

***PARENTING FOR EMOTIONAL GROWTH:
A TEXTBOOK***

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TEXTBOOK

UNIT 3

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UNIT 3

EARLY CHILDHOOD: THE PRESCHOOL YEARS (3 TO 6 YEARS)

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UNIT 3

EARLY CHILDHOOD: THE PRESCHOOL YEARS (3 to 6 Years)

3.1 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT⁸ that determines what a child is able to do.

3.111 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Degree of Adaptive Capability and Degree of Helplessness

The many emotional-behavioral developments we will talk about in this Unit can occur normally only if the child's biological systems, his anatomical (bodily organs like the brain, muscles) and physiological (like breathing, brain functioning, etc.) systems develop age-adequately. At present we know that specific maturations⁹ of the brain and nervous system make possible the development of new functions and abilities, some of which, not all, we will consider briefly below. What these specific maturations are, though, we do not know. Nonetheless, because the 3 and 4 year old can do things he or she could not do as a one-year-old, we must assume that some maturations of the brain and body systems which give rise to these increasing abilities have taken place.

To gain an idea of the maturation that must underlie the developments from 3 to 6 years of age, think of what a 2 year old is capable of in terms of adapting on her own as compared to the extent to which a 6 or 7 year old can function independently. For instance, the 2 year old is just learning to speak; the 6 year old can speak fluently and is in first grade learning to read (and some are already able), to write and to do simple arithmetic. The 2 year old is probably being toilet trained; the 6 year old usually can wait for recess to go to the bathroom. The 2 year old needs someone to get food and keep clean enough; the 6 year old can feed herself or himself ably (so long as the food is prepared for eating) and toilet himself or herself quite well already. The 2 year old can walk, some can run; the 6 year old can skip, ride a two-wheel bicycle, and some can swing a bat or begin to play a musical instrument. The 2 year-old weighs about 28 pounds; the 6 year old weighs about 48 pounds. The 2 year old stands about 34 inches in height; the 6 year old about 46 inches. Growth in body mass, height and physical strength side by side with developments in adaptive functioning and skills are among the major determiners of these age-appropriate differences.

Remarkable developments in adaptive capability occur during the period between infancy and the early elementary school years. These occur not just by virtue of

⁸ Addresses ONLY factors on which emotional-behavioral development depends.

⁹ "Maturation" here means genetically pre-programmed gradual and progressive changes that occur normally in a child's body and psychology.

underlying maturations of the brain, bones and muscles, but also by increasing abilities to coordinate body movements, control body actions, and by learning and by exercising developing abilities and skills. Of course, between 3 and 6, there is much age-appropriate helplessness still. What is most important for us to know is that all normal developments of the body and its functions are fostered or can be retarded by, respectively, good enough as compared to poor emotionally involved care-giving and rearing.

Let's look at only a few of the bodily developments that occur during the years from 3 to 6 that make the child able to adapt but keep him or her still very dependent on others. Let's consider these in terms of the awesome emotional-behavioral functions they make possible: like the development of language, of the growing capacity to think, to fantasy and to solve problems, the ability to self-protect and cope with stresses. Let's also consider briefly the maturation that must underlie the increasing physical abilities of the 3 to 6 year old as well as those that make for the beginnings of sexual behaviors.

3.112 CHILD REARING ASPECT OF: How to Optimize the Development of Adaptive Capability and the Degree of Helplessness

What can parents do to give their child the best possible opportunity to develop into healthy preschoolers who are able to adapt adequately for their age? To set the stage for such ability to adapt, the child's physical needs have to be sufficiently secured. In the 3 to 6 year old child, whether he or she is biologically well-endowed or not, the child's physical and adaptive growth can be made to be the best it can be by the parents' caregiving and rearing. Everyday caregiving including sufficient feeding, maintaining reasonable nutrition and health-promoting conditions, toilet training where that is not yet mastered, teaching the 3 year old to do what the child seems ready to do, like ride a tricycle, learn new words, and many other skills all contribute to the healthy physical development that make the child age-appropriately competent. We emphasize again that in addition a reasonable degree of emotionally engaged care-giving and maintaining a loving and respecting emotional atmosphere in the home and in relationships seems to be required for optimal physical development. Much study of both human infants as well as infants of other animal species (monkeys and apes, for instance) shows that mammal infants will suffer poor (slowed down and even stunted) physical development when deprived of sufficient good quality emotional attachment and interactions.

