toddlers who are very compliant from the very beginning of life--due to their genetic make-up--in most normal children, a number of repetitions are always needed in order for the toddler to gradually internalize the message.

With this we see the beginnings of the child's developing within his or her own mind the concept that something is not allowed. Eventually this will become based on the acceptance of the parent's loving intentions toward her or his child. During the end of the first year, only the very beginnings of such internalized rules develop.

Thus one of the earliest and most important factors that give rise to conscience formation is the internalization of parental dictates. Such internalization is especially prominent during the first 6 years of life, but where there are good parent-child relationships, internalization of parental dictates will continue even into mid adolescence (15 to 18 years of age).

(Talk about the quality of parent-child relationship here, etc.)

**Question:** What about identification as a contributor to the beginnings of conscience development? Have you seen your young one act like Mom or Dad in the context of setting limits or stating a prohibition with the dog, for instance?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Side by side with being guided by the parental dictates they internalize, the way children behave (the way we all behave), the way they feel about what they should do and should not do also comes from identifications they make with their parents. The

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young child, especially so before the age of 6 years and even into early adolescence, wants to be like, act like, the parents the child loves and admires.

Identification with those we are reared by includes especially, but not always, taking into ourselves our parents' standards of believing and behaving. Thus, for instance, the prejudices and biases children hear and see at home and in their social community often, though not always by any means, become part of their own biases and prejudices. Although these identifications will be seriously challenged during adolescence--when youth needs to find his/her own sense of peer determined identity--, identifications with the parents of childhood continue to be more or less powerful even for life.

In the very young child, in association with identifying with the mother that grows out of giving up the experience of oneness with her, equally important and parallel identifications occur with the father who helps draw the child out of the oneness with mother.

Question: How, do you think, does toilet training contribute to the development of conscience? What have you seen in your own children that would make you think this?

Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: Toilet training makes a significant contribution to the development of conscience by its focus on the toddler learning to comply with a higher-than-before level of parental demand and expectation.

Here's an issue to think about. In some cultures toilet training is undertaken very early, even from the end of the first year of life on. At this time, complying with parental dictates is just beginning and basically consists of learning the most basic "Do's" and "Don'ts". At this age, when Mom says "Don't do this!", it means right here and now. It does not have the greater conscience developing capability of the child's deciding when and where the "Do's" and "Don'ts" will be applied. Toilet training really requires that the toddler make this when and where decision: "It's now I need to go to potty" or, "I don't need to go to potty now." After all, when it is time to comply with the demand that he/she go to the toilet can really only be decided by the toddler; it's his/her bodily needs that call the shots.

In addition, there are other important psychological factors that play a part in toilet training. The child has to let go of certain "body parts" which at certain times in development may cause children anxiety. It is not uncommon for children to have the bizarre thought "What other body parts am I going to be expected to let go of?" or, "If I sit on the potty a lot of things inside me are going to fall out", etc.

All in all, developmentalists have found that it is especially when toilet training is undertaken during the child's third year of life that the great benefits of toilet training for

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Instructor: this idea needs a brief explanatory statement of Separation-Individuation theory. It will serve Workshop instructors well to become well enough acquainted with and be comfortable in stating in a few sentences the basic developmental models we use including Spitz and Bowlby's Attachment theory, Freud's Psychosexual theory, Erikson's Psychosocial theory, Mahler's Separation-Individuation theory, Parens' Aggression

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theory, etc. as these are enormously useful child rearing guides for both instructors and parents. Conscience formation are gotten. The toddler by now is able to weigh *when and where* the "Do's" and "Don'ts" need to be put into effect. Thus toilet training makes demands on the child to comply with expected behaviors that are standard in the child's environment, and that make special demands that the child give up some of her/his own wishes and preferences for *what to do, when to do it, and where*.

Toilet training too occurs step by step and brings with it the internalization of parental wishes, demands, rules of conduct, and goals for the child. Because toilet training brings with it discipline that pertains to the child's own earliest bodily experiences, toilet training makes an important contribution to internalizing how the child is expected to responsibly take care of her/his own body and health.

**Group discussions**

1. **Regarding Beginning Conscience Formation**

   In order to properly evaluate the establishment of the conscience proper in a 1--3 year old one must **look for evidence of the internalization of parental dictates**. For example, consider the following questions as you observe your child:

   1. Does your toddler comply immediately, after 1 repetition, or are more repetitions needed to get him to do what mother tells him to do? (Instructor: be sure parents know that repetitions are needed to get the average normal toddler to comply with Mother's dictate.)
   2. Does your toddler easily accept that there are things that he/she is not allowed to do?
   3. Does your toddler easily learn --i.e., internalize--what he can and what he cannot do?
   4. Does making a demand on your toddler lead to battles of wills? Often? Rarely? Are these battles of wills light, moderate, or heavy weight? We'll talk more about these in Workshop #3.

   **Identification** will also contribute to the development of the conscience proper. Consider the following questions:

   1. Do you see in your toddler's behaviors (vocal, expressions of feelings, gestures, or other) things you yourself do? (These are not just imitations; they often are beginning identifications with things Mother does.)
   2. Do you see behaviors suggestive of identification with Father?
   3. Do you see behaviors in the toddler that are like an older sibling's? Or behaviors that are like a favorite and frequently used substitute caregiver?

Regarding **toilet training** (if it has begun), consider the following questions:

   1. To what degree does your toddler accept the demand that he tell Mom or Dad when he needs to go potty?
   2. How old was the toddler when toilet training was started?
3. Is your toddler making it easy to become toilet trained? Is it that he/she is taking initiative or just that he/she complies easily?

2. Regarding how the parent helps the toddler in conscience formation

In looking at what and how you, as parent, try to optimize your toddler's internalization of parental dictates, look for the following qualities of what you are doing, especially for the emotional tone of your efforts. Parents will have to bravely observe their own behaviors to answer the following questions:

1. How does Mom make her demands on her toddler? Is Mom pleasant or unpleasant? Clear or not so clear? With loving firmness or pleads? With thought about what this could mean to the toddler (empathy) or not thinking it's important to wonder that? The way Mom would like to be talked to if she were the toddler or does Mom forget to think about this? Etc.
2. Does Mom expect compliance immediately, after 1 repetition, or after more repetitions? How does Mom feel? And how does she react?
3. How does Dad make demands on his toddler? (Same criteria as above.)
4. Does Dad expect compliance immediately, after 1 repetition, or after more repetitions? How does Dad feel and react?
5. Do Mom and Dad think their toddler is learning what he is not allowed to do? Are they pleased? Disappointed?

Regarding identifications that the toddler is making with his/her parents:
1. What are Mom's reactions? When the toddler does something Mom feels good about doing (e.g., comforting)? When the toddler does things Mom does not feel so good about (e.g., yell or use foul words)?
2. What are Dad's reactions? When the toddler does something Dad feels good about doing (e.g., carrying Dad's hammer or briefcase)? When the toddler does things Dad does not feel so good about (e.g., yell or use foul words)?

If toilet training has begun, how did the parent get it started?
1. What did the parent do?
2. What was the quality of what and how this was done?
3. What did the parent do and how did she/he get his/her toddler to accept the demand that the child tell Mom or Dad when he/she needs to go potty?

Other major contributors to the development of conscience will be taken up in Workshop #3 and Workshop #4. Before continuing this exploration of the earliest contributors to conscience formation, in Workshop #2 we must take up that other major part of conscience formation, the development of The Ideal Self and Self Esteem.
WORKSHOP # 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE -- Part II:
THE IDEAL SELF AND SELF-ESTEEM

**Question:** What do we mean by the term "Ideal Self?"

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** The Ideal Self refers to that part of conscience that holds up the image of how the child would view himself most ideally. This ideal self image includes the abilities and powers the child would have as well as the standards of behavior by which the child would find himself to be the most admirable and valued. These, of course, become measures of how the child wishes to be and to live. The Ideal Self holds all the features of the person the child wishes to become. This part of conscience then is quite different from but closely related to that of the "conscience proper" which holds up the standards for morality, for what to do, how to conduct one's life according to what is right and wrong.

The construction of the Ideal Self has a great deal to do with the child's image of the parent whom the child admires and upon whom the child feels totally dependent. This is because the degree to which the loved one is idealized will influence the degree to which the idealized self will be constructed.

To better understand this concept, think of the fact that we all have mental images of who we are. We also all have mental images of who we really want and hope to be, an ideal image of ourselves. This is our Ideal Self; it is a mental representation we hold up to ourselves as a guide for how we are to behave and what we are to do. The closer we get to this ideal model of ourselves, the better our feelings about ourselves, the better our self-esteem. And the greater the distance between our Ideal Self and the way we perceive ourselves today, here and now, the lower our self-esteem.

**Question:** How does that work? What is the relationship between the child's Ideal Self and his self-esteem?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** There is a crucial relationship here. It is that the more the child approaches being like, behaving like his Ideal Self is supposed to, the better the child's self esteem. The more the child does not behave like his Ideal Self holds up to him, the more the child feels shame and then the lower his self-esteem.

**Question:** How does the Ideal Self influence the development of Conscience?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** As we said in Workshop #1, the child's conscience originates, in large part, from his/her relationships with his/her parents, how the parents behave and the standards
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by which they live. Due to the processes of internalization and identification (discussed in Workshop #1) their images, behaviors, dictates, and living standards are taken into the child's mind and made a part of the child's personality. They importantly give shape to the ideal forms of self the child constructs within his/her own psyche. Later, whether the parents are present or not, the ideal images and standards are able to exist within the child's psyche "on their own", acquiring much stability over time.

With its largest beginnings within the family, the Self Image like the Conscience Proper, also gradually become additionally influenced by the peer group (especially in adolescence and young adulthood), by religious teachings, school, and society.

By becoming a set of idealized standards for the child's activities and behaviors, the Ideal Self contributes to the Conscience becoming more or less demanding. If the demands are too high, indeed unachievable, the child's self goals will be unreachable and his/her self-esteem may always be too low. If the demands are not high enough, the child's goals too easily achievable, the challenge will be insufficient and no self-esteem will be generated; here too then, self-esteem is likely to be low. Thus, the standards and demands made by the Ideal Self have to be reasonably achievable but also high enough to make sufficient demands on the self for achievement. The child has to feel her/his goals are worthwhile.

Question: Can we make more clear how this aspect of conscience differs from the Conscience Proper?

Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion:

1. **the Ideal Self** holds up the standards that guide us in our behaviors, in what we do and the way we function, and in how we present ourselves for the world to see.

   The closer we see ourselves act and function to that ideal self, the better our self-esteem. The more distant our behaviors and functioning from that ideal self, the more the feeling of shame and the lower our self-esteem.

2. **The Conscience Proper** holds up to us what is right and wrong. It holds the dictates of behavior so well known from our religious liturgies: "Thou shalt not kill. Etc." It holds our sense of morality, our moral code, what each of us determines is right to do and wrong to do.

   The conscience proper is especially linked with our feelings of guilt. The most central human experience in which guilt is activated in us is when we wish to hurt someone we love, when we wish to or actually destroy someone or something we value. (We'll talk about this especially in Workshop #4.)

   Guilt too is linked with our self-esteem. The more we feel guilt, the lower our self-esteem.

Reminder from Workshop #1: Before age 3 years, or thereabout, the conscience formation, both Conscience Proper and Ideal Self, were determined primarily by the fear of loss of love and of punishment. The child learns what the parent thinks is "good" and "bad" and accepts the parents' dictates in order to earn their approval. Fear of parental disapproval (felt as loss of love) and punishment are the principal motivators in the less than 3 year-old child's acceptance and internalization of parental dictates. What is "bad" is whatever we think or do that might cause us to lose our parents' love or to be punished.
The danger sets in only if and when the parents discover the bad act or thought. From around the age of 3 years the child begins to develop internalized standards of conscience that are no longer based just on what is "good" and "bad" but are based on what is "right" and "wrong", on a more complex and elevated sense of morality. "Good and bad" morality is linked to the Talion Principle: "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth". This development at about 3 years of age is especially fostered by developments we shall talk about in Workshop #4.

**Question:** How does the child develop a mental image of himself?  
**Answers** from workshop participants. What have they observed in their own children?  
**Discussion:** This development depends on a number of factors. First of all, the child comes into the world with **inborn givens**, which make up the child's **temperament**, that shape his/her self-experience from the very beginnings of life. For instance, her/his general state of comfort, the built-in functioning of his/her physiology (bodily systems like digestion, muscular system, allergies, etc.), her/his reactivities (rapid, slow, etc.), her/his thresholds of irritability, his/her ability to organize experience, etc., all these make important contributions to how the child experiences her/himself.

These inborn givens then in combination with the **experiences** the child has, especially in his/her family relationships, will organize in the child's mind into images she has of herself. Where the child's family relationships are good, the normal child's physical and emotional needs will most likely be sufficiently met as a result of which the child will feel good about herself and feel valued. Out of such inner feeling of sufficient gratification and comfort grows a feeling of a self that is comfortable, that feels sufficiently at ease, and sufficiently valued. Where the child's experiences are predominantly too frustrating and poor, so too will the inner feelings such experiences generate enter into that child's self image formation.

**Question:** Do you think that the image the child forms of himself **develops** over time? Or, does it develop once and for all just at the beginning of life? Or does it develop only when one is an adult?  
**Answers** from workshop participants using examples from their own experiences with children and their observations.

**Discussion:** We assume from much research and clinical experience that the forming of an ideal way to be is not at all a static process. It begins from the start of life and continues to change and develop over time as new experiences and new identifications occur.

For instance, by the end of year one, the child has developed some sense of himself, some elements of a self image, and if well cared for, some stabilizing sense of being worthy of good care and nurture. These make for the foundation of a positive mental self image with good self-esteem and make an important contribution to the child's ability and wish to relate well to others from the end of the first year of life on.

During the second and third years, these feelings of self develop further and begin to organize and coalesce into a more complex and capable inner sense of oneself. One can see the child's expectation of comfort when he needs comfort, of care when he needs...
care, of a sense of being a "me" and of things being "mine", verbalized especially during the latter half of the second year. This sense of self now becomes not only better organized and cohesive but also capable of more specific feelings, ideas, wishes, and even goals. A more and more complex mental image of the self is taking shape, components of which are modeled on the many ways the child experiences life, especially in his/her family, with parents and siblings (if such are there).

The toddler develops a cluster of self images representative in the toddler's mind of the varied experiences he is having over time. He has a self image of being a boy, a son, perhaps a sibling, an active child, or a shy child, etc. Each of these has an image of the "best I could be", an ideal version. It's the ideal versions of these that coalesce into the ideal self image formation. All of these factors influence the development within his mind of the way he would most like to be. This ideal self image begins to hold up goals for the child's self development, goals of conduct and of achievement.

**Question:** What are the major contributors that become organized into the child's self esteem from the second and third years of life on?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** There are three major contributors.

1. The first has to do with **self valuing**, a sense of inner value which every child is born with. The degree to which this inborn normal sense of self value (also called "primary narcissism") is reasonably protected by the way parents care for their child, to that degree it is a major contributor to the basic sense of self value. The degree to which this feeling of self valuing stabilizes in the child directly results from the way the child is valued and treated by his or her parents. This also determines the development of basic trust during the first year.

2. The second major contributor toward the quality of the child's self esteem is tied to the first one. It is the quality of the relationships we have with our primary caregivers, in particular our mother and father. Being valued and loved by those we value and love brings with it a remarkable degree of well-being. This is especially so for the child during the first three years of life when the basic core of self esteem, the basic self image, and the basic ideal self image begin to organize in the child's mind.

3. The third major contributor to self esteem arises from the quality of the developing sense of autonomy, of competence, of effectiveness which the child begins to develop during the second and third years of life. Each accomplishment, each new skill the child masters, each well done thing the child achieves--and the greater the effort needed the greater the feeling of achievement--each conveys to the child a sense of inner valuing that arises from the feeling of successful autonomy. This is in stark contrast to what comes with failures. Failures bring the opposite feeling, the feeling of shame, of being inept and incapable.

**Question:** What does the child feel when she/he experiences shame?

**Answers** from workshop participants. What do the participants feel when they have felt shame? (Instructor: this is an opportunity to highlight the value of empathy in child rearing.)
**Discussion:** Shame is a very painful feeling of distress which always arises when one feels disappointed in oneself. One has not lived up to one's expectations. It often arises from experiences of failure. But it also often arises when we disappoint those we value and those we love. This excruciating feeling brings with it the feeling of not being good enough, not lovable and not deserving of being valued or appreciated. Shame is felt when the child feels he/she is not living up to her/his ideal self image.

This painful feeling begins to be experienced by children during the second year, from about 18 months of age on. Shame directly erodes self esteem.

Parents and other child tenders need to be aware that humiliating the child causes damage and that it will compound the damage the feeling of shame itself already may have created. It is important to not intentionally shame and humiliate the child. Usually, intentionally shaming children does more harm than good and is not a most effective nor a desirable way to help a child learn how to do something well. By contrast, respectfully and lovingly expecting the child to do better, to try harder, and encouraging a toddler's efforts to learn and applaud his/her real successes optimizes learning and encourages the child to correct mistakes and overcome failures.

**Question:** What does the child feel when he/she experiences guilt?

**Answers** from workshop participants. Have they felt guilt?

**Discussion:** The earliest form of guilt is associated with feeling that we have done something wrong. The activity that we feel was wrong may be an actual act, a behavior, or it may be only in our mind, that is, it may be a fantasy or a wish. Because we feel what we did or thought was/is wrong, we fear loss of love and/or punishment and/or even injury.

In its earliest forms, children 1 and 2 years of age usually feel guilt when their parents discover the guilty act or wish and then administer punishment of some form. At this early stage of conscience development the child may not feel guilty if the undesirable act was not discovered. Also, in its earliest form, guilt is not as steadfast as it will become and the young child can readily be talked out of feeling guilty by the parent.

As guilt further develops around age 3-4 years, the child is progressively internalizing the parental standards of conscience and important inner stirrings we shall talk about in Workshop #4 lead to the child's increasingly organizing a sense of morality, of right and wrong, and with it an ability to feel guilt profoundly. From here on, the child experiences pressure from these internal standards; now the child feels guilty even if the act was not discovered or punished. Such weighty guilt feelings come from the child's own internal disapproval of his/her wish or act measured against his/her own moral standards. In addition now, feelings of guilt are not only more weighty, they are also more tenacious, more difficult to undo, and last much longer. Nor, now, is it easy for parents to talk their child out of feeling guilty.

In the Workshop #4 especially we shall talk in more detail about specific feelings and wishes that the child typically experiences which cause much guilt. For now let us say that guilt is felt when we want to hurt or feel hate toward someone we love. Such feelings of guilt begin from about 18 months of age on, emerging when quite normal children experience a substantial amount of hostility toward parents they love dearly.
**Question:** How do shame and guilt influence the child's developing Ideal Self?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** The ability to feel shame and guilt is personally, adaptively, and socially very important. As painful feelings they help the child determine that she/he will not do things, and eventually will not act on thoughts, that bring about these painful feelings. They help the child envision him/herself as a person who does not do things that bring on these feelings. And one sees young children struggle to live by such determinations.

Normal development, adaptation and social living require that we develop the ability to feel these painful feelings. And when developed to a reasonable degree, they can guide us well. But it is also important to not stimulate too much guilt and shame in a child. This is likely to lead the child to develop a too severe conscience with too lofty Ideal Self expectations which will lead to persistent feelings of unworthiness and un-modifiable low self-esteem.

**Question:** What is the role of identification in Ideal Self formation?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** As we talked about in Workshop #1, identification refers to the important process whereby the child wishes to and learns to behave, to do and not to do, through behaving like mother and father do.

*It is well for parents and other valuable caregivers to know that they are modeling behaviors, attitudes and values for the child: the child will identify with her/his parents and therewith behave as the parents do.* In this then, the way the parents are and behave, by identification will be adopted by the child as part of his/her Ideal Self image. It is important for parents to know that the child's identifications contribute most importantly to the complex self image that is taking shape within the young child's psyche (mind).

**Question:** What role does internalization play in Ideal Self formation?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** In very much the same way as identification, internalization of parental dictates brings the "parent into the self" by the child's taking into his/her mind the parents' attitudes, the parents' verbalized "do's" and "don'ts" of everyday life. Though the words are internalized, it is especially the quality of the experience that the child perceives himself/herself to have with the parents which becomes internalized and which will then color the child's experience with the world. In this way then, internalization of the parents' verbalized "Do's and Don'ts" makes a major contribution to the child's Ideal Self formation.

But as all parents know, it is not just what parents *tell* their children to do that becomes internalized. It is not just the parents' dictates. It is especially, by identification, what the parents *do, how they behave*, that gets taken into the child's ways of being. In this way, identification and internalization work hand in hand in contributing to the stuff of which the young child's Ideal Self gets made.

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Group Discussion

Consider the following questions and discuss them in small groups in order to allow useful dialogue among participants.

1. What can a parent do to see to it that their toddler's basic sense of self valuing (primary narcissism) remains reasonably intact? Have any of them seen a toddler's primary narcissism being torn down? (This happens when children are physically or emotionally abused such as by insulting remarks as "You really are a nasty kid!" Or, "You sure are stupid!" Or, the child is beaten for having broken a glass, etc.)

2. What about the quality of their toddler's relationships in the home? What have the parents done to establish the quality of their relationships with their toddlers?

3. Have the participants observed that the better their toddler's developing sense of autonomy, of competence, of effectiveness, the better his/her self-esteem?
   Discuss examples of this and ways that the family did or did not encourage this development.

4. How do the participants feel about genuinely felt positive responsiveness and shows of affection to their children? Do they fear that this will spoil the child? When do they respond affectionately to their child? When do they withhold such response? How does the child react, etc.?

   Discuss "spoiling": give a definition, what causes it, how to handle it, etc.
   How do you distinguish spoiling from shows of genuine feelings of love and appreciation?

5. During limit setting experiences with the child, how does the parent show the child that he/she is still loved and cherished, but that the behavior itself is not being approved of?

   Practice various scenarios illustrating this point. (It is critical that the child feels loved by those that he/she loves--even in the context of troublesome parent-child interactions.)

6. Do the participants support their child's efforts to do things well, to do things by themselves? Are the children complimented when they do things well and/or by themselves? What if the child has not done the task well? How do they react?

   Practice various scenarios illustrating this point.

Review salient points of workshop.
WORKSHOP # 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE -- Part III:
AMBIVALENCE, ITS ROLE IN CONSCIENCE FORMATION

Instructor's Introduction:

Another major contributor to conscience formation comes from the experience of wanting to hurt, and even in moments of high intensity of wanting to destroy someone the child values and loves. Of course, in most young children this wish to destroy is a very short-lived wish; usually it comes in a flash, and when the rage the child feels subsides that wish subsides too. As we said in Workshop #1, this wish to hurt someone we value, to feel hate toward someone we love is called ambivalence.

In Workshop #1 we've talked about factors that help a child learn what he/she can and cannot do, must and must not do. This is at the basic level children understand well, that some things are good and some are bad. But a sense of morality is more than knowing what one can and cannot do, what is good and bad. A sense of morality has to include knowing what is right and wrong, what is decent and reasonable and what is neither of these, what is uplifting and hope-rendering for family and society and what is hurtful and destructive to these.

This shift in the development of a sense of morality from perceiving things as good and bad to perceiving wishes and behaviors as right and wrong occurs especially under the influence of this remarkable and unavoidable human experience: experiencing love and hate toward the same person(s), experiencing ambivalence.

Question: Have you seen instances in your toddler when you have felt your toddler wants to hurt you? Have you at times felt your young child hates you?

Answers from participants. Gently urge for examples.

Discussion: No doubt you have at times responsibly, when needed, made demands, set limits, or in one way or another deprived your child of what the child wants. With this, you have no doubt found that your child reacts with anger, even with hostility toward you. Many normal toddlers even have rage reactions when limits are set.

In fact, setting limits is by far the most common and frequent parent child interaction that generates hostile feelings in the child toward his/her parents. It unavoidably stirs up feelings of hostility toward the parent the toddler loves. It produces ambivalence in the child. And, this ambivalence is the principal producer of guilt. Feeling guilt is the mark of the child's having a conscience reaction. Therefore, when the child feels guilt it means that he/she has developed a substantial internal structuring of conscience.

As we noted in Workshop #2, guilt is felt when the child feels he has done something "wrong". Its central dynamic is the child's feeling hate toward someone he

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loves or wanting to cause harm to someone valued. This begins at home and gradually becomes generalized to society. Guilt, therefore, is socially valuable. It inhibits our wishes to harm others. But even more than that, guilt is personally valuable. It protects us against doing things that will undermine our self esteem and makes us fear the world we live in.

**Question:** Can one feel too little or too much guilt?  
**Answers** from participants.  
**Discussion:** Yes, one can feel **too little guilt**. But in trying to assess if someone is feeling too little guilt, one has to know how old the child is. We have emphasized that conscience **develops**. The six month old cannot yet feel guilt. That ability is not yet developed. Given our assumption of the key guilt producing dynamic, namely, hating someone we love produces guilt, or ambivalence produces guilt, guilt begins to develop when the toddler is able to feel ambivalence, at earliest from about 12 to 18 months of age. But from then on, one should begin to see reactions of ill-feeling in a child when he hurts Mother, Father, or a sibling. Too little a reaction of ill-feeling may generalize to being untroubled when harm others, harming others then comes too easily and becomes socially risky.

Equally troubling is feeling **too much guilt**. Too much guilt is the cause of many neurotic problems in people. It can lead to unreasonable self-punishment, inhibitions of success, under-achievements, depression, suicide, and more. Thus inducing the development of too much guilt in children produces a serious handicap to their healthy development.

For this and other reasons, the way parents set limits has important implications. (Instructor: You will have to determine whether or not Workshop #5 from the set of *Workshops on Aggression*, Setting Limits Constructively -- Protecting Healthy Assertiveness, ought to be considered for these participants. If it should, it will require an additional Workshop session.)

**Question:** Here are a couple of very tough questions: Do you think it is possible to rear children so that they never get angry with or feel hostility and hate toward their Moms or Dads? Do you think it is possible for good, responsible parents to rear their children in such a way as to never get angry, and even to feel hostile toward the children they love?  
**Answers** from participants. Try to get their views on this.  
**Discussion:** It is impossible to rear children in such a way that they never feel hostility and even hate toward the parents they love. Here's why.

**Ambivalence** has a complex early development that can usefully be thought of as evolving in the course of the child's experiencing two basic conflicts of ambivalence. Let's talk about these now.

**The first conflict of ambivalence**, which every child experiences to a greater or lesser degree, emerges when the child's marvelous thrust to autonomy leads him to want to do things which the responsible parent feels could hurt the child, someone else or harm something valuable.
Many years of child observation leads us to say that 10 month olds are not just drawn by curiosity to explore things. They are driven from within, by an inner push to understand and gain mastery over themselves and the universe into which they were born. This inner push, we say is driven by non-destructive aggression, and is what is visible in the child's behaviors as the child's **thrust to autonomy**, the inner thrust to become a self with powers to initiate a plan, put it into action and do what is required to reach a goal. In short then, the child is driven to explore and gain some degree of mastery over the unknown.

But Mother and Father, loving their child, are driven to protect the young child who means so much to them. When the child puts himself, others, or valued things at risk, responsible parents will step in and protect the child by telling her she is not allowed to do this or that. This is absolutely necessary. Children need to learn what is not safe or not reasonable for them to do.

Oh, oh. But doesn't that create a problem? Indeed it does! This is the basic dynamic that underlies all **battles of wills** between parents and child. This creates many problems for both child and parents. But regarding the child's conscience formation, what matters is this.

1. The battles of wills are experienced by both child and parent as an **inter-personal conflict**, a conflict **between two people**.

2. But the child (and usually the parent too) is burdened by more than having a conflict with his Mom or Dad. He also now feels angry, if not outright hostile toward the Mom/Dad he loves. He feels an **intra-psychic conflict**, a conflict **within himself**. The conflict is a **conflict due to ambivalence**: he wants to hurt the Mom/Dad he loves! This is a conflict within himself that arises out of his relationship with one other person at a time, his Mom or his Dad. Each such conflict is a two-some, or a **dyadic** conflict.

This is the **first conflict of ambivalence** that every child begins to experience to a greater or lesser degree from about the end of the first year of life on. It is in this way that even in the best of parent-child relationships, it is unavoidable that children get angry and even hostile and feel hate toward the parents they love. It is also here that most good parents come to feel anger, even hostility toward the children they love. They too feel ambivalence toward the child they love, and with it they feel guilt.

We shall take up the other major normal conflict of ambivalence, the **second conflict of ambivalence** in Workshop #4.

(Instructor: again note here how crucial it is for parents to learn to set limits constructively, i.e., to handle what induces and causes battles of wills constructively.)

**Question:** What **role do parents have** in securing the healthy beginnings of conscience formation in their child?

**Answers** from workshop participants using examples from their own experiences with their children.

**Discussion:** Parents play a vital role in their child's conscience formation because the quality of the relationships the child forms with them especially importantly influences the quality of the child's beginning conscience development. The better and more stable the feelings of love, respect, and efforts to understand the child on the part of the parents, the greater the chances that the child's feelings toward the parents will be ones of love,
respect, and the child too will make efforts to understand what and why the parent is doing what she/he is doing. With this, the better the chances that a responsible and reasonable conscience will begin to be formed, and with this the better the child's self esteem.

Or, the greater the feelings of hostility and hate mutually felt between child and parents, the lesser the respect and consideration in interactions, the more will the child feel hostile toward Mother and Father. With this, the greater will be the ambivalence (the mix of love and hate feelings) the child feels and the more does the child take this hostility into his conscience. Intense hostility within the child then leads to harshness within the conscience that is being formed, the harsher the earliest self-recriminations, the harsher the hate toward the self, and the lower the self-esteem. The equally critical risk is that if the hate the child feels becomes too large and the love feelings too weak, the less the actual development of conscience within the child, the less the development of a responsible sense of morality.

Thus, parents have the task along with the child, of securing the development of a reasonable conscience, one that is neither too weak nor too rigid, too unconcerned nor too punitive, neither too lax in expectations nor too (unreasonably) demanding.

**Question:** How can parents do this; what parental attitudes will best secure the development of a reasonable conscience within their child?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** When the child has not followed a rule, for example, the reaction of the primary caregivers, Mother and Father especially, will profoundly influence the child's own reaction to his or her own behavior. (Instructor: point to the fact that again we come back to the issue of setting limit constructively.) If mother or father is too harsh, the child is very likely to internalize this reaction into his or her budding conscience. If the parent is too lax, that attitude too is very likely to be internalized.