3.121 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Brain Functioning That Makes Us Able to Think, Learn, Communicate and Problem Solve

Remarkable brain developments occur from 3 years of age to six that allow for learning rapidly to communicate through speaking and for the capacity for fantasizing. Several known brain maturations underlie these new developments in a child's behavior. These include maturations in the cerebral cortex (the largest part of the human brain) with the organization of new brain (neuronal) circuits (or networks) and the fuller protective covering of nerves (myelinization). Not only is there the expansion of vocabulary and of saying thoughts in sentences, but there is also now an increasing ability to tell what happened in a long story form, which reveals a child's growing understanding of events and interactions. There is also a dramatic enlargement in the ability to use fantasy, a major adaptive function (for the testing of one's wishes and for problem solving), from the ability to pretend momentarily to the ability to spin a fantasy story commonly seen in 4 and 5-year-old's fantasy play. There are brain maturations that bring with them knowing important aspects of language and thinking which we do not teach to our children, such as how to ask a question as compared to stating something one thinks. And there are maturations in the brain that make for the 3 to 6 year old's remarkable development of psychological coping mechanism, problem solving mechanisms like psychological defenses, which allow greater flexibility in adapting than was made possible by the earlier coping mechanisms of which the one and two year old are capable. We will detail these more later and speak of their coping functions.

3.122 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize the Development of This Brain Functioning.

Essentially what was stated under Section 3.112 applies here as well. Later, when we talk about the adaptive and coping value of some of these activities, we will talk about what parents can do to facilitate and support their healthy and age-appropriate development.

3.131 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Other Brain and Body Maturations That Increase the Child's Ability to Adapt.

In most children, toilet training capability becomes assured between 2 1/2 and 4 years of age. During this time, from 3 to 6 years, there are also large developments in and increasing control of bodily movements, coordination and physical skills. What makes these possible are further developments not only in the frontal lobes of the brain, but also in the cerebellum part of the brain as well as in the growth of the bones and

muscles (including those that control the urinary bladder and the anus, which make toilet training possible). This is evident in the fact that most children become reliably toilet trained by the age of 3 and 4.

There is also a large increase in the ability to use fine motor movements especially of the fingers and hands as is evident in the ability some children begin to show in learning to write, to draw, to build things with toys like tinker toys, some even to play musical instruments.

There is stabilization of locomotion (bodily movement). Some (talented) children can also begin to do gymnastics and dance. There is a large leap from the six month old highly limited fine motor movements, as seen in the child's inability to release the grasp reflex, to the five year old being able to use a crayon or pencil, let alone play a musical instrument. So too, the leap is great between the six month-old being just able to crawl and the 4 and 5 year old being able to run, dance, and do gymnastics.

3.132 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize These Other Maturations.

It is generally known by parents that a child ought to be toilet trained by the age of 3 to 4. Some children who have difficulty learning to control urination, particularly in the form of bedwetting, may need examination to determine if some physical factor is interfering with the mastery of bladder control. Although most bedwetting beyond the age of 5 is developmentally and psychologically based, in some children, an organic malfunctioning may be responsible for it. Because it can be very disturbing to both child and parents, problems with age-appropriate urinary control can be helped by professionals who know how to deal with them, like child psychiatrists, psychologists and some pediatricians. In later sections of this course we will talk further about how parents can optimize these brain and body maturations.

3.141 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: The Beginning of Sexual (Reproduction) Development.

As we shall detail in Section 3.23 (below) observable sexual behaviors are found in all 3 to 6 year old children. Many parents are surprised by these, and many parents do not think of these behaviors as being sexual. We shall talk about them in Section 3.23. Professionals who study children's behaviors recognize that sexual feelings, thoughts and fantasies begin during the 2 to 6 years period. These strongly suggests that some biogenetically scheduled maturation occurs in the child which triggers the emergence of these behaviors during the 3 (2) to 6 years period. Here, very likely too, several parts of the brain, the nervous system, and sexual hormones operate jointly to bring about the behaviors we will discuss in Section 3.23.

Of course these early biological developments are vastly different from those that

occur in adolescence when sexual maturation leads to the dramatic hormonal and bodily developments we know to be typical of early adolescence. It is only with the sexual developments that are part of adolescence that the capability to reproduce the species begins. That is, we make a distinction between the early sexual development, what we speak of as infantile sexual development, as compared to adult sexual development which has its beginnings in adolescence.

3.142 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize the Beginnings of Sexual (Reproductive) Development

Parents who are aware of this normal development are far better prepared to help their young children deal with the behaviors to which it leads than those who are not. We have found that parents who do not know of this biological development find sexual behaviors in their children very alarming, and inadvertently, as a result, may create significant problems for both their child and themselves.