It is not just the words of the mother's dictates that the child internalizes into what will become part of the child's conscience. It is the entire experience, or scene, as the child perceives it to be, with all the feelings the child has; this is what becomes internalized into the child's conscience.

Thus, the more positive the emotional quality of these experiences, the more the parents' limits are set with feelings of reasonableness and with loving firmness when needed, the more lovingly firm and reasonable, the feelings that become part of the "Do's" and "Don'ts", of the child's conscience. The more hostile and hateful the feelings of these experiences, the more hostile the feelings that enter into the formation of the conscience.

**Question:** How does having a healthy conscience or an unhealthy (too harsh, too lax, etc.) conscience affect the quality of life?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** First, we all need a conscience to live responsibly, by acceptable principles in Society. Without this, human beings would be unable to cooperate reasonably together and life as we know it would be much more chaotic and lawless than it already is.
A healthy conscience guides us, indeed protects us against doing things we should not do, such as do violence to others and to ourselves. As we said before, too harsh a conscience will make us too critical not only of ourselves but also of others, is very likely to make us feel depressed and feel "evil", make us feel unlovable, interfere with our working well and reach the reasonable attainment of our goals; it may even lead to suicide.

**Question:** Does a **healthy attachment** by the child to his/her parents, part and parcel of positive child-parent relationships, contribute to the child's conscience formation?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Absolutely! It bears repeating that the quality of the child's relationships importantly influences the quality of the beginnings of conscience that develop. The key factor in **positively** internalizing the dictates of the parents and in the gradual identification of the child with the parent is the degree to which the person who prohibits or disapproves is positively emotionally valued by the child. When these dictates are made by someone whom the child values and loves most, the firmer and more secure their internalization will be.

On the other hand, children who are not sufficiently or are too negatively attached to at least one caregiver, be it a mother, father, or someone else, may develop a conscience only minimally or not at all. Such children will then not be governed by a social moral code of behavior and will not be motivated to comply with demands, rules, and laws of school and society. From these children come most of our criminals.

The same holds true for children who are excessively hurt during these early years, who then develop insufficient feelings of love for others associated with large loads of hate toward others. As a result, they develop a conscience that condones and make directing hate feelings toward others feel reasonable and deserved. In this way, children who are abused by those that they are naturally prepared to love, their own parents, are likely to develop a conscience that condones hating and destroying others. And, it is well known now that about 50% of these children will in turn become abusing parents.

**Question:** Even though we have not yet covered all major areas of conscience formation, we can already ask: What, then, is the **main arena** in which a child's conscience becomes formed?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Conscience develops, gradually, predominantly through the child's interactions with her/his parents. The type of conscience a child develops comes predominantly from two sources, or two aspects of the same source: (1) the degree to which he/she is emotionally attached to his parents; (2) the quality of these crucial attachments. Let's make sure we're on the same wave length by discussing these briefly.

1. The **degree of attachment**: although infants are born with a strong built-in need and immediate readiness to attach (to form an emotional "bond"), they need the parents to respond actively with love, nurture, comforting, and all those things that are a parent's responsibilities. If parents are unable to respond actively enough, the **degree** to
which that attachment develops is most likely to be less stable and strong than is best for both child and parent. Then, feeling not cared for enough by those the child most depends on, the child may well develop a sense of not caring enough for others. This "caring for others" is at the core of a good sense of conscience.

2. The quality of attachments: there are two crucial factors that give quality to attachment: (a) the security in that attachment, and (b) the quality given to it by how much the child is loved versus hated by the parent, by how ambivalent the parents feel toward their child. The less the child feels secure in his/her attachments, the more he/she is likely to feel anxiety, fear, resentment, and all that goes toward creating hostility and hate in that child.

As we have emphasized, this hostility and hate will enter into the quality of his/her conscience and he/she will develop a hostile conscience and a harsh but weak sense of morality.

Question: Are there any inborn (genetic) factors that contribute to how a conscience will form?

Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: Absolutely. A number of inborn factors will contribute to how the conscience will form, whether readily or with difficulty. For instance, children born with greater sensitivities will be more responsive to how others feel and as a result will be more quickly aware of and responsive to what their parents feel, expect, say and do. As time goes by, this will also apply to how peers feel and react.

Another factor, for instance, is that the infant who is born with the strong inner need "to have or do what he wants when he wants" will have greater difficulty complying with what the parents demand and expect and is likely to develop an internalized conflict over compliance—which will bring with it an insufficient ability to comply reasonably with the demands of school and society including peer relations, the law, etc. The "Do's" and "Don'ts" may be insufficiently predictable or too rigid.

Group Discussions

1. Regarding the Child's Experience of Ambivalence

In order to evaluate the progress of conscience formation in your child, consider the following:

(1) Does your toddler show much intense hostility or hate toward Mom?
(2) Does your toddler show much intense hostility or hate toward Dad?
(3) When your toddler has had a battle of wills with Mom or Dad, have you seen any signs of remorse (guilt)? (Look for sadness, wanting to be comforted, trying to make up, versus staying angry for quite a while after, long periods of pouting, not trying to make up, etc.)

2. Regarding How the Parent Helps the Child Deal with Feelings of Ambivalence

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(1) How does Mom react to her toddler showing moments of intense hostility or hate toward her?
   (2) How does Dad react to his toddler showing moments of intense hostility or hate toward him?
   (3) After a battle of wills, how do Mom or Dad react or respond to any signs of remorse (guilt) in their toddler?
       Do they try to comfort?
       Do they try to help their toddler make up?
       Do the Mom and Dad have the ability to forgive, or do they stay angry for quite a while after or have long periods of not talking to their toddler, not trying to make up, etc?

Role-plays and Group Discussion

Consider the following scenarios. Bear in mind:
   How can you, the participants, effect a positive development in your toddler's ability to learn what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior?
   Consider and discuss if your toddlers are able to sort out what is "right" from what is "wrong". (The ability to learn moral distinctions occurs at a later stage of development, between ages 3 to 6 years.)

1. The internalization of parental dictates such as the verbal command "Don't touch the stove!" Workshop participants supply examples from their everyday experiences and practice helpfully guiding the child.

2. Using instances of **battles of wills** or simply of **limit setting** with their toddlers. Workshop participants supply examples from their everyday experiences and practice constructive methods of limit setting and how to help the toddler learn what he may and may not do.

3. Discuss positive ways to help the child in the major task of **toilet training**.

4. Discuss growth-enhancing ways to handle feelings of hostility and hate from the toddler toward Mom or Dad.

Group Discussion

1. Can a parent be "too strict?" How do you think being too strict would affect the child and his/her growing conscience?
2. Can a parent be "too easy?" How might that affect a child and his/her growing conscience?
3. What would happen to a child's conscience formation if the parent changes his/her mind all the time (what is right today is wrong tomorrow)?
Conclusion: Healthy conscience formation is much facilitated when the parents expect their toddlers to comply with reasonable dictates, reasonable "Do's" and "Don'ts", clear explanations of what is allowed and what is not, firm-enough and loving limit setting and readiness to talk with the child, being consistent in their own behavior, and being moderate but sufficient in their privilege withdrawal (punishment.)
WORKSHOP # 4

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE -- Part IV: "THE FAMILY ROMANCE" AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONSCIENCE FORMATION

Instructor's Introduction, Part 1:

As we have said, like all aspects of human personality formation, conscience formation develops over time. During the first 3 years substantial elements of conscience develop within the child's psyche. We detailed two major points pertaining to conscience formation in Workshops #1, #2, and #3,

1. That the conscience can be usefully considered to consist of 2 parts
   a. The conscience proper (Workshop #1), and
   b. The ideal self (Workshop #2). And, we also said
2. That during the first 3 years, both parts of conscience are especially developed by means of
   a. The internalization of parental dictates (Workshop #1),
   b. Identifications (Workshop #1),
   c. Toilet training (Workshop #1),
   d. Limit setting and battles of wills (Workshop #3), and especially by
   e. Ambivalence (to hate and/or to wish to harm someone we love, in Workshop #3).

In Workshop #3 we said that **ambivalence is a key experiential factor** that leads to that most remarkable development within the conscience, the recognition and knowledge of the **keystone of morality**, to recognize and know **what in behavior is right and what is wrong**. We noted that the shift within the child's budding conscience of being guided by "what is good and bad"--which is based on the Talion principle, "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth"--to "what is right and wrong" is a large leap into a new level in the sense of morality.¹

In Workshop #3 we said that **ambivalence is the principle producer of guilt** in us and that **guilt is a conscience reaction**. Indeed, psychodynamic thinking is that guilt is one of the two major feelings that tells us that a conscience is being formed; the other such feeling is shame.

In Workshop #3 we also said that one can usefully follow (and conceptualize) the development of ambivalence in the course of two normal basic conflicts, conflicts

¹ One major difference between the Talion principle law and the higher level morality is that the Talion principle is unforgiving; there is no room for explanation, reasoning, atonement and pardon. Advanced morality and social law while acknowledging the Talion principle do not stop there. They allow explanation, reasoning, atonement, and pardon.

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essentially due to the ambivalence they generate in normal children. And we spoke of these as two conflicts of ambivalence.

The first conflict of ambivalence we said arises out of the normal unavoidable battles of wills that develop in all parent-child relationships, that these battles of wills are driven by the child's marvelous thrust to autonomy which runs into conflict with the responsible, loving parent's need to protect and socialize the very young child. (Instructor: use examples, briefly, e.g., toddler reaching for your hot cup of coffee, or your child taking Tommy's truck.) These battles of wills begin from the end of the first year of life and continue well into adolescence. Each of these is in essence a conflict between the child and one parent (although it may be with both parents as one). We say then that it is a dyadic conflict.

In this Workshop we shall talk about the crucial second conflict of ambivalence.

Instructor, field any questions at this point of what has been said so far.

Instructor's Introduction, Part 2:

Between the ages of 3 to 6 years the child's conscience organizes and coalesces into an internal agency of the mind that now increasingly determines the child's conduct and behavior. During the 3 to 6 year period it becomes organized, as we said, at a more importantly advanced level especially under the impact of the experience of ambivalence, and it stabilizes at this new organized level during the 6 to 10 year phase. It is generally not until the 3 to 6 years period that the child begins to develop a conscience that has an authority that arises from within the self. With this, as we said, the child makes her/his own determinations of what is right and what is wrong, the cornerstone of a self-determining sense of morality.

Question: What is the difference between a child's understanding his/her behaviors to be "good/bad" as compared to being "right/wrong"?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: When young children do things for which they fear they will be punished by Mom or Dad, they are operating by the Talion principle. They believe that what they are doing is "bad". They may fear loss of love by Mom or Dad or getting a time out or losing a TV privilege, or much worse. By contrast when they stop themselves from doing something because they fear they will be punished by their parents, they are being "good" and feel they deserve approval from the parents. Behavior that is "good/bad" is determined by the anticipation of approval/punishment by an outside authority.

Behavior that is determined to be "right/wrong" is determined by a much more complex and now internal mental process. It is determined by

1. an empathic principle: "How would I feel if this were done to me?"
2. a judgment, more than a fear: "It's not nice, or proper, or desirable to do this". Or, "Nice kids don't do this!"
3. This judgment comes from within the child her/himself.
4. This judgment comes into play now whether the child actually did or...
simply wished to do what is deemed by the child to be wrong. Now the thought, the wish to do (what is deemed to be wrong) has nearly as much power as the actual deed.

5. The fear of punishment now comes not from outside the self, as from the parents, but comes from within the child him/herself.

**Question:** Can workshop participants provide examples of these various levels of conscience formation in their own children?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Instructor: look for examples of young children operating by the principle that certain behaviors are "good/bad" in contrast to behaviors that are "right/wrong". This may not be so easy.

**Question:** How come this development occurs now? What factors contribute to this development?

**Answers** from participants. Any ideas?

**Discussion:** Two genetically programmed factors play major roles in this conscience development: (1) brain maturation that dramatically increases cognitive functioning, and (2) the emergence of what we are calling "the family romance". Let's take them up now, one at a time.

1. Infant research, especially spear-headed during the 1950s and 1960s by Jean Piaget, the Swiss Psychologist, has found that with entry into the third year of life, children's thinking abilities develop dramatically. With this, children now develop the ability to tell a story, to act out in play a story with so much more detail than before, which leads to children now play with one another rather than in parallel, side by side. With this ability, comes the further development of that crucial adaptive function: fantasy formation. "If I can imagine what might happen if I jump out the window--I'd probably splatter all over the ground--I don't need to do it to find out what the consequences of doing so would be!" Fantasy formation can be life saving. It is at the center of the development of imagination, that essential tool for creative thinking.

**Question:** Give some examples of collaborative play in children. What themes are most commonly played out? (Playing "house" is one of the earliest, with family play themes). Do they see evidence here of the enlargement of the toddler's thinking abilities?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** (Instructor: look for the themes that come up in the participants' examples and comment to the fact that they invariably pertain to important everyday life experiences young children have. We assume, given our experiences, that themes of home life will come up in examples of children's play. Instructors can then go into the second genetically programmed factor that contributes to conscience formation at this age.)

2. We said that the second genetically programmed factor that contributes to conscience formation at this age is the child's family romance.
**Question:** Any idea what we mean by "the child's family romance?"

**Answers** from participants. Any have three or four year olds? Among these, has anyone's child said he/she is going to marry Mom/Dad?

**Discussion:** For reasons we shall explain in a moment, it is very normal for 3 to 5 year olds, and even older children to say that when they grow up they will marry Mom or Dad. This statement tells us that normal children have thoughts and fantasies that emerge around this age, of someday marrying the parent of the other sex. This is what we mean by the normal child's "family romance". (Instructor: where you think it will not create too much anxiety, you can say that this is what Sigmund Freud called the Oedipus Complex.)

But before we explain what makes this emerge at this time, another question.

**Question:** Has anyone with a three or four year old child seen a recent interest in genitals, their own and others? Or the young child touching his/her own genitals with greater persistence and frequency than before? Does anyone worry about her/his child "masturbating"?

**Answers** by participants. (Instructor: gentle encouragement may be needed. No pressure.) Instructor's examples may be useful if there are no volunteers from among participants.

**Discussion:** Here's the second genetically programmed factor in question:

Observational research of normal children between the ages of 1 to 4 years leads many mental health professionals to assume that a specific maturation occurs in the normal child at about 2 to 2 1/2 years of age that has to do with this increased concern about genitals, their own and those of others. Mental health people speak of it as a "differentiation" in the child's sexual development and sexual identity formation.

Just as we all can see that there is a biogenetically-driven "differentiation" or maturation of sexuality that is programmed to occur at puberty which leads to the remarkable physical changes we see in 10 to 13 year olds and thrusts them into adolescence, so too do we assume that there is such a maturation during the third year of life. While it is not as visible anatomically as it is at puberty, it is observable in normal children's behaviors.

Key among the sexual development behaviors we see are not only the concerns, pre-occupations, and anxieties of 2 to 6 year olds with regard to their own and others' genitals, but we also see the stuff that makes for "the family romance".

Here's what gives rise to and what we mean by the child's "family romance"

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We see from the 2 year old's attention to his/her own genitals, as well as those of others, that there is more awareness of these and most likely more physical sensations in those body parts that occur at this time. It is, we assume, due to a biological maturation of the child's sexuality, an infantile form we say, of the young child's normally developing sexuality.

But this biological maturation also brings with it psychological meanings. The biological maturation brings with it sensations and feelings. What feelings, you might wonder? Well, sexual feelings!

**Question:** What did you say, sexual feelings? Have you seen any evidence of sexual feelings in your 3 to 6 year olds?

**Answers** from participants. (Instructor: go gently. Parents are made very anxious by these thoughts. Many will deny behaviors in which such feelings are evident even when they occur right in front of their eyes.)

**Discussion:** What are sexual feelings most a part of? While they have an independent source within the person, that is, they arise out of our brain-genital areas connections, they are inherently and ultimately part of those other remarkable human feelings "that make the world go round" as they say, feelings of love.

So, we are saying that 2 to 6 year olds become capable of feeling sexual feelings, of these feelings having psychological meaning, and that the child will be driven from within to "attach" or "direct" these sexual feelings toward special "others". Given the biological origins and purpose of the sexual drive--the preservation of the species!--, the sexual feelings that arise from the sexual drive are in origin, inherently directed toward "another" or "others".

Well, toward whom do you suppose is the 2 year old child most likely to direct these sexual feelings? Since they are part and parcel of what we call love--remember the song "What is this thing called love?"--to whom will they most become directed and attached? We say, to those to whom the child already is attached, the ones the child already loves affectionately! Toward Mom and Dad, of course! Given the predominant biologically based nature of sexual feelings and observation of children documents this fact: that little girls attach these feelings mostly toward the fathers they love, and little boys do so toward their mothers. This is what gave rise to the 3 year old girl's "fluttering her eye-lashes and saying to her father 'Will you take me to the movies and dancing?"' (Parens et al., 1976), and the 3 year old boy's telling his mother he wishes Daddy would not come home for dinner tonight!

This is the beginning of what we call the normal "child's family romance".

**Question:** Does any of this sound familiar to any of you? Have any of you run into such behaviors in your own children?

**Answers** from participants. (Instructor: if you don't have examples, see the examples we use in Unit 3 Textbook, under Sexual-reproductive development, of Parenting for Emotional Growth: A Curriculum . . . )
Discussion: Many things follow from these behaviors in normal children. But here we want to focus on what all this means with regard to conscience formation.

Question: What bearing does the 2 to 6 year old's having "infantile sexual love feelings" for the parent of the other sex have on conscience formation?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: Are "infantile sexual love feelings" real? Do young children really feel these to a meaningful degree? These questions are answered by a large group of research and clinical mental health professionals with a firm "Yes". In fact, although there are many who consider this view with skepticism, the seriousness of "infantile sexuality" has now been asserted and amply documented since the early 1900s.

Can the 2 to 6 year old's love wishes be gratified? Can Mother say to her 3 year old, "Ok, honey, when you get big, I'll marry you"? Of course not. But the fact is that it is seldom necessary for Mother to say that. In fact, many children may say a few times that when they grow up they'll marry Mom or Dad, but then, they stop doing so. What stops them?

Commonly young children come to feel angry that they are not taken seriously by so important a person as his mother or as her father. In addition, being quite young and still unable to reason as they someday will, 3-4 year olds often feel much jealousy toward the parent of the same sex. This is because they can see that the parent whose special attentions they want, continues to gratify the parent of the same sex, as the child would like to be gratified. One little girl insisted that Father buy her exactly the same dress he had just bought Mother. Many people are skeptical that this happens to young children. The fact is, however, that many psychodynamic clinicians, and others (including writers and philosophers), find much evidence in support of this explanation. To continue with it, here is what follows.

Feeling jealous of Mom, the little girl begins to have serious feelings of hate toward her. But the 3-4 year-old girl also has strong love feelings and admiration for this same mother! What a dilemma! And, the 3-4 year-old boy, feeling jealous of his father, begins to have serious feelings of hate for him. But he also has strong love feelings and admiration for his father. Thus, the child now experiences the second conflict of ambivalence. This conflict of hating someone the child loves is based in a triangular relationship, in a triadic relationship. The little boy adores his mother while linked with this he hates the father he loves. The little girl adores her father while linked with this she hates the mother she loves dearly.

Question: Well, what does all this mess have to do with conscience formation, with what we say is a large step into morality?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: This ambivalence now creates an awful dilemma for the young child. Three year-old Jane at snacks joined a group of peers in talking about whom they are going to marry. The toddlers had initiated this discussion themselves. Jane said she is going to marry her Daddy. After snacks, the toddlers came back into the observation room where the mothers sat. One of the observers who had been in the snack room
innocently enough but not very wisely asked Jane to tell her Mom who she said she is going to marry. Jane's facial expression suddenly sombered. She froze. She just could not speak. As many a child therapist would assume, we inferred that Jane had suddenly become aware of the implications of her wish to marry her mother's husband! Pertinent to this problem is that fact that Jane and Mother, who had a very good relationship since Jane's birth, now seemed to have many disagreeable times together. There were many more conflicts between them than ever before. Jane at times outright taunted her mother by defying Mother and refusing to comply with what Mother told her to do or to not do. Jane showed ample evidence of feelings of ambivalence toward her dear mother.

What we learned to assume happened now is this. Jane felt large hostile feelings toward the mother she loved. She said at one time that she wanted Daddy to take her camping and did not want the rest of the family to come along. There were moments, they did not last long, when she wanted to be rid of her mother and her siblings. But such thoughts, such wishes, made her feel very bad. How does any one of us feel when we want to be rid of someone we love? Invariably we feel very bad. This very bad feeling is guilt. Among the factors that make us feel guilty, none is more powerful than wanting to harm or destroy someone we love deeply, like one's mother or father.

The fact is that this feeling of guilt is not only powerful but it is unavoidable because it comes from within the 3-4 year old child's own mind. The child does not need anyone to say to her/him, "It's terrible that you want to hurt your mother/father!" The child comes to this conclusion on her/his own. In fact, it is futile to tell the child otherwise. From within her/his own mind, the child becomes aware of: "It is very wrong for me to want to hurt the father I love! Nice boys don't want to hurt their fathers." And the girl thinks the same to herself about her mother. In fact, these thoughts and wishes are experienced by the child as so onerous, so unacceptable to the child him/herself, that most children repress these wishes and set themselves the task of gradually resolving them, and make them no longer have such wishes.

But the gains this seemingly awful conflict brings are quite remarkable. And the most remarkable of the gains is that this large reaction of guilt brings about the organization within the child's mind of an agency that tells the child what is right and what is wrong in human relations. It organizes the child's conscience at the new level we have been talking about. In this way, the second conflict of ambivalence makes its enormous contribution to conscience formation.

**Question:** But what paralyzed Jane? Why did she become speechless?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** In addition to her own reaction to the wishes she had and feeling that these wishes were dangerous, we assume that Jane also knew that her mother, and even her father, would not approve of them. The child then fears that the parent will withdraw love from the child. In order to protect herself from these wishes, the child identifies with her parents' fantasied disapproval through her own disapproval of these wishes and being like the parents in declaring that these wishes are not acceptable, they are wrong.

The child's conscience then takes on the child's images of his/her parents' disapproval. This along with their standards for behavior are taken into and made a part of the child's conscience; it becomes part of the child's personality and gradually whether.
the parents are present or not, it is always there functioning in the child.

**Question:** But what made Jane feel so troubled when actually she had *done* nothing; she had only *had thoughts and wishes*?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Jane seemed to dread that her mother would know the thoughts she had, she would know her fantasies and wishes. And it is especially at this time that the distinction between *doing* something bad and *wishing* to do it disappears, since nothing we experience can be hidden from the conscience within us—not even our own thoughts! This is where the notion comes from that a thought, a wish, is equivalent to an act. Of course, they are not in the eyes of the law. Nor are they believed to be equivalent in psychology although some religious teachings hold that they are. But inside our psyches, they feel like the same thing.

For Jane, wishing to be rid of her mother, is what lay behind her dread that mother find out that she wished to marry Daddy. Wishing to destroy someone we value and/or love leads to feelings of guilt and these lead to the establishment of the *conscience proper*, the agency within the self which now becomes capable of approving or disapproving what the self does. This is the morality component of conscience.

The child's long existing love for the parent he or she now experiences as a rival whom the child wishes to be rid of, through the experiences of *empathy and altruism*, and then the fear of retribution by the *loss of love and threat of abandonment by the parent*, are major determiners of the child's setting up a conscience.

The normal, well-cared for child's reaction to these transgressive wishes is usually intense, can be harsh, and even ruthless. The result can be the development of a substantially harsh conscience.

**Instructors** field any questions at this point again.

**Question:** So then, ambivalence, hating or wanting to harm someone one also loves, creates a miserable internal conflict for the child—and for the parent too. But you say that it also is a major contributor to conscience formation. Are you sure it might not be better to just find ways of avoiding our children's developing ambivalent feelings toward us?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** It just can't be avoided. Here are 2 major reasons:

1. Of course, when young children are emotionally/physically abused, it will lay the ground for hate toward the parents. But even in children who are not abused emotionally or physically, **battles of wills** are the first largest *normal* generator of ambivalence children experience. Even in children who are well-cared for. In fact, can responsible parents, parents who take very good care of their children avoid all battles of wills? (Instructor: some examples here may be helpful.) The answer is that *responsible child rearing unavoidably brings with it battles of wills*. The child's genetic dispositions (that give rise to the child's specific temperament) will make these more or less intense, frequent and difficult to resolve.

2. All normal children reared within a family, be it with one or two parent(s), will experience his/her sexual feelings to follow the path forged by the child's affectionate

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love feelings and will therefore, have sexual feelings for his/her parent(s). Every child then experiences his or her own fantasied and wished for family romance. This too unavoidably brings with it, the second conflict of ambivalence. This is so even in families where there is only one parent. Even then, there usually is someone who stands in as Mother's "mate". (Instructor: be prepared to explain this further.)

**Question:** Well then, how can we best deal with ambivalence in our children so that it troubles them least and at the same time helps them develop a good conscience?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Whether there is only one parent or two, from the vantage point of what experience contributes to it, the development of conscience is mostly determined by the quality of the child's relationship to his/her primary caregivers.

Let's start with the influence of qualitatively negative or hostile relatedness. Theorists of conscience formation have proposed that the degree to which the child hates those the child needs for survival, the degree to which hostile destructiveness (intense feelings of hate and hostility) have been generated within the child toward needed caregivers is a large determiner of how harsh the child's conscience will become. We especially find this in children who are insufficiently well cared for and in whom a substantial degree of hostility has accumulated.

Given that conscience formation during the first 6 years period is strongly dependent on stably feeling love for those one transiently hates and wishes to destroy, children whose relationships with their parents have been especially hurtful, rejecting and predominantly hostile, such children's assessment of right and wrong will be distorted by feelings of excessive hostility.

Without a good-enough attachment to (feeling valued by and valuing) the primary caregiver, when the child hates and wishes to destroy the caregiver, the child may feel only a very weak, insufficient feeling of guilt. The child will not feel clearly enough from within "This is wrong!"

Furthermore, children who form little or no attachments, who do not value those who try to care for them, will not only fail to experience reasonable guilt in reaction to their hate and wishes to destroy, and tend to have insufficiently developed consciences, but will also have the predisposition to becoming antisocial, delinquent individuals.

A conscience can be too weak and it can be too harsh.

**Question:** Well then, given that ambivalence is unavoidable, and that hostile relatedness will negatively influence conscience formation possibly making it too harsh or too weak, what can the parent(s) do that is most securing of the child's developing a healthy conscience?

**Answers** from participants. Have participants observed the influence of positive attachments and its opposite?

**Discussion:** Loving well a parent (or other caregiver) by whom the child feels well loved is essential to and predictive of healthy conscience formation. Well cared for children who are forming stable positive emotional attachments and feel loved and respected will have a strong inner source of containing transient experiences of hostility and even hate.
that develop in normal children. We have said that conscience will get a powerful developmental push in reaction to their family romance conflict during the 3 to 6 years period. Hate toward a loved parent is not at all uncommon then; feelings of envy and jealousy do this to us. They make us hate. Stable love and admiration for the parent will lead the child to challenge the feelings of hate and the wish to hurt the loved parent. The child will, from within the child's own psyche, strongly object, declare undesirable, unacceptable, and **wrong** those feelings of hate and wishes to harm or destroy.

**Instructors reiterate:** We are describing normal developmental processes which typically occur during the child's first 6 years of life. As adults we often do not remember these feelings consciously although they frequently continue to impact on our actions and emotions. In mental health, these feelings have been said to be "unforgettable and unrememberable."

Parents are best equipped to handle these normal developmental crises with knowledge and ways to promote healthy growth in their children. In this way parents can help their children develop to the best of their potential.

**Question:** Is the development of the **ideal self**, including self image and self esteem, affected by the wishes and fantasies stirred up by "the child's family romance" and the consequences to which these fantasies may lead?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** The fear of loss of love, the fear of being abandoned, in the boy especially the fear of being bodily harmed in punishment for these wishes, and the feelings of guilt especially, give the child an inner sense of urgency to develop not only standards for what is right and wrong, but also standards for the type of person the child wishes to be. From this aspect of experiencing, standards for the self are further developed in a significant way during the 3 to 6 years period.

In addition, this component of conscience gets a contribution especially from the child's identifications with the loved and idealized parent whom the child experiences as a rival and wishes to replace. As examined in earlier Workshops, by means of identification, these wishes are converted into wanting to be like the idealized person the child wishes to replace.

Invariably, the child who well loves his parents idealizes his parents. Thereby, the child makes these parents more grand than they actually are. Now, the degree to which the loved rival is idealized will influence the degree to which the identifying self-image will be idealized. If the idealization of the rival parent is exaggerated (which may be intensified by guilt), the idealized self may also be exaggerated and be too unattainable. This will create a burden for the child because the child's efforts may fall short of achieving the standards set up in that idealized self over the years. Just as the morality component of conscience can be too harsh or too lax, so too the idealized image of the self can be too great and can be too little.

Like with the balance of love and hate in the structuring of the morality component of conscience, so too will love and hate play a part in the development of standards for the self. In other words, the better, the more reasonable the relationship
between child and parent, the better the child feels loved and loves, the less the intensity of hate (because less hostile destructiveness has accumulated over the first three years of life), the closer the child will feel himself/herself to the idealized self and the more positive will the child's current self esteem be.

**Discuss the following Questions:**
1. Have the participants observed their 3 to 6 year old children idealizing them and trying to be like them?
2. How have the children fared when they have not been able to receive the same love privileges as the rival parent?
3. Have they noticed their children's feelings: what are they?
4. How have the participants been able to help their children with these painful emotions?

**Instructor's Summary and Review**

Conscience is an internal mental-emotional system of rules of conduct which we ourselves gradually construct and which exerts internal pressures on us for compliance. The consequence of not complying sufficiently with these internal rules is that we experience feelings that are painful to us and which of themselves then can dictate our behaviors. The cardinal painful feelings include guilt, shame, and anxiety.

We think of conscience as having two parts: (a) the conscience proper which has to do with the "Do's and Don’ts" by which we eventually guide our own conduct, and (b) the ideal self which has to do with what we hold up to ourselves as our ideal conduct and behavior, our ideal self-image as a total person.