As with the other bodily maturations which lead to the developments we have explored in this section, sufficient nutrition of a well balanced diet (with enough protein, natural vitamins and minerals), good hygiene and encouraging age-appropriate self care including the mastery of toilet training, sufficient protection from excessive cold and excessive heat, sufficient attention to the child's needs for emotional relatedness that is loving and respecting, and the child's needs for healthy guidance in behavior are all protective of the biological developments that are going on. In addition, securing the child with a safe environment where there are no abuses, physical or sexual, contributes to healthy physical development which, in turn, makes a major contribution to overall healthy emotional and behavioral development.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.21 THE CHILD'S ABILITIES TO ADAPT -- Part I

Several models of human emotional development are especially valuable because they detail not just the stepwise evolving of behaviors but also because they explain the meanings of typical behaviors as they appear at specific times in development. Much behavior typically found in most children has come to be understood as to what they mean and professionals have proposed what underlying motivations and interactional processes might be at play. For instance, when we talked about the first three years of life, we talked about how attachment to one's caregivers develops and why it is so important (attachment theory), and we also talked about separation-individuation theory which proposes how the child develops a good sense of self and relationship with caregivers and others. The psychoanalytic model known as "psychosexual" development, will especially help us understand the development of the sense of self during the 3 to 6 years period. During this time the child further develops in relationships (Sections 3.22) but very important is that the self becomes a specific gendered-self, a boy self or a girl self, a sexual human being (Sections 3.23). In this section, we shall turn to Erik Erikson's "psychosocial" model of development. This model will help us understand where the child is during the 3 to 6 years period in the course of becoming an emotionally healthy person capable of good adaptation to society and to the challenges of life.

During the first year of life the child put much emotional and mental effort into developing a sense of Basic Trust, of trusting that those on whom the infant depended for his survival and who the infant was increasingly coming to value would indeed be there when the infant needed holding, feeding, calming, comforting. And furthermore, as the infant increasingly developed a sense of trusting this/those primary caregiver(s), in parallel the child increasingly developed a sense that the child is worthy of trust, of being held, valued, cared about. This beginning sense of trust-worthiness is, of course, the nucleus of the later to come (in the second year) feeling of being worthy of love. If this inner sense does not develop positively, the infant would develop an increasingly stable sense of Basic Mistrust.

During the second and third years, with a good inner sense of Basic Trust, the toddler now moved to a new level of adaptive development. Propelled by an inborn powerful inner thrust to autonomy -- to do things oneself, to act on one's own, to make one's own decisions -- we detailed in Unit 2, the child's sense of being a self was now further shaped by the increasing sense of being someone with an inner feeling of autonomy, of being a self separate from primary caregiver(s), capable of self-locomotion, having an inner force, a beginning will, an increasing sense of independent functioning.

Of course the better the Basic Trust built during year one, the better the foundation for the emerging Sense of Autonomy during year two. The better the caregiver(s) were able to handle the child's thrust to autonomy in growth promoting ways, the better the

child's increasing Sense of Autonomy. Where unhappily Basic Trust was poor during year one, where in fact Basic Mistrust developed, and/or where the caregiver(s) cannot handle the child's at times difficult to deal with sense of autonomy, that child is more likely to develop a poor Sense of Autonomy, indeed to develop a Sense of Shame, Erikson proposed. As we described in Unit 2¹⁰, children are capable of feeling shame from the middle of the second year of life on.

Now during the 3 to 6 years period Erikson proposed, the child seems biologically-genetically scheduled to develop a Sense of Initiative. Normally, the well cared-for, child has a good Sense of Autonomy and now exerts much emotional effort at developing the feeling "I can make things happen, I can start them and build on them. I can plan things and make them happen." Of course, the 3 year old will be more or less tentative in such grand self-feelings. Erikson proposed that the major obstacles now to success in developing such a good Sense of Initiative can come from 3 sources: (1) from the poor quality of Basic Trust and Sense of Autonomy acquired before; (2) from caregivers' handling the child's initiatives and adaptive functioning in growth-disturbing ways; or (3) from a source within the child, from feelings of guilt. In this chapter, we shall describe in detail the major developmental factors which Erikson and many health clinicians who treat children have found create guilt in every child during the 3 to 6 years period (see Sections 3.23 and 3.26). According to these clinicians, experiencing feelings of guilt during this period of development is unavoidable. If the feelings of guilt are too intense and frequent, they will undermine the developing Sense of Initiative. In addition excessive guilt can even undermine an earlier acquired good Sense of Basic Trust and of Autonomy. As we shall see, the 3 to 6 year old child grows remarkably in adaptive functions and capabilities.

¹⁰ Sections 2.2131 and 2.2132

3.2111 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Sleep-Wake Patterning, Dreams, Night Terrors

In the average child the patterns of sleep-wake cycles are established by three years of age. Where sleep is disturbed, as was discussed in Unit 1, various sleep disturbers can be at work. Considering only (internal) psychological stresses commonly experienced by the 3 to 6 year old child, we find two major sources: anxieties from insufficiently mastered past developmental tasks (especially progressing toilet training and achieving an adequate sense of being a self separate from but strongly emotionally attached to primary caregivers), and anxieties arising from the three to six year period itself.

These stresses tend to be experienced either at bedtime, especially when it is due to separation anxiety, or during sleep in the form of sleep disturbing dreams or nightmares ("bad" dreams). When it is due to disturbing dreams, the content of the dream can often - though not always, nor directly -- give some clues as to the psychological stressor at work.