We feel anxiety when our conduct/behavior falls short of either our conscience proper or our ideal self. In addition, we feel guilt when we don't comply sufficiently with our conscience proper; and we feel shame when we fall short of complying with the rules we set up in our ideal self.

The beginnings of conscience proper can be seen normally in the child's behaviors during the last months of the first year of life. The infant will by then begin to learn there are things that he is permitted to do, but most important, that there are things that he is not permitted to do.

The development of conscience proper is a process that evolves in large strides during the 1 to 6 years period. Four factors occur during the 1-3 years period which contribute to this development.

**Discuss with workshop participants the four factors:**

1. The toddler *internalizes* the dictates of her parents, the do's and don'ts that are part of everyday life within her family.
   Review and discuss what is *internalization* and why this occurs.

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2. Side by side with the internalization due to learning by conditioning, the child's internalization is influenced by the powerful defense-process of identification with her mother and father.

   Review and discuss what is identification and why this occurs.
   Discuss how limit-setting and the quality of parent-child relatedness around the limit-setting becomes internalized and influences conscience formation and the quality of the way the child learns to control and guide herself.

3. Discuss how the process of toilet training helps the child develop a conscience.

   Discuss how through this process the child gradually accepts the demands made on him and learns to discipline himself in order to please the parents he loves and whose approval every normal child needs. (After a time he finds that he, too, has accepted this and now, like his parents, values not only being clean, but values himself better.)

4. Discuss how the experience of feeling hostility and hate toward the parent the child loves and values contribute importantly to the development of conscience proper.

   Underscore the positive value of emerging guilt due to these hostile feelings and how they indicate that conscience is developing.
   Emphasize that too much guilt, however, will lead to the child developing a too severe conscience and feelings of unworthiness and low self-esteem.
WORKSHOP # 5

CONSCIENCE FORMATION OVER THE YEARS -- INFANCY THROUGH ADOLESCENCE

**Question:** By when does a child's conscience get to be strong enough that the child really knows what's right and what's wrong?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** There is no clear line when this occurs. Society as seen in our laws evidently believes that individuals under 18 years of age cannot be judged by the same standards as adults. People under 18 years who violate laws are tried in Juvenile Courts by standards that are not as demanding as they are for adults. Our belief that they should be able to judge what's right and what's wrong seems to be set at this age.

In the field of Mental Health (Psychiatry, Psychology, Social Work, Psychoanalysis, etc.) we assert that, like all mental (emotional-psychological) development, conscience development starts soon after birth and continues well into adulthood. As we have said in the first 4 Workshops, the child's ability to judge something to be right and wrong, as compared to simply being good and bad, evolves: it seems to begin during the 3 to 6 year period and eventually solidifies by about 18 years.

**Question:** Would it be useful before we go on with conscience development from 6 to 18 or so years to briefly pull together what we've said of it from birth to 6 years?

**Answers** from participants both in terms of the usefulness of this exercise, and if they agree, to detail some of the early development.

**Discussion:** A brief review of conscience formation up to the age of 6 years goes like this:

From near the end of the first year of life on, conscience formation mostly consists of (1) children's internalizing their parents' "Do's" and "Don'ts".

This is added to by (2) the one-year-old's showing evidence of identifying with what the parents do and don't do. For instance, a 12 month old turns to a fussing 10 month old and gently pats her on the back. The gesture and the feelings she conveys are of trying to calm the fussing 10 month old. We have seen the 12 month old's mother do just that to her. At the same time, though not surprisingly, the 12 month old's mother do just that to her. At the same time, though not surprisingly, the 12 month old was not yet able to share some of her cookie with the 10 month old.

(3) Another major factor that comes into operation from about 12 months of age on that powerfully inputs into conscience formation is the unavoidable battle of wills that plagues every parent-child relationship. It brings with it or arises out of the parent's limit-setting which for the child is that most annoying thing parents always seem to be doing, and for the parent is that most miserable of parental tasks! And we said that the central difficulty that comes with these is that each battle of wills brings with it for the child the experience of being angry with someone the child loves and for the mother, that
miserable feeling of being angry with the child she loves. That is then, both child and parent experience that major intrapsychic conflict maker, ambivalence. The silver lining in all this though as we explained in Workshop #3, is that this experience of ambivalence, which is unavoidable in all relationships, has the great asset of contributing to the development of conscience.

Caution here: if the battles of wills are moderate and the ambivalence it causes is moderate, healthy conscience formation will follow. If the battles of wills are too harsh and/or too frequent, large levels of hostility and hate will be generated, ambivalence will be intense, and too harsh conscience formation is likely to follow. These are the earliest factors during the earliest months of the child's life when the toddler's social training begins and the setting down of a foundation for conscience development occurs.

**Question:** What happens to conscience formation in children in whom limit-setting is too harsh?

**Answers** from participants using their experiences and examples, if any.

**Discussion:** Where limit-setting has been too harsh and excessive, these children will internalize this type of experience, an experience over-weighted with harshness and hostility/hate. These children will then become burdened by too harsh and excessively demanding internal dictates that are like the parents' and that bring with them feelings of hostility/hate. These feelings of hostility and hate will be felt not only toward others, but once internalized into their budding conscience, will also be directed toward themselves. They will establish overly criticizing and harsh patterns that will give character to the conscience foundation they will build.

**Question:** What about when the child's behavior during the first 2 1/2 years of life has been insufficiently guided, or insufficiently contained, or supervised inadequately?

**Answers** from workshop participants. What do they imagine would develop here?

**Discussion:** This situation is equally problematic. The child whose behavior has been insufficiently, reasonably contained by parental "Do's and Don'ts" during the first 2 1/2 years of life would develop an insufficient cluster of internalized parental dictates. This may lead to the child's failing to develop reasonable standards by which to behave. Although young children may enjoy being given more than reasonable freedom to do what they want, the chance is large that they will run into trouble by getting hurt too often and/or by getting into too frequent social conflict and be rejected by others, peers and adults.

**Question:** What other major contributors to conscience formation come up during the third year of life?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** As we said in prior Workshops, two more contributors come into play during the third year: (1) toilet training, and (2) the child's emerging "family romance".

1. In the US there is much recognition that toilet training during the third year of
life brings with it major advantages over toilet training during the first and second years of life. This understanding comes to us from much clinical work and research which inform us that physical and psychological developments during the third year of life make it possible for toilet training to be an experience in which the child has much greater control over what he/she can do than before and with it then can assume much more responsibility, use more judgment, and learn self control at a far advanced level than earlier. Toilet training then becomes easier for both child and parent(s), brings with it a greater degree of achievement for the child, builds self confidence, a positive sense of autonomy and makes a major contribution to conscience formation.

**Question:** And what are the major factors in the child's "family romance" that have input into conscience formation? (Instructor: this can be used as an occasion not only for a brief review by participants of the child's "family romance", but especially for some further familiarization with and desensitization against the anxiety talking about the family romance often brings to many parents.)

Let's start with: What very troublesome feelings does the young child experience then?

**Answers** from workshop participants. Can they remember these feelings in themselves and/or have they observed these reactions in their children?

**Discussion:** The family romance brings with it feelings of rivalry, of envy, and with these then feelings of hostility and even hate toward the parent of the same sex, all resulting from the child's profound feelings of hurt and rejection by the parent of the other sex. For these painful feelings, the young child blames the parent who does get the gratification the child yearns for, namely, the parent of the same sex as the child.

**Question:** And what contribution does this make to conscience development in the child?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** What it does is powerful. The hostility and hate the hurt feelings generate in the young child become enormously conflict producing and become a large burden for the child. As a result of the wish to bring harm to the parent of the same sex whom the child also loves deeply, the child develops a deeply felt sense of remorse. From the young child's reaction to her/his wish to destroy the parent the child also loves, deep feelings of guilt, self-accusation, self-hate and self-depreciation set in.

These feelings then bring the young child to set up more or less strict prohibitions against and even serious threats of punishment for transgressions. These reactions during the 2 1/2 to 6 or so year period become organized and structured (become increasingly stable) into the conscience as an autonomous internal system which will now govern the child's behavior. Whereas in the first stage of conscience formation, during the first 2 1/2 years of life, the child gradually learns what he/she can do and cannot do, she/he thinks in terms of being "good" or "bad", now during the 3 to 6 or so year period, the child learns what is right from what is wrong, an extremely important increased capability which underlies the development of morality.
**Question:** Is conscience development done then? Is that it? Or, does conscience development continue? Don't adolescents learn more about what's right and wrong?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Conscience in fact continues to develop even in young adulthood and may even be modified as an adult continues to develop psychologically-emotionally. Let's proceed stage by stage.

The 6 to 10 years of age period is a major time during which the conscience now organized into an internal "agency", stabilizes, achieving a moderately reliable internal source of standards for behavior pertaining to morality.

**Instructors' reminder to the participants:**

Remember, we consider it useful to think of conscience as consisting of two major components. The first is the **Conscience Proper**, which is the determiner of what we come to believe to be our "**Do's"** and "**Don'ts"**, what we consider to be right and wrong, the agency within our minds which governs these crucial aspects of experiencing. It is the part of conscience that has to do with the **sense of morality**.

The second component of conscience is that which holds up the ideal image the child develops for himself, containing the standards of behavior the child idealizes, standards which lead to the child's approving or disapproving of his or her behavior. The closer the child comes to be like this self image, and lives by these idealized standards, the more the child's self-esteem rises. Thus, the feelings the child has about himself/herself are in large part determined by how close to or far from these ideals of being and behaving she/he comes. This component of conscience thus also powerfully co-determines the child's moral behavior.

From the conscience proper, failure to live by internalized standards leads to a feeling of **guilt**. Failure to live by the standards of the ideal self-image, leads to feelings of **shame**. Both contribute jointly to the quality of the child's self-esteem and feelings of inferiority or comfort with the self.

**Instructors continue:**

During the 6 to 10 year period, the developments achieved during the 3 to 6 year period in conscience formation consolidate and gain a new level of stability. During this time period a major brain development leads to a new level of **cognitive functioning** (thinking at a higher level of organization and comprehension) and with it comes an important **pattern of adaptation and coping** which contributes to conscience stabilization. Some developmentalists have observed that young school-age children tend to get into a lot of ritualistic behaviors and begin to set much stock on playing by rules and setting down regulations in interacting with each other. They are also much more receptive to rules and regulations being set down by home life, by school, and in peer relations. (Psychodynamic professionals speak of this as being socially appropriate obsessive-compulsive behavior.)

This age-appropriate tendency helps the process of organizing and setting in order
within the conscience rules and regulations for social interaction and social conduct. As the child adapts to the many demands made on her/him by school, home and peer relationships, so too the child's internal governance with regard to morality firms up, is further organized and, as an internal agency, it is able to approve or disapprove of the child's behavior, thoughts (fantasies), and feelings.

**Question:** What about what you've just said here? That is, now we talk about "the school" and "the peer group" or "peer relations". Haven't most kids already been in school? And haven't they all already had friends and playmates? Why are we talking about these just now?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** It is so that most children by now have already been in school and certainly have had playmates and friends. And they even talk about both a good deal. But two factors make their influence less organizing of the child's experience prior to age 6 than they will have during the 6 to 10 years period and thereafter.

1. Even when younger-than-6-year-old children are in preschool and kindergarten, and when they have one or more friends who become quite meaningful to them, or they have a teacher or daycare caregiver who is very meaningful to them, their primary relationships and the center of their emotional universe are their **nuclear family** (Mom, Dad, and siblings or other constant, devoted and emotionally attached caregivers) and **home**.

2. The second factor is the one mentioned above, namely, the brain development that brings with it a new level of cognitive and adaptive functioning. But this brain development also brings with it a new level of **emotional/psychological** development. This development propels the 5 to 6 year old to bring a close to the child's "family romance", to resolve this child's family drama as best as she/he can now. Genetic programming that governs continuing development makes this demand on the child!

Now, by virtue of the 6 year olds' continuing complex emotional developments, **peer relations and school have a new level of impact during the 6 to 10 year period**.

So, what the child has internalized into conscience formation so far has arisen predominantly from the child's experiencing in the family. The character of the morality the child has acquired is then most determined by the **family morality**.

Now, during the 6 to 10 year period influences from relationships outside of the home begin to have a significant impact. They do not yet attain a level which overrides the importance of family relationships, and therefore are not as impacting on the child's conscience formation as the relationships in the family. This is especially the case where the child's relationships in the family are of good quality. But these **outside the family sources of experience, school and peer relations** begin to make meaningful contributions to the child's stabilizing conscience formation.

In addition, as those who have 6 to 10 year olds know, now, 6 to 10 year olds may begin to select heroic figures from outside the family, be it individuals admired by them from real life or even from cartoon and film heroes/heroines, who begin to add to the child's idealized self image. Every boy has a "superman" figure he would like to be like. Every girl has some "heroine". This impacts more on the ideal self than on the development of morality, but it may link to that too, such as "Superman/Superwoman
never does anything wrong". Often these are associated with things the person does (e.g. being a sports figure, teacher, doctor, fireman, policeman etc.) Where the child's relationships are good, these contributions to the self image are not likely to displace those established earlier; but they add a new dimension to the idealized self image.

**Question:** How come some 6 to 10 year olds refuse to go by the rules set up in school and in peer relations?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** A number of factors can do this.

1. Some children have all along found it more difficult than others to follow instructions and to comply reasonably with their parents' dictates as well as those of preschool teachers. They are more stubborn than others from the very beginning of life--clearly an inborn tendency in them. And they make their own lives and that of their parents more difficult by their resistance to reasonable compliance. Because they tend to get into more battles of wills with their parents than reasonably compliant kids, they tend to accumulate more hostility within themselves and develop more guilt. They are also likely then, as a result of accumulating more hostility and guilt, to develop more severe consciences. (Instructor: you may need to clarify this further.)

2. Children who have poor relationships at home, be they too troubled, or too hostile, or where children are too neglected or abused, may resist internalizing their parents' dictates or they may internalize their parents' dictates the way they experience them, in the spirit of neglect or abuse or hostility, etc.

**Question:** What are likely consequences regarding conscience formation in children whose relationships at home are too troubled or too hostile?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Where children's relationships at home are too troubled or too hostile, these will determine the character of the dictates the child will internalize. These internalized dictates affect the sense of morality developed by the child. The relationships at home will also influence the degree to which the child will attempt to form or avoid forming new relationships outside the home, what kind of relationships they will choose to form, and subsequently internalize rules for behavior from these new relationships, even if they are not well developed relationships. The child will do this in an attempt to supply him/her self with the gratification of basic emotional needs.

Depending on the character of the new relationships, children will lessen or intensify their internalized hostile morality standards. For instance, in children who have internalized much hostility within their conscience, those who can be reached emotionally by more benevolent relationships may, be means of internalization and identifications, internalize some more benevolent modification of the dictates that have already been internalized. These children may adopt a degree of morality more beneficial to them and society.

These children will also develop variable degrees of guilt and shame. Bear in mind that guilt and the potential for feeling shame, in moderate doses, are needed for appropriate socialization. Where children have relationships that are so poor that the
children grow to not value or come to mistrust relatedness, they may develop insufficient
guilt and may discharge hostility without the containing power of a reasonable degree of
guilt (and shame). On the other hand, where children are abused, they will accumulate
much internal hostility and then may develop too intense feelings of guilt and shame.

Recall that **guilt**, the result of criticism from within about things the 6 to 10 year
old does, thinks, and feels, and **shame**, the result of not living up to one's ideal self
image, will be most determining of the child's degree of well-being, the child's self
esteem, and with it the child's moods and dispositions. Too much guilt will make the
child feel quite bad, will interfere with the child's good self esteem and even ability to
work. (It must be borne in mind as a source of bad moods, poor efforts in school, lack of
energy in work and in the development of skills.) Too much guilt also may inhibit a
child's efforts to form relationships with peers and may be a substantial detriment to the
child's healthy adaptation. The same can be said for the child who experiences too
intense feelings of shame.

**Question:** What developments in conscience occur between ages 10-13
(preadolescence)?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** The 10 to 13 year period brings with it a soft loosening of conscience. The
stability of conscience achieved during the 6 to 10 year period becomes increasingly
challenged by the peer group's ways of behaving. The peer group gains increasingly
more importance from preadolescence on. Seeing the peer group's different rules of
interaction and conduct, of play and rivalries, from those of family life leads to the child's
beginning to question the "Do's " and "Don'ts", what is right and what is wrong that
govern family life.

Still, though, during the 10 to 13 year period, the family morality holds the upper
hand over the influences of the peer group. In addition, it is important to bear in mind
that the play of this enlarging influence by the peer group on the child's existing
conscience varies according to the kind of conscience which has developed so far.

In general though, here are some of the developments that occur:

- Standards for the self, both in terms of the conscience proper and the ideal self,
established during the first 10 years may lose some of their stability during the 10 to 13
year period, due to the increasing need for approval and acceptance from peers. (This
factor will become even more important during the adolescent years.) During this 10 to
13 year period, idealization of individuals into heroes and heroines is no longer just
linked up with the idealization of the parents. Nor do imagined heroes like
Superman/Superwoman have as large a sway as they did even two years before.

- People from the enlarging community often become idealized. Teachers, friends
parents, older admired peers, movie/TV heroes/heroines, these gain in value. Of course,
both the morality component of conscience can be too harsh or too low, and the idealized
image of the self can be too great and can be too little.

- Like with the play of love and hate in the structuring of the morality component of
conscience, so too will love and hate play a part in the development of standards for the
self. In essence, the better the relationship between child and parent, the better the child
feels loved and loves, the less the intensity of hate (because less hostile destructiveness

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has accumulated over the first 10 years of life), the closer the child will feel herself/himself to the idealized self, the better will the child's current self-esteem be.

**Question:** What developments of conscience occur during adolescence?  
**Answers** from workshop participants.  

**Discussion:** It is especially during adolescence that the child's internalized representations of the parents in their conscience is most tested and revised against the morality--rules of conduct and values--of the peer group. Interestingly, this is so because the largest restructuring of conscience occurs during the 13 to 21 years of age period. This is due to a number of internal psychological factors that support the transformation of the child into the eventual adult. This is what the 10 years of adolescence really are: the bridging period from childhood into adulthood.

One of the most important tasks of adolescent development is the shift in importance of relationships. Where as up to adolescence the nuclear family has been at the center of the child's relational universe, during adulthood, the center of the individual's relational universe has to be the peer group. It's from the peer group that a mate will be selected for the purposes of preserving the species, for having babies. It is during adolescence that this shift of lessening the centrality of the parents and gradually more and more centralizing peer relations must occur. This is one of the factors that leads to the increased importance of peers and outside world others for more or less reconstituting ones rules of conduct, behavior, both in terms of morality and ideal self imaging.

Individuals vary in the extent to which the morality internalized from the peer group will modify or even dislodge the morality earlier internalized from the parent-child relationship. It is likely that where the relationships between child and parents has been good over time, the influence of the peer group in terms of changing the existing internalized morality is least likely to be bring about large changes.

On the other hand, the more hostile the relationships between parent and child from early childhood on, the more likely the eagerness on the part of the individual to acquire new relationships which will be experienced less painfully, and the greater the impact of these new peer relationships on the modifications of conscience during adolescence. However, here too like during the 10 to 13 year period, the influence of new relationships may go either toward improving or toward further depreciating the sense of morality and the ideal self.

**Question:** Due, in part, to the preadolescent's and adolescent's growing autonomy and differentiation from his/her parents how can the parent best handle the child's experience of hostility and hate toward the parent expressed during this 10-year period of development?  
**Answers** from participants.  

**Discussion:** During this long decade, the child's experience of hostility and hate toward the parent can at times become enormously difficult to withstand.

Like earlier in life, how the parent reacts to such declaration of hostile feelings is critical. The parent who feels so injured that he/she reacts with sharp hostility to the
child is certain to create further hurt in the child with a further intensification of the child's hostile feelings and of guilt. Likewise, the parent who denies what the child says by declaring that the child doesn't mean what he/she said will also create intense feelings of self-criticism in the child. This, because the child may feel: "My mother thinks these feelings are so bad, so unacceptable, that she can't even believe that I would feel this toward her!" In both cases the intensity of the child's counter-reaction against himself/herself will be intensified. This will add to the child's own substantial load of disapproval and self-recrimination.

Like in earlier years, it is important that the parent takes the child's feelings of hate seriously but try to not feel too hurt, at such moments reminding oneself of and trusting the child's long standing shows of affection and declarations of love. Where the parent is able to empathically (based on understanding the child's feelings) tolerate these, and at an appropriate moment--not in the heat of battle--reassure the child that the love the child also feels will win out over the hate, indeed, is certain to help the child resolve his/her feelings of hostility, rage and hate.

Depreciating the child for (reasonably--i.e., in words but not insults) expressing feelings of hostility and hate, inducing guilt and shame beyond what the child will generate himself/herself, will only intensify the harshness of the child's own conscience and will bring with it undue pain of all kinds--self-criticism, self-depreciation, self-hate, disallowing reasonable pleasures, etc.--for years to come. This will make painful reality even more painful by inducing more than reasonable feelings of shame and guilt in the child, all lowering the child's long-term self-esteem.

**Question:** Do the parents themselves continue to have a significant influence on the preadolescent and adolescent child?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** The influence parents can have during their offspring's adolescence is now more limited than it was before. Those parents who over the years made effort to rear their children in growth-promoting ways, with love, respect, sufficient emotional availability and attention, will benefit from the stronger positive influence they will continue to have now, as they have before.

Parents whose relationships with their children in the course of their development has been poor will have much less leverage in influencing their adolescent's behavior and with it have less influence on the revision of conscience which occurs during this developmental period.

In other words, given the decreasing influence parents have on the development of conscience in their child during adolescence, as with those who have talked and

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listened to their children from infancy on, those who have set limits with their children in protective, guiding, respecting and reasonable ways, those who have been emotionally available, loving and respecting of their children from early on in life, they will have a large advantage in continuing to have an input during this era of conscience revision.

**Question:** Why do these parents have a greater advantage?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** There are two primary reasons:

1. Those earlier internalizations coming from identifications with their parents will have greater stability than will those of parents whose relationships with their children have been laden with hostility and hate and

2. During these times of continuing development when parental influence will decrease and peer influence increases, parents who have a positive relationship with their adolescent will be more readily able to counter the negative influences coming from the peer group which will be impacting, often with much pressure, on their adolescent.

This general principle will apply both in terms of the adolescent's thrust to separate from the parents of childhood in the process of individuation, as well as with regard to the adolescent's efforts at shifting his/her valuation and interest to the adolescent peer in preparation for an eventual relationship to a mate in adulthood.

**Question:** Will the parents' own behaviors influence the development of conscience and the construction of the ideal-self in their children?

**Answers** from workshop participants using examples.

**Discussion:** Parents serve their child and themselves best when they bear in mind that how they themselves behave both in terms of morality and in terms of ideal-self behaviors in their own life activities, become models and are among the strongest contributors to how the child as well as the adolescent behave. By continuing identification with their parents, the parents' behaviors will be adopted by their adolescents even at a time when such identification with the parent is at a minimum, namely during mid and possibly late adolescence. Whatever the adolescent's efforts to separate from the parents, their behavior will be taken into account and will continue to have some degree of impact on their adolescent's character formation.
WORKSHOP # 6

LIMIT-SETTING, PUNISHMENT, AND REPARATION --
HOW THEY INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE

Question: How do limit-setting, punishment, and reparation influence the development of conscience?
Answers from participants.
Discussion: We've spoken earlier (Workshop #3) about the role of battles of wills, limit-setting and the ambivalence that these commonly bring to conscience formation: i.e., by the part "hating someone we love" plays in the production of guilt and with it of conscience-building self-recriminations and prohibitions. Now let's look at another aspect of limit-setting to conscience formation.

All three, limit-setting, punishment, and reparation are part of the guidelines parents give their children whereby children learn to behave, learn what they can and cannot do, and what's right and wrong.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

Question: How do you think does limit-setting influence conscience formation? That is, how does limit-setting help the child internalize guidelines to live by safely and constructively?
Answers from participants.
Discussion: We set limits on behalf of the young child where the young child has not yet developed the ability to judge what is a safe or unsafe thing to do, a reasonable or unreasonable thing to do, a fair or unfair, etc. thing to do. By setting limits with this in mind, we give the child explanations, reasons, and make clear that these limits contain guidelines for how we hope the child will learn to behave and make life better for him/herself. When the child then does not comply with these life-improving guidelines, the child will feel the parents' disapproval. With consistent repetitions of this interactional experience then, the child will internalize not only the guideline but also that parental disapproval which automatically follows on not complying with the guideline. Both then, guideline and disapproval when internalized become part of the child's conscience.

Question: Does the way we set limits and the way we disapprove of what our child does affect the kind of conscience she/he develops?
Answers from participants.
Discussion: Some parents believe in being quite strict with their children. Some believe

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A Workshop discussing "Setting Limits Constructively" is developed. It is Workshop

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in letting their children pretty well do whatever they want so long as they don't kill themselves. Others believe that setting limits and expressing disapproval depends upon the situation and that no overriding rules should dominate.

We feel that parents would do best if they tailor their limit-setting, for starts, into a pattern the child will be able to predict.

Second, the pattern should be tailored to the particular young child. For instance, for a moderately active child, a 4 or 5 step limit-setting to punishment strategy, for high-activity children, a 3 step strategy, and for shy children--who need to be encouraged to be assertive--a 6 or 7 step strategy. In other words, aim to optimize the child's response to limit-setting.

The general rules for limit-setting constructively would be helpful to both parents and child (Instructor: see the Workshop "Setting Limits Constructively" referred to in footnote #1). Foremost, (1) don't set limits when they are not needed; (2) set limits with increasing loving-firmness; (3) follow through when the limit is indicated, and retract the limit when you recognize that the limit actually is not needed. And (4) be reasonable and sympathetic in setting limits.

Similarly, in disapproving of the child's behavior, do so to demand a change in behavior, not with the aim of shaming or otherwise hurting your child.

The ways both setting limits and disapproving/approving are done by the parent(s) will become internalized by the child and influence how the child herself/himself will set her/his own limits and self-approve/disapprove.

**Question:** Can a parent be too strict? How do you think being too strict would affect the child? (Gear answers toward the age child being considered by the group.)

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** If the parent is too strict one of two or both things is likely to follow:

1. The young child's natural need to explore, to learn and understand what the world he/she lives in is all about may become discouraged and the thrust to learn may be damaged by it. Clearly the consequences of this can have drastic implications for learning in school and in general.

2. The child is likely to become too anxious about making mistakes, may well feel too ashamed and guilty when he does make one, will fear parental disapproval and punishment, will resent the punishment if he feels it is too harsh, will become too hostile himself, and will develop too strict a conscience himself as he grows older.

Each of these is a very high price to pay!

**Question:** Can a parent be too easy? How might this affect the child?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** A "too easy" parent is very likely to affect the child significantly too. He/she is likely to have a hard time knowing what he/she can/should and can't/shouldn't do and, in particular with a young child, he/she may get into more trouble than need be simply because her/his conscience guiding function hasn't developed well enough to

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guide her/him well enough.

Some children, especially so in adolescence, may come to think that their parents don't care enough about their well-being to uphold rules, standards and regulations for the child/adolescent.

**Question:** What influence would the parent who constantly changes his/her mind have on the child's developing internalized guidelines for behavior?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** The child doesn't get a clear idea of what is allowed, and what is not allowed. The child may develop the feeling that activities and emotions have no sequence, no rhyme or reason, and may feel that the world is a chaotic place where "anything goes" and anything can happen.

As in everything else, parents help their child internalize clear-enough guidelines when they are clear in their explanations of what is allowed and what is not, when they are firm and reasonable in their limits, understanding of the child's mistakes, and when they take the time to talk with their child about what's going on.

**All children need the help of their parents' guidelines while their own consciences are developing.** The best help is that which is given in the form of kind, firm, clear limits, and when needed, moderate punishments.

**Question:** What about punishment? Should children be punished?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Parents would give anything to never have to punish their children! But it doesn't work like that. Unfortunately, even the nicest, most lovable child will at times feel driven to do something the parent will disapprove of, whether it is putting himself at risk (like playing with an electrical outlet), transgressing against another child or sibling (like wanting to play with Tommy's truck when Tommy is playing with it, or shoving his youngest brother who just smashed his block tower for the third time), or breaking Mother's prized vase she'd been told a number of times not to touch. Whatever the child's inborn characteristics (temperament), punishment will sometime be warranted, in fact will be needed.

**Question:** What makes punishment happen? What drives us to punish our children?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** With good-enough parents, and with good-enough children, **punishment always follows on the failure of our limit-setting**—whether we set limits poorly or the child is resisting complying with the limits.

It's when limit-setting fails that we resort to punishment. This is quite reasonable. When parents set a limit, if the child does not comply with it, it is desirable that clear consequences follow. If the parent has decided that the limit is needed--be it to protect the child, socialize the child, or protect against valued things being damaged, etc.--compliance by the child is in the child's best interest. Later, when a teacher says to the child to do a homework assignment we expect that the child will comply, period! It truly
is in the child's best interest to comply with reasonable limits. But many a very good kid 
may for one reason or another--good reasons too--hold his/her ground and not comply. 
The consequence, unless we give up--which is not good for the child--, is punishment. 

It is to minimize the need for punishment that it is important to set limits well, 
reasonably, and constructively (see footnote 1).

Question: How can parents best help conscience development in their children when 
they feel that punishment is warranted?

Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: Like reasonable and constructive limit setting, so too being reasonable and 
constructive in punishment will best help healthy conscience development under those 
circumstances. The aim of punishment should be to emphasize the importance of the 
rule which has been broken, to convey the expectation of compliance, and to make the 
child feel responsible for his/her behavior. The aim of punishment should not be to 
hurt the child physically or emotionally. The quality of punishment, the inherent aim 
of punishment, like with limit-setting, will become internalized and adopted by the 
conscience; the character of the child's conscience will in substantial part become like the 
character of the punishing parent.

Question: What is reasonable and constructive punishment?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: Thinking particularly of conscience formation, reasonable, constructive 
punishments could include scolding (with a brief explanation), taking away a privilege 
such as giving the child a time-out or taking away a favorite TV program, or depriving 
him/her of a treat (e.g. a bed-time story.) Questionably reasonable and less constructive 
punishment is the inflicting of pain. Let's look at punishment more closely.

1. We propose that there are three basic forms of punishment:
   (a) the expression of disapproval, i.e., scolding,
   (b) the withdrawal of a privilege, and
   (c) the inflicting of pain.