Some children will have night terrors during these (and later) years. Night terrors differ from "bad" dreams (nightmares). Dreams (including "bad" dreams) occur during least deep levels of sleep, during what is known as REM sleep (which stands for "rapid eye movements" sleep). Although bad dreams may be frightening and waken the child, when they do so, the child will be verbally and emotionally reachable (in touch) and often able to tell the parent what the dream was about, and will usually be easily-enough comforted with reassurance. Not so with night terrors. Night terrors occur when the child is in deep sleep. Although the child may be tossing, frightened and even screaming, these will usually not cause full waking. As a result the child will not be reachable, and usually is not able to feel the parent's efforts to calm him or her. (We will say more about this in the child rearing section below.)

Not wanting to go to bed at night-time may also occur for emotional reasons other than anxiety. In the 3 to 6 year old, it may be due to the child's wanting to be included in all family activities especially those: 1) that include mother and father being alone; 2) when older siblings can stay up later; 3) and if some upsetting event occurred earlier that day whether it occurred within the family, with a young peer, in preschool, or some other reason.

3.2112 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize Sleep-Wake Patterning; How to Deal With Sleep Problems

In terms of child rearing, sleep-wake patterning disturbances during this 3 to 6 years age period will most usually come from problems with going to bed, the fear of having "bad dreams" (nightmares) and, least common due to the fear of having night terrors.

Dealing constructively with the child's resistance to going to bed requires sorting out if that resistance is due to anxiety, whether separation anxiety or some other source of

anxiety, or due to wanting to be included in all the parents activities -- even very private ones, including sexual events and arguments --, or due to an upsetting event of the day.

If the resistance is due to anxiety, it is important that the parent try to calm, reassure, and comfort the child because anxiety can become traumatizing. Trying to set limits when anxiety causes difficulty in going to sleep will either not work or make the child use a coping mechanism to suppress feeling the anxiety which may produce greater problems in the long run. Simply put: calm anxiety, reassure and comfort the child.

For example, it is September 21 and 4 year-old Johnny started preschool again 2 1/2 weeks ago, going from 8:30 to 2:30, 5 days a week. Mother and father had made good efforts to prepare him reminding him of the nice things about the school, things he enjoyed last year, reassuring him that Mrs. Nell seems to be a very nice teacher who likes children, and that his friends Doug, Joan and Diane will be there too. Johnny seemed very cheerful about going. But Mother said that 2 days ago when she dropped him off, he seemed to try not cry and had clung to her for about a minute. But he did separate from her bravely.

For the past week though Dad had noticed that getting him to bed seemed to take forever. He resists going upstairs, dallies taking off his clothes, tries to make a game of every step toward going to bed like wanting Dad to chase him to get his teeth brushed and wash up, wanting more than 2 stories read to him, needing to go to the bathroom again, needing a drink of water, and now says he's afraid of the shadows on the wall. He's getting to be a pain. Mom said that he does the same with her lately. And, she said, he gets really upset when Mom gets irritated and annoyed with him and he seems scared when Dad scolds at him. Talking about it, Mom and Dad agree that he really seems scared of something. They agree they should talk with Johnny about this. Dinner would be a good time to talk with him, so that he might have time to digest the family talk before bedtime.

At dinner Dad asks Johnny how school was today. Johnny says he doesn't like school anymore; Doug isn't nice to him and Mrs. Nell doesn't like him! Mother is surprised, she said, because Mrs. Nell got a warm smile on her face when she saw Johnny this morning and as soon as Doug saw Johnny he came over and wanted Johnny to build a big tower with him again (using blocks). Well, Johnny said, I don't like it when you leave in the morning. Mom asked if maybe being away from Mommy and Daddy worried him? Well, I don't know, Johnny said.

Talking briefly together while clearing the dinner table, Mom and Dad agreed that maybe starting school again, like that doctor they know said, was causing Johnny an increase in separation anxiety. Dad suggested starting bed time 15 minutes earlier so that Johnny could have a bit more time getting to bed. As she helped Johnny get off his clothes, washed and into his p.j.'s., Mom reassured him that she and Dad love Johnny a great deal, that they think he's a great kid. She read only one story and said she'd rather talk with him for a while instead of reading more. She reassured him he'd be fine in school even if it didn't feel good when she dropped him off; she is sure that Doug likes him and so does Mrs. Nell. And she told him she and Dad, as usual, would be downstairs, that of course they would not leave him while he was asleep. Mom asked if he needed to go to the bathroom again. No. Mom stayed a bit longer repeating her

reassurances, patted his head, gave him a kiss on the cheek and said goodnight. A few minutes later, when he called and said he needed to go the bathroom again, Dad called up, said there really is nothing to be afraid of and to go to sleep.

It may not always work this easily. But anxiety is best dealt with by reassurance, comforting and moderate limit setting. It is wise to encourage the child to talk about troublesome experiences on coming back from school or at dinnertime rather than just before bedtime. Listening to the child brings many benefits: it insures that your child will tell you important things that go on in his or her life; your child is more likely to listen to you; he or she will learn that talking about problems can be very helpful; and more. If the resistance to going to sleep is due to an upsetting event that occurred during the day, it is very helpful to talk the event over with the child. Reassure, look for and talk about a way to repair today's losses or damages the next day or soon thereafter, and be hopeful for a better day.

If the resistance to going to sleep is due to wanting to be included in all family activities, including parents' private activities, be sympathetic, but also demand reasonable privacy and set limits. 4 year old Jennifer didn't like to have to go to bed at 8:00 when her 7 year-old brother Mike didn't. She wondered what he, Mom and Dad talked about and do that she's left out of. As she has done before, Mom again explained that Mike is older than she is and will go to bed 1/2 hour later than she does. "You know this very well," Mom said. "Now it simply is time for you to go to bed!" Then Jennifer said she wondered what Mom and Daddy are going to do later. Mom said that she and Dad "have a lot to do, a lot to talk about, and we need to have private time together as a Mom and Dad. And now its time for you to go to bed!" "But Mom," protests Jennifer, "I can't go to sleep yet, it's too early." "No more discussion about it Jenny, let's go up now. You don't have to like it; we're going up now."

When it is a question of the child waking from sleep, it will be easy enough to sort out if the child was wakened by a "bad" dream or by a night terror. Dreams require listening to the child's dream, trying to help the child understand what it may be about, comforting the child and if necessary staying with the child until she/he goes back to sleep. Usually children do not require the parent to stay there until the child goes back to sleep when waking from an upsetting dream.

With respect to the effort to help the child understand what the dream may be about, many people (and parents) find this an extremely useful way of gaining some self-understanding or understanding of the child and helps to find a way for reassuring the child. Understanding what the dream may be about gives the parent an idea of what form of reassurance to give. For instance, Mom and Dad were awakened by Johnny's shouts. It was Dad's turn so he got up and went to Johnny's room. Johnny had just had a terrible dream, he said, about a very mean bear who was chasing him. Dad said that Johnny is really safe, that "It was only a bad dream. We'll talk about it tomorrow. But you know, I'd never let you be where an angry bear could be. And besides, I wouldn't let anybody, not even a bear hurt you. Now, go back to sleep."

If the waking is caused by a night terror the situation is more difficult and requires more attention by the parent. As a psychological experience, a night terror is an acute panic state during sleep. This means that night terrors are highly concentrated

experiences of high level anxiety and can therefore be acutely traumatizing. The child (like an adult) who experiences panic feels utterly helpless and terrified. He is sure that something terrible is going to happen to him. Experiences like this can make a child convinced that the world is not a safe place and that he cannot find safety anywhere. This is why the child who has night terrors especially requires the parent's help. In dealing with a night terror, it is important to know that the child will not be fully awake when the parent is trying to help him. The child will most likely not hear what the parent is saying and may not even know that the parent is there, even when the parent has picked up the child in an effort to calm and comfort him. This is due to the fact that the child is not awake, may in fact, even when seeming to be partly awake, continue to be in deep sleep. When the child is having a night terror and when the parent is attempting to comfort the child, listen to what the child is saying. It may give the parent a clue as to what is causing the night terror. The parent should not be surprised if what the child is mumbling is not immediately understandable. It may be necessary to fully waken the child if the night terror persists while the parent is trying to comfort the child. After the child is fully awake the parent should comfort the child, in order to facilitate going back to sleep. Night terrors that persist may make a child afraid to go to sleep. If indeed they persist too long, professional consultation is warranted.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.2121 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Affects (Feelings and Moods)

During the 3 to 6 years period there is a remarkable development and widening in the range of feelings (affects) the child becomes capable of experiencing. As we have detailed before¹¹ and shall detail in Section 3.2211, this widening is caused both by (1) a consolidation, stabilization, and deepening of emotional attachment (what we call "self and object constancy") and by (2) a further maturation of those affects the child has been capable of experiencing and expressing to this point in development. As is our practice in this Text, we will talk about only a few of these affects.

Love feelings: The stabilization of positive emotional attachments to the mother and father, and also to siblings and other valued persons (caregivers, relatives, close family friends), is manifested in behavioral signs of affection, in wanting to be with, in expressions of tolerable but painful negative feelings of separation (anxiety, anger, pouting sadness), and in negative as well as in positive reunion reactions. One can now see in the child's behavior affective (emotional) evidence that the child "loves" mother and father. All signs of it point to a deepening of the affection current of loving.

In addition, a highly important new aspect of loving becomes visible in children's behavior, especially toward their parents, but also towards siblings and others. For instance, according to his mother, Doug, a 4 1/4 year old boy, sometimes leans against his mother tenderly, caresses her arm in a way that makes her feel somewhat uncomfortable, not altogether sure of what he is feeling. He may even whisper gently into her ear that he loves her. According to Diane's father, his 4 1/4 year-old daughter sashayed up to her father, fluttered her eyelashes and said to him "Will you take me to the movies and dancing?" Bernie, a normal 5 1/2 year old boy, painfully adoring of a 25 year old woman neighbor tried to maneuver his mother into inviting this neighbor to their home and then he said he wanted mother to leave him alone with her! Are these the behaviors of abnormal children? It requires open-mindedness and modest skills in observations for parents to see this type of behavior in their own children. Normal 3 year-olds begin to feel sexual and erotic love feelings as Diane and Doug showed. A normal 5 year-old, like Bernie did, may feel and at times behave like Romeo. We will have more to say about this in Section 3.23.

Hostile and Hate Feelings: As the stabilization of positive emotional attachment and interactions bring a deepening and further development of these love feelings, (now adding the amorous or sexual aspect of loving), so too the stabilization of negative emotional attachments and interactions bring with them the development and further deepening of negatively felt attachment feelings laden with hostility, rage and hate. In

¹¹ Section 2.2211 and 2.2221.

the model of aggression we use¹² the term "hostile" feelings in a broader sense than usual. The first of the hostile feelings of which the young child is capable is rage. Then as the infant grows, from about 6 months of age on, in addition to rage, anger and an infantile form of hostility are among the earliest negative feelings of which an infant seems capable during the first or so year life. Although it already emerges during the middle of second year, hate develops further and consolidates as a hostile affect during the 3 to 6 years period.

During the 3 to 6 year period, like before, the experiences that most produce feelings of hostility, rage, and hate are child neglect and child abuse (emotional abuse and physical abuse). Shaming children, insulting them or putting them down can be as painful and producing of hate as are slapping, pinching, burning or beating the child.

Among children who are not neglected or abused, as well as with those who are, one of the experiences that most stirs up feelings of hate is jealousy. Father and mother, in an expression of affection toward each other, embrace. Unexpectedly they find their 3 or 4 year old child come physically between them and angrily try to push them apart. On his return from a trip Diane's father brought mother a pretty dress as a gift, and for his daughter he brought an attractive toy. To the dismay of both mother and father, Diane threw the toy aside and pouting demanded that she get a dress just like mother got. Although quite surprised, father (with mother's help) bought Diane a dress too. She was absolutely delighted. She told one of her brothers that this is her wedding dress!

Yesterday, 4 1/4 year-old Doug asked his mother if Daddy is coming home for dinner and he pouted when mother said cheerfully that indeed, Daddy is. To mother's dismay, Doug wished that father wouldn't come home this evening because he wanted to have dinner alone with Mom. As we shall detail in Section 3.23, these normal children are expressing feelings of jealousy. Of course there are other common feelings of jealousy young children experience, even in the later part of the second year of life, especially such feelings as are commonly associated with sibling rivalry.

Also noteworthy is that boys and girls tend to begin to express their feelings of anger and hostility somewhat differently now. We will discuss this more extensively when we shall talk about Aggression (Section 3.24), but we will mention here that there is a tendency on the part of boys to express their hostility by using he-man, "macho" threatening gestures, pushing domineeringly, striking out, smashing things, etc. Little girls, on the other hand, tend to express hostility by teasing, scratching, pulling hair and in behavior spoken of in the vernacular as "bitchiness". Of course little girls also will strike out but there are differences in the form and in the quality of that striking out from what is usually seen in little boys. Both boys and girls are equally capable of teasing and taunting as expressions of underlying hostile feelings.

Rage reactions and infantile temper tantrums ought to be lessening now both in their frequency and in their intensity and duration.

Sadness, grief, depression: These feelings change now too, although they may not be visibly distinguishable from their earlier forms. It is especially in the underlying

¹² See *Aggression in Our Children: Coping With It Constructively* by H. Parens with E. Scattergood, W. Singletary and A. Duff, published by Jason Aronson Publishers, 1987.

psychological meaning of the experiencing of sadness, grief, and depression that these differ from their earlier forms. So too, the child's abilities to cope with these affective experiences increase at this time. The child's ability to deal with sadness and depression as well as with the underlying psychological meaning of these affects will be further discussed in Sections 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25. Depression most commonly is caused by the feeling (fantasized or actual) of having lost someone we love. It can also be caused by guilt (see below). Sadness, grief, and depression can range from being mild to being very painful, this has already been so even in the first year of life, and can be so during this period as well.

Shame: Shame, a feeling of worthlessness and self depreciation, can already be experienced by the child during the second year of life, but it now becomes more intense and consolidates as a feeling the child may experience more or less intensely and frequently. Shame can be a very painful feeling. Although it can lead to feeling depression, it is more noxious than depression because it leads to a loss in self-esteem (self-valuing), a feeling of the self as painfully unworthy of love. We will talk about this further in Section 3.25.

Guilt: Guilt, a feeling of self-criticism and self-attack, is also commonly associated with, but is somewhat different from shame, emerges now too (see Sections 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25).

Of course, other positive feelings evolve too. Pleasure and excitement become experienced by and in conjunction with more things now than earlier. Pleasure with humor can be quite sophisticated in some children. There can be excitement associated with an event like going to the beach, and there can now be sexual excitement (see Section 3.23).

One also sees the mixture of feelings, especially the mixture of love and hate feelings which we call ambivalence. Ambivalence is experienced by all children toward their parents and their siblings, and because all subsequent relationships, are patterned on these earliest and most basic relationships, similar degrees of ambivalence are experienced toward any other human beings they encounter (we shall discuss ambivalence in Section 3.23 and 3.24).

It is well to mention here that 3 to 6 year old children experience certain affects with specific persons in their lives in a way that is determined by inborn dispositions. That is, during the 3 to 6 years period, a little boy will feel jealous of his beloved father, much less so of his mother; a little girl will feel acutely jealous of her beloved mother, but much less so of her father. Similarly the little girl will feel strong infantile erotic love feelings for her father, and less so toward her mother; whereas boys, will feel strong infantile erotic love feelings toward their mothers, and quite less so toward their fathers. Another commonly found patterned way of feeling toward others is that throughout cultures mothers seem to be linked with a calming-soothing affect whereas fathers seem to be linked with excitement of play affect. Specific affects being attached to specific persons is common from very early in life and tends to endure.

3.2122 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize the Experience of Affects.

We repeat that affects are enormously helpful to parents, because they tell parents much about what their children are experiencing which they may not express in words. And, of course, what children tell or otherwise convey to their parents is guiding to their parenting work. As common sense would suggest, we find that if parents want to be listened to, they should also listen to their children. Research shows that, in general, the earlier in life the child feels listened to, the more likely she or he will tell parents what he or she feels, and the more likely is it that she/he will listen to her/his parents. In listening to and watching the young child especially, because of the limited way children can put thoughts and feelings into words, what they show (by their feelings) is most informing and parenting guiding.

During the 3 to 6 years period certain affects become very worrisome to the child and the child may protect herself/himself in a variety of ways against experiencing them as well as against showing them¹³. In other words, from about 3 years of age on children find it necessary to begin to hide, even from themselves, some thoughts and strong feelings they have.

Most parents recognize and can feel their children's feelings by the way these affects make them feel. But many parents resist (unconsciously) this normal capability, disregard their children's feelings, and they tell us that children don't really feel the things they say they feel nor the feelings they overtly show. What is important in this is that most children are deeply hurt by the fact that their feelings are believed to be false, or not taken seriously, or that some parents do not register the meaning of the experience and the feelings the child is having. These parents seem to have blunted or dampened or do not exercise their capacity for empathy. Empathy is the ability to register, to feel and recognize within oneself what someone else may be feeling, which is very telling of what that person may be emotionally experiencing. Empathy does not mean to feel like the other person feels; to feel like the other person feels is identification. Empathy means to be able to "emotionally recognize" what the person is feeling by emotionally attuning to the person. Of course, whether in parenting or in any other relationship, empathy is a much needed capability because it informs us about the other person's emotional experiencing.

Or one finds a parent say, "You are not angry" to a child who is, or, "You are not upset; just stop it!" to a child who is upset, or "I know you don't mean it" when a child has just painfully cried out to the parent "I hate you!" Not believing children's feelings can make a child feel she/he is not supposed to have such feelings, that there is something wrong with the child for having them. Or, one can see parents who tease their children, and seem to act as if the child's hurt feelings do not mean that the child is hurting or that the hurt feelings will not last, and to top it off may tell the child he or she is a poor sport for getting upset (i.e., feeling hurt).

Ridiculing children's feelings may not only embarrass and even humiliate them, it

¹³ See Section 3.23.

may also make them believe their feelings are ridiculous, unusual, not reasonable. Take for instance the 5 year-old who is in love with his 25 year old neighbor. To ridicule this reaction because the parent does not know it is a normal reaction, may lead to the child's becoming embarrassed and believing that loving erotically, passionately, is a sign of badness, defect, among other things.

Not accepting that a four-year-old means it when at a given moment he or she yells at his/her mother "I hate you!" causes many problems for the child. Jennifer's mother had much trouble dealing with 4 year old Jennifer's being angry with her. Because when she was a child her family strongly disapproved of any expression of anger, let alone hate, Jennifer's mother too came to believe and feel that these feelings (anger, hostility, hate) are unacceptable. Good people, decent people don't feel hate! she believed.

For the past year and a half, Jennifer and her Mom just did not get along like they had before. Jennifer was not as easy and pleasant to be with as she had been in the first 2 years. Recently, when mom again told Jennifer she cannot just go into her 7 year old Mike's things and play with the erector constructions he build -- in a fit of anger and with conviction Jennifer said: "I hate you. You always like Mike better than me. I hate you!" Shocked, hurt and upset, Mom said, "I know you don't mean that. That's a terrible thing to say to your mother. Wait till I tell your father."

But what does it do to the child, when mom (or dad) says, as did Jennifer's mother, (1) you don't mean that, (2) it's terrible to say that, and (3) I'll tell your father. The child will have to defend against feeling so. She may react in a variety of ways. She may feel: "It's wrong to hate my mother; it's bad to hate my mother who loves me." She may need to deny: No, I don't hate my mother; I love my mother." Or, "I am really mad at my mother because she likes my brother and she hates me; and I hate her." She may then turn these feelings against herself: "I am bad!" Or, "Children who hate their mothers get (punished by being) sent away, or are not loved anymore!" The child may conclude that he or she is a bad child.

What causes the child to hate a parent? Usually it is when the child feels deeply hurt by something the parent does or does not do. (It is more complicated though as we shall elaborate in Sections 3.23 and 3.24). Understanding that every child who loves her or his parents dearly will also at times have reasonable cause to hate that parent can make the parent more tolerant and more helpful to the child. It was difficult for Jennifer's mother to hear this expression of feeling from her beloved little daughter. We cannot be sure just what it meant to her. But if Mother understood that something was causing Jennifer a great deal of pain (such as feeling she is not number one with the father she adores, and feeling jealous of the person she believed indeed was so with her father) and knowing that Jennifer's declaration was not the only way Jennifer felt about her, Mother probably would have dealt with this in a more growth-promoting way. For example she might then have thought to say; "O.K. Jennifer, you hate me right now. I get pretty mad at you sometimes too." And at some point, then or later add, "But I'm glad that usually we love each other a lot, and when you hate me it's only for a little while." It is likely that the child's inner reaction to this type of parental response is something like: "I am not so terrible; I will get over feeling my hate; Mom loves me even if I sometimes feel real mad at her; I'm still lovable." And this in turn then invariably intensifies her feelings of love

for her mother.

Negative feelings like anger, hate, jealousy, shame, guilt, in the 3 to 6 year old can all be dealt with constructively by not rejecting the child for feeling these, by talking about the feelings and what caused them, and by guiding the child in how to learn to deal with these feelings constructively. For instance, what Jennifer said to her mother also indicated that Jennifer believes her mother prefers her brother Mike over her. This tells us she at times feels jealous of him too. A parent shouldn't ignore this very painful feeling. There will be times when Jennifer, like every normal child, will feel jealous of someone else for reasons that are real or imagined (fantasized). She will at times feel jealous of her Mom, Dad, brother, friends, neighbors and even people she does not know. This is an opportunity for her Mom or Dad to help her tolerate this painful feeling. After things cooled down between Jennifer and Mom, Mom could say: "I guess there are times when you feel Dad loves me better than you. Dad loves you and me differently; he loves you like his dear daughter and he loves me like his wife. And he has enough love for both of us. Dad and I really love you both very much." And when it comes to Jennifer being jealous of Mike who can build such great things with his mechanical set, and who can go to bed later than she does, Mom could say: "Yeah, Mike can build great things with his mechanical set, but you'll learn to do fine things when you're 7 years old too. Look, you already know the alphabet and that's really great! People are good at different things. Think of the things you can do well for your age and of the ways you're special."

Given that having feelings of anger, hostility and hate toward those we love most is unavoidable from very early on in life, and that having such feelings creates troublesome problems for child and parents alike, understanding what causes them is essential for handling them constructively. We have already discussed in Units 1 and 2 that children are not born angry, hostile or hating, but that specific types of experiences generate these feelings in them, specifically experiences of excessive unpleasure (emotional pain). The same applies to feelings of jealousy, shame and guilt. We will discuss how to constructively handle anger, hostility and hate in Section 3.24, and more about jealousy and guilt in Sections 3.23 and 3.26. We have talked about handling shame feelings in children under 3 in Unit 2, Section 2.2132. The same principles apply for the 3 to 6 year old.

But troublesome as these unavoidable negative feelings are, they also bring with them important positive developments that we shall explain in Sections 3.23, 3.24 and 3.26. For now we emphasize that it is important to allow a child to feel these negative affects and to not suppress them, avoid them, or make them be swallowed too quickly, that is, before they can be dealt with in a reasonable integrating manner. Denying or suppressing these feelings by trying to make them go away too fast or totally rejecting them can be harmful just by virtue of the fact that they will simply be internalized like they are experienced, i.e., without being reduced or resolved. Talking negative feelings out works much better for both the child and the parent's mental health.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.2131 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Cognitive Activity, Play