Even though parents have times of feeling ineffectual in getting the child they 
love to comply with their dictates, the most powerful punishment they can effect is 
disapproval of their child's behavior. Unfortunately, many a good parent may lose 
sight of this. Disapproval is so powerful because it makes the child feel the threat of loss 
of love from the parent the child loves and whose love the child deeply needs.

Similarly, once the child's conscience becomes sufficiently developed, 
disapproval can eventually also come from the child's own conscience. This is a 
powerful inner governor of our behavior. We may be able to escape the disapproval of 
others, but we can't escape disapproval that comes from within ourselves.

Of the other two, the obvious forms of punishment, the withdrawal of privilege is 
much safer and generally better than the inflicting of pain.

A Workshop discussing "Punishment" more fully is developed. It is Workshop #6 in 

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the set *Workshops On Aggression*.

2. Punishment is **never reasonable** with infants less than 1 year of age.

3. The mildest withdrawal of privilege is the "**time out**". The child has to sit or be in some limited space and stay there for a limited number of minutes. This can work very well with children from 18 months to 6 years. Beyond that age it is generally only weakly effective.

4. When withdrawing a privilege, **be reasonable**: for instance, don't take TV away for more than one program at a time. **Use your judgment**: the older the child, the more difficult she is to set limits with, the more you up the punishment, etc. The younger the child, the more shy or timid, the more slowly you move into punishment.

**Question:** What about inflicting pain to punish? Some Mental Health workers, other professionals, and many parents strongly feel that one should never hit a child. Do you feel that way? **Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Hitting children, inflicting pain is **loaded with problems**. Unfortunately, some bright, energetic young children just will not comply with limits even when privilege withdrawal would seem reasonably dosed. Many of these kids tend to not stop until they get a swat on the bottom. **But**, there have to be **strict rules and limits in physical punishment**:

(a) **Never** use anything other than your **open hand**. A fist is out of order. Belts, sticks, paddles, and all else are out of order too.

(b) Give **no more than one** swat on the bottom of the less than 8 year old.

(c) Always swat on the **clothed** bottom. Do not make the child take off her or his pants! A **moderate** swat on the back of a shoulder can work well enough too.

(d) If you have to physically transport your child to his room, be firm but exert the least force needed.

(e) Physical modes of punishment too easily run into becoming child abuse and parents should **make all efforts possible to avoid child abuse**. **Child abuse cures nothing**; it cripples a lot, both child and parent. And it is the most malignant destroyer of the parent-child relationship. Child abuse is considered to be so serious that medical people have to report cases of child abuse to government agencies.

**Question:** Do you think that children are able to appropriately punish themselves? Can they weigh a reasonable and appropriate punishment? **Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** As the child's conscience is developing, children are unable to have a clear idea as to what might be a fair punishment and what might be a punishment that is too lenient or too severe.

Depending on many factors including what type of conscience has developed thus far, the quality of that conscience (too strict or too lax), the kind of ideal self that the child has created for him/herself, the age of the child and the family that the child lives in, most usually the child is not able to appropriately judge or weigh the degree to which

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he/she should punish himself. For instance, it is not unheard of that a 4 year old caught 15 minutes before dinner with his hand in the cookie box, when asked by Mom what he would do if his child did this, might answer: "Cut off his hand!"

As in many other ways, the child needs the parent to guide him or her in meting out the punishment and in helping the child understand what is appropriate and what is not. Some children tend to be too harsh on themselves while others are not strict enough.

A good guide for the parent is to be reasonable and clear as to the type of punishment and why it is being used. And, it is most important for the child and parent to be able to discuss the punishment together once they begin the healing process.

(Instructor: Consider talking about the fact that it is important to not always assume that the damage or injury the child caused was accidental. "Oh, he didn't mean it", when indeed the child did, gives the child no way of repairing an intentional act, and intensifies the guilt it brings.)

**Question:** What kind of example should the parent try to set for the child when the parent is feeling angry with the child?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** All parents and children get angry at one another at times, but parents can help by being reasonably self-controlled, and by showing the child how he/she can express his/her anger in a reasonable way.

Parents should be ready to "make up", and should be willing to apologize to the child if they have gone too far in the expression of their hostility. These behaviors help preserve the child's self-esteem, and also give the child good models for the development of his/her own ideal-self behaviors.

**Question:** Is the parent "flawed" or "bad" if he/she feels anger or hostility toward her/his own child and expresses it (in reasonable ways)?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Absolutely not! When we speak of optimizing the parent-child relationship we do not mean that children and parents should never be angry with nor feel hostility toward each other. Nor should one avoid ever being angry or hide feeling angry with or feeling hostility toward one another. Anger and hostility in love relationships is unavoidable. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for children who dearly love their parents to at times feel even hate toward them.

Parents should not suppress feelings of anger, hostility, or even hate at the time that these are experienced. But it is important that these feelings be expressed with caution and reasonably. Parents would do well to not tell their children they hate them, even when they momentarily do. This important topic is discussed in several "Aggression" Workshops.

**Question:** Do children "need" to be punished when they do not comply with clearly set limits or when they have done something that has on a number of occasions clearly been disallowed?

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Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: Children need to have a clear idea of what they can and cannot do in order to fully know how far they can go with a particular activity or pursuit. Children "need" to have parents set clear limits on their behavior and to clarify where the boundaries are as well as what the consequences are for trespassing or overriding the limit set.

In this way one can say that children need to be punished when they have done something that is clearly disallowed because it further reinforces the rule, and the principle for which it stands, that was violated. Furthermore, it follows through on the punishment that was "forewarned" if the rule was broken. Children tend to feel enormously guilty when they have violated a dearly held family principle; they feel they have done something wrong and reasonable punishment sometimes relieves this guilt. Children are also relieved when they "test" the parent and see that the parent will do what he/she said he/she would, even if it means that the child the parent loves will be angry or even furious with her/him. It is reassuring to the child to see that the parent is not afraid of the child's anger or hostility (even when the child is terrified of his/her own hostility) and will remain the child's parent in "good times and in bad times."

Question: Is punishment effective in developing an inner sense of morality when it is carried out by someone that the child does not love or value?

Answers from workshop participants.

Discussion: In the course of development, prohibitions and punishments by authorities whom the growing child does not hold in high regard, in short for whom he/she does not feel love, are much weaker in leading to the internalization of a sense of what's right and wrong. Such prohibitions and punishment do not increase the developing inner sense of morality. School authorities, law enforcement agencies know only too well how frequently punishment fails to "teach a lesson of morality" even when it is quite harsh. The most powerful factor responsible for its failure, although there are other contributors, is that the person punished does not value, respect, in short "love" the authority administering the punishment.

Question: If a child has transgressed a well established limit, and has been punished, is there anything he/she can do to more fully undo that mistake/failure? Can the child do anything to "repair" the damage he/she has caused to another and him/herself?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: Absolutely. We all make mistakes. Most mistakes to a greater or lesser degree can be undone or repaired; some can be atoned for.

It is crucial to help the child learn to make efforts to repair, to make up, again in reasonable ways for mistakes the child makes. Such efforts to repair contribute enormously not only to optimizing the parent-child relationship but in helping the child learn how to deal with her/his own unavoidable feelings of anger, hostility and hate toward the parents they love and respect.

Children deeply appreciate their parents' making efforts to repair a hurt either parent may have caused his/her child. Unless injuries have occurred too frequently, have been too severe, children's hurts can genuinely be healed by a parent's efforts to repair.

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In our years of work with children and parents, we have never seen a child ridicule or reject a parent's sincere efforts to repair. Again, unfortunately this will not work in instances where the parents have too severely traumatized their children.

**Question:** What can a child be helped to do to "repair" a misdeed?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** Nothing fancy is needed. An apology that in both words and feelings sounds genuine is a large first step, and often it is enough. Many a child will say "Sorry!" but do so without sounding very sorry at all. That is not acceptable and the child should be so informed. If a somewhat older child has broken a younger sibling's toy, it may be suggested that he/she pay toward buying his little brother the same toy out of his/her own next birthday gift money (assuming he may get some money gifts). Or she/he can do her/his younger sibling a favor that would genuinely please the younger sibling. We should note that the same applies to a younger sibling breaking something that belongs to his/her older brother or sister.

**Question:** How is it helpful to the child to allow the child to make up to the parent, to verbally or in some other way have a chance to "make good" after some misdeed?

**Answers** from workshop participants using examples if warranted.

**Discussion:** It is very helpful for the child to be able to atone for what he/she has done. This activity helps the child take responsibility for his/her actions and to actively take steps to repair whatever damage or injury was caused. Regardless of what method the child chooses to repair the damage or injury (some children like to make the parent a drawing or to do a chore without being reminded, etc.) it is very important for the parent and child to talk about the event, why it occurred, how it made each other feel, etc.

And, it is also very wise and helpful to support and express appreciation for the child's genuine efforts to repair damage or injury he/she caused, whether intentional or accidental.

In other words, it is very important and helpful to the child to, in some way, make up to the parent or sibling; and again, it will be further beneficial to fully discuss the incident and to reach a better understanding of it together.

**Instructors summarize:**

As we have discussed in earlier workshops, guilt pertains to the feeling that we have done something wrong according to our own conscience. This feeling originally derives from the child's fear of punishment by the parents if their misdeed was discovered.

With the older child's ability to discern "right from wrong", going beyond the simpler "good from bad", the punishment becomes built into our character so that if we feel we have violated our own standards, we tend to punish ourselves with feelings of anxiety and rage against ourselves to relieve the guilt feelings. (Instructor: you may need to clarify this idea.)

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The part of our personality that makes us feel guilty is made up of both our internal, unacceptable pressures (drives) and wishes and the standards imposed from our outside world, especially by our parents, religious teachings and other authorities.

There are problems with both too strict a conscience and too lax a conscience.

**Question:** How can parents best help their children develop a realistic conscience?  
**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** According to Dr. Leo Madow, the best way to do this is to first accept responsibility for the act and then, in order to find the best solution to the problem, one must deal with the results in a constructive way.

**Group Discussions**

Discuss with participants constructive ways as compared to destructive ways

(1) of punishing,

(2) of helping children deal with feelings of guilt (e.g. self-torture does not resolve guilt feelings),

(3) of helping children to repair the results of transgressions.

Discuss the child's ability to appropriately punish self.

Discuss the child's need to atone and make reparations.

Discuss parents' reasonable assessment of their child's ability to know right from wrong and good from bad at particular ages.

Discuss failures in punishment when the child does not value the punisher.

( This topic will be fully explored in Workshop #7.)

**Role play** various scenarios illustrating how to help children develop a realistic conscience. Get examples from participants.

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Dr. Leo Madow wrote the book *Guilt: How to Recognize and Cope With It*. Published in 1988 by Jason Aronson Inc.
WORKSHOP # 7

TOWARD OPTIMIZING
THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALITY IN CHILDREN

(Instructor: This Workshop aims to pull things together regarding conscience formation, and to focus on what we think parents most need to do to promote the child's best possible conscience formation.)

Question: What would you say might be the most crucial factors that influence conscience formation?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: All physical and emotional developments depend on two all-determining interacting factors: the child's inborn givens (genetic makeup) and the child's experiences.

At this time, and most likely for a long time to come, there is little we can do about a child's genes and other inborn personality determining factors. On the other hand, there is much, in fact very much, we can do about a child's experiences.

What most determines, shapes and colors our experiences from birth on, and even before birth, occurs in the environment into which we are born and in which we are reared.

Question: What in the young and growing child's environment would you say most influences the quality of experiences the child has?

Answers from participants.

Discussion: Many factors influence the quality of experiences we have, whether we are children or adults. Cultural background, social conditions (e.g., war or peace), economic status, family life, good health or poor health, traumas (e.g., accidents), education, etc.

Among all these factors, Mental Health researchers and clinicians tell us, it is those who populate the environment in which we live who most influence the types of experiences we have. And this is even more so with children.

Quite specifically, the quality of the relationships the child has most determines the quality of the experiences the child has. Mental Health people have found, and have amply documented, that the quality of a child's attachment to the persons who rear the child are heavily determining of the child's personality and ways of adapting to life.

Question: OK, that's for personality development, and even for how kids cope. But what does this have to do with the development of morality?

Answers from participants.

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**Discussion:** Well, in fact, theorists of conscience formation have proposed that this applies perhaps even more so to the development of morality than to other aspects of personality formation. Of all aspects of our personalities, **conscience formation is especially dependent on the kinds of experiences we have within family life.**

For instance, theorists and clinicians assert that the degree to which the child feels unloved, or feels abused, which largely determine the degree to which hostile destructiveness and hate are generated in the child are large determiners of how harsh the conscience will become. And if these hurtful experiences are very intense and frequent, they may lead to the maldevelopment of morality and even to failure of its development.

In this way, then, the child who is insufficiently well cared for and where a substantial degree of hostility has accumulated, the more likely it is that this child will develop a harsh conscience and an intolerant sense of morality. Such a child will be an overly harsh judge of his/her own actions and those of others.

It is also important to note that because conscience formation depends on feeling love for those one at times feels hate for and wishes to destroy, that children whose relationships with their parents have been especially harsh and hurtful, such children's assessment of right and wrong is very likely to be biased by the excessive hostility they feel, and make them merciless judges and harsh punishers of themselves and others.

**Question:** That's scary. But what about the many kids who are real loose about morality? Teenagers and adults who hurt others, break laws, rob and even murder? What's with their sense of morality?

**Answers from participants.**

**Discussion:** That's just as important as some people developing too harsh consciences, people who develop not enough of a sense of morality. In fact, they tend to cause more harm to others than the hyper-moral ones.

Again, the quality of the parent-child relationships is a key factor. Children who form insufficiently secure attachments and have insufficiently positive relationships, who do not value enough those who care for them, may by virtue of the hate they feel tend to develop "unhealthy" consciences. Their consciences may become too harsh or their conscience development may be insufficient. They may then suffer from insufficient guilt in reaction to their hate and wishes to destroy, and will then be predisposed to become antisocial, delinquent individuals.

As we said in Workshop #6, following this line of reasoning, prohibitions and punishments by parents for whom the child does not feel love, does not lead to the internalization of right and wrong, and does not increase a healthy sense of morality. Even harsh punishments will fail due to this factor.

**Question:** Do you think that children who are sufficiently loved, respected and well cared for are likely to develop a healthy conscience and sense of morality?

**Answers from participants.** Try to get to why they think this might be so.

**Discussion:** Many Mental Health workers would say, "absolutely!" They will tell you that the prime determiners of whether a conscience develops into an unhealthy (too weak or too harsh) or a healthy conscience are the degree to which the child feels loved and is

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loved in balance with the degree to which the child hates and feels hated in her/his primary relationships.

As we have emphasized throughout these Workshops, among the experiences the child has, the importance of the quality of the parent-child relationships in determining personality formations cannot be overstated.

**Question:** How can responsible parents disapprove of what their child does without hurting the child's healthy conscience formation?

**Answers** from participants using examples from their experiences.

**Discussion:** Disapproval of our children's behavior at one time or another is unavoidable even in the "best" of kids. Even the easiest and most reasonably compliant children do things that will warrant disapproval, e.g., hitting a sibling, or playing with an electrical outlet, etc. By the way we disapprove of the child's behavior and/or actions, we will contribute to what the child internalizes as part of his or her own disapproving attitudes toward her/himself and toward others.

Conversely, when approving of the child's behavior, the way we parents express our feelings of approval and of love toward our children, not only heavily influences the way the child will experience herself or himself, but also by virtue of the degree to which we stir love within our child for her/himself, just like with hostility or hate, by these expressions of feelings we help determine the quality of our child's own conscience formation. All these feelings, nonverbal and verbal, are registered within the child's establishing conscience during childhood, especially so during the first 6 years of life.

**Question:** What happens when a parent feels really intense anger toward the child: how does this affect the child's developing self-esteem and conscience?

**Answers** from workshop participants. How have they handled strong feelings of anger toward their child?

**Discussion:** All parents, even excellent parents, will sometimes experience strong feelings of anger toward their children. This does not make them "bad" or irresponsible parents. However, the way in which we express our anger to the child will make a big difference in the child's experience with the parent, in the child's learning his/her own ways of expressing his/her own feelings of anger, hostility and even hate, and ultimately in terms of the child's own self image. We know that hostile feelings can be expressed in constructive ways and that this can positively strengthen the child-parent relationship when done well! (Instructor: refer to our Workshops on Aggression #5, #8, and #9 for further in depth discussion of this important topic.)

The challenge to parents, whether in setting limits or in some other way having to oppose the child's wishes, is to do this in growth-promoting ways, in firm and loving rather than hostile limit-setting ways. How this is expressed will influence how the child feels about himself or herself and will make a large contribution to the child's feelings of guilt and shame and the degree to which the child's conscience will become harsh or benevolent.

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**Question:** How can the parent best tolerate and handle the child's experience and expression of hostility and hate toward the parent?

**Answers** from workshop participants. How do they feel they have handled this most constructively?

**Discussion:** During the rearing of our children, from their birth on, our own child's expression of hostility or of hate toward us can be extraordinarily difficult for us, their parents, to feel and tolerate. How we, the parents, react to such expressions of feelings, in deed or in words, is very important.

It is important that the parent be able to **empathically tolerate**—that is, **try to understand what is causing the child to feel what she/he feels and react reasonably**—these declarations and reassure the child that although the child and she feel angry with one another at times, the love they feel for each other most of the time will win out over the short times when the child feels anger, hostility and hate toward Mom (or Dad), just as it is when Mom feels angry with her child.

Depreciating or shaming the child for expressing such feelings induces guilt and shame beyond what the child will generate himself/herself. This will tend to intensify the harshness of the child's own conscience which is likely to cause the child undue pain for many years to come. By how the parents' help or make more difficult the child's dealing with these tough to handle feelings, they tend to, respectively lessen or intensify the child's feelings of guilt and shame. In this, then, they can influence for better or for worse the degree to which their child's conscience becomes healthy and guiding as compared to harsh and crippling.

As we discussed in Workshop #4, the ways of handling the child's experience of his/her family romance-derived wishes and feelings also influence the child's conscience formation, especially by how the parents react to and handle the child's expressions of rivalry and jealousy, as well as of hostility and hate.

Shaming the child when the child expresses painful feelings of rivalry, or feelings of hate usually reveals deep seated feelings of past hurts in the parent and unfortunately contributes to undermining the child's self evaluation, and self-esteem. Given the high level of emotional investment the child makes in his or her fantasied family romance the child is vulnerable to being embarrased, to feeling shame as well as guilt by hurtful or teasing handling of the child's expressions of both family romance thoughts and feelings. Thoughtfulness, respect and love for the child will protect the normally vulnerable 3 to 6 year old against unintended injury at the hands of his or her parents and do so for years to come.

**Thoughtfulness, respect and love for the child will protect the normally vulnerable 3 to 6 year old against unintended injury at the hands of his or her parents and do so for years to come.**

Summing up the parents' handling of the child's expressions of hostility and hate, **understanding what the child's behavior means, what is causing it, consideration and sympathy in determining how to handle the child's hostile behaviors, the use of some warm (non-hostile) humor, being realistic, all can contribute positively to the child's developing a conscience that has a reasonable view of what is right and what is wrong, of demanding responsible conduct in relationships, toward oneself and toward others.**

Regardless of the child's age, helping a child cope constructively with feelings of hostility and hate is critical. If the parent can help the child cope with the hate feelings the child has, that parent will be able to help the child's decreasing degree of guilt and shame and therewith improve well-being and functioning in all spheres of

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development.

**Addressing questions of hostility, allowing a child to feel and to verbalize these feelings of hostility, all for the purpose of helping a child constructively work through these feelings of hostility, is enormously important.**

In families where hostility is rejected as a bad feeling which the child should not have, the child is put at an enormous disadvantage to constructively working through feelings of hostility, resolving the sources which generate it, and therewith decreasing guilt and shame. As said earlier, guilt and shame are strong underminers of well-being, can interfere with a child's evaluation of his/her performance, with a child's efforts to try to learn, to try to form relationships, and more.

**Question:** We've mentioned guilt and shame a good deal now as we talk about conscience formation, are reactions of guilt and shame "normal" or do they just occur in troubled children and families?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Experiences of shame and guilt are unavoidable and occur in all children (and adults) and families. This is because experiences of anger, hostility and even hate are unavoidable in children and families. Even the best adjusted person has to deal with normal, everyday experiences of hostility and therewith also of guilt and shame.

During childhood there will be certain instances and developmental periods that will generate more guilt and shame in the child toward his/her parents than at other times. Again, it will be during those periods that bring with them more frequent occasions of anger and hostility toward the parents the children love. For instance, in the normal course of limit-setting the child is very likely to experience varying degrees of hostility and hate toward the limit-setter. It is the manner in which this hate, hostility and then guilt and shame are handled between the child and the parent that will greatly determine how these painful feelings are resolved.

**Question:** What are the instigators of feelings of hostility and hate and then guilt and shame in the child and, what can the parent do to help the child cope with these?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** All instigators of hostility and hate have the same common factor: it is the experience of **excessive unpleasure**, meaning too much pain (physical or emotional). Excessive unpleasure, excessive emotional pain, of whatever source, generates hostility and hate, and therewith produces guilt.

When parents recognize their child's experience in this way, that the child is actually in pain, they will be better able to reasonably tolerate a child's hostility and hate and consequently they will be better able to help the child talk about what causes the hostility and hate. By talking constructively about these feelings they help diminish their intensity and help the child clarify to himself/herself which experiences are generating the hostility. These experiences with the parent invariably help the child cope with these factors better.
**Question:** What happens if the parent just criticizes the child for being angry or hostile, such as: "You're just a rotten kid!" or "Nice people don't show when they feel angry; they just keep it in!" or "Nice people don't feel hostile"?

**Answers** from workshop participants based upon their own experiences.

**Discussion:** First of all, it's not true that "Nice people don't feel hostile". Parents who are unduly critical of their children's anger, hostility and hate, rob the child of the opportunity to get help from his/her parents on how to deal with these normal feelings, to decrease not only the experience of hostility and hate but also of eroding guilt and shame. Feelings of hostility and hate are best dealt with when they are taken seriously and dealt with **understanding**.

Additionally, parents who are hyper-critical of their children's behaviors, who are insufficiently satisfied with their children's efforts when these efforts are genuine, intensify feelings of hostility, hate as well as guilt and shame.

**Question:** What can parents do to help their child from developing too much guilt and/or shame?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** As the child gets older, especially during the 4 to 10 or so years period, parents can be protective of the child's developing guilt and shame by helping the child learn to tolerate and accept rules and regulations to which the child should comply not only at home but especially in peer relationships as this need for compliance now surfaces daily. For instance, a visiting peer's stirring up one's child to anger by demanding that certain rules be abided by in a game, may be a good opportunity for a parent to benevolently help a child tolerate the displeasure that often comes with having to abide by established rules and regulations that come with that game. Helping a child tolerate disappointment, losing, can be protective against the development of hostility and even rage, and with these further guilt and shame.

**Question:** How can the parent best handle instances where the child's behavior or performance is not up to the level parents want or the parent(s) feel criticism of the child's performance and/or behavior are called for?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Parents can help a child learn to tolerate criticism for insufficiently attained performance, if they do this in a supportive and constructive way. This becomes increasingly important from the beginning of the child's formal education when so many new skills need to be learned.

In order for the parents' demand for better performance to be experienced by the child as helpful (thus constructive), the parent has to make the demand recognizing her/his child's sensitivities, address the criticism in sympathetic tones, even if firmly, with suggestions on how to improve the performance.

Then very important, is to give the child an opportunity to respond to the criticism, to discuss the child's performance with the parent, to let the child complain about the parent's expectations, to express anger in reasonable ways in reaction to the criticism, all these can be very helpful. It is very difficult for anyone of us to be found
wanting in our performance, for someone we admire to tell us we need to do better! We can't expect children to not feel somewhat emotionally wounded by even well intended and well done criticism. It simply hurts our healthy narcissism (pride). This is what invariably makes each of us feel some anger when so criticized.

To prohibit a child from reacting with anger, frustration, disappointment to parental criticism, is to make the child suppress feelings of anger and hostility which can only bring further problems rather than help. Helping the child to express his/her angry feelings in reasonable ways should be part of this difficult undertaking. We say again that it is very important to give the young child an opportunity to talk about things and to have the opportunity to express the feelings he/she has in acceptable ways.

In criticizing one's child, several parental factors contribute very positively to the child's healthy conscience formation. These are the parents' abilities to empathize and to be altruistic. Recall the **definitions**:

- **Empathy** is the ability to perceive what another person may be experiencing and feeling.
- **Altruism** is the ability to perceive what another person's needs and interests before one's own.

**Question:** How does parental empathy play a special part in "criticizing" one's child constructively?

**Answers** from participants.

**Discussion:** By considering what the child will probably feel when criticized by Mother/Father, the parent will automatically approach the child with due consideration for the child's sensitivities, color her/his tone to the child's sensitivities and phrase the criticism accordingly as well. Parents should not fear making reasonable demands for performance and behaviors of their child. It is how these are presented to the child that they need to tailor to their child's personality.

Furthermore, the parent who is able to be empathic, who gives evidence of it day in and day out in her/his care of the child, will be a prime model for the development of empathy within the child. This will occur especially by the child's identification with that aspect of the parent's behavior. Of course the child can develop empathy even without this type of identification. However, the child who has the good fortune of having parents who are empathic will have a substantial advantage in this regard.

**Question:** What role does parental altruism play in the parents' criticizing his/her child?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Altruism along with considerateness plays a large role in the demands we make of our children. It is reasonable for parents to have goals for their children. In fact, children need their parents to have expectations of them in order to feel they are capable, valuable human beings.

But, aiming as high as one reasonably can, it is important for the parent to yield to the child's reasonable preferences for his/her own life goals. This becomes increasingly meaningful as the child gets older. Applying the principle of altruism here means that the parents needs and interests will yield to the child's needs and interests. And this applies...
to the issue of criticizing one's child for his/her interests, goals, preferences.

Of course, we do not mean that parents should be forgiving of behavior that breaks the law, or is destructive of the self, or is inconsiderate of others. We mean, for instance, criticizing a boy who prefers to read a book than to play baseball, or a girl who prefers to play baseball than help Mom bake cookies.

Here as with the child's empathy development, the child's developing the ability to be altruistic is greatly facilitated when his/her parents model altruistic behavior toward him/her on a daily basis.

**Discussions:**

1. What is "helpful criticism" and "unhelpful criticism"? Give examples.
2. Discuss the principle of criticizing the behavior and not the child!
3. Practice ways to "criticize the behavior and not the child".
4. Use role plays of these with examples from participants' life experiences.

**Question:** What happens to the child's developing abilities to empathize and be altruistic if parents do not encourage and compliment these behaviors in the child?

**Answers** from workshop participants; can they provide examples?

**Discussion:** Parents who do not encourage and compliment these behaviors lose the double opportunity to approve of and enhance the invaluable adaptive capabilities of their children. Helping the child with these capacities will help the child develop a more benevolent conscience, one that makes them able to empathize with themselves and be altruistic toward themselves. This last thought may seem puzzling but consider the fact that our conscience acts as our internal policeman/policewoman. If our internal policeman/woman is harsh and only self interested, it will make rigid demands on the child and make the child feel a prisoner to this harsh, inconsiderate agent.

In addition, of course, well developed abilities to empathize and be altruistic will strongly facilitate the child's forming good relationships and increase his/her abilities to work and to learn. These very developments are the ones the child will have as an adult.

It is also worth repeating that complimenting and encouraging the child (only when sincerely meant and not as a false exaggeration) will further optimize the parent-child relationship and that the salutary benefits of this last through the entire lifetime. Many children will continue to develop these capabilities even without parental support but will be advantaged if their parents show evidence of valuing them as well, and indeed, show these qualities in their daily life.

**Question:** How hard or how soft should parents be as their children develop standards for themselves?

**Answers** from workshop participants.

**Discussion:** Parents should be alert to extremes in either direction. Just as aiming too high can be detrimental to the child's well being, one can equally harm the child at all ages by expecting too little, by not helping the child build a strong, substantial self image,

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or discouraging the child's normal, built-in tendency to do so.

A reasonable balance between pushing too hard and not pushing hard enough is required to be helpful to the child. One of the best ways to achieve this, in addition to one's own thoughtful observations of the child's behavior, is to speak to the child about it. What does the child see for himself/herself in terms of achievement, in terms of what he/she wants to do and wants to become. Encouragement to strive somewhat higher, somewhat farther, can be enormously helpful.

Summary

The development of conscience perhaps more than any other part of the child's psychological-emotional development is most influenced by the way the parents rear their child. The development of conscience is thought of by many mental health professionals to be strictly the product of human social interaction and experience.

Parents must know that a child's conscience develops over time. This will inform them that they cannot expect their children to know right from wrong from the very beginning of life. This sense of morality develops step by step and will not become cohesively organized until the child is about 6 years old. And, much further development of conscience continues through adolescence and even into young adulthood and beyond. During the toddler years, from 1 to 3, the child begins to sort out, with the help of his parents (and other meaningful caregivers) what is right, what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behavior.

Parents must also know that if a conscience becomes too harsh, imposes too many restrictions, prohibitions, and produces too much guilt, adaptation will be difficult. Excessive loads of guilt, too hateful an attitude toward oneself, too rigid restrictions imposed on oneself, will impede the child's healthy emotional development and adaptation. Therefore, parents have the task along with the child, of securing the development of a reasonable conscience, one that is neither too weak nor too rigid, too unconcerned nor too punitive, neither too lax in expectations nor too demanding.

It is best that parents react reasonably to the child's own insufficient compliance with demands made by the parents. The reaction of mother and father, especially, will profoundly influence the child's own reaction to his or her own behavior. To repeat, if mother or father is too harsh, the child is inclined to internalize that reaction into his or her budding conscience. If the parent is too lax, that attitude is most likely to be internalized. Enormously important is that the caregiver's reaction will be much more meaningful to the child when the caregiver is meaningful to the child, such as when it is mother or father, the "other person" of a "primary relationship." The key factor is the degree to which the person who prohibits or disapproves is emotionally valued by the child.

Optional Discussion

1. How do participants encourage conscience-building behavior with their children?
2. Do the participants think their own behaviors are a model for their children? How so, do they think, with respect to conscience formation? Try to get examples from participants.

3. Discuss various conscience-developing activities with children at different ages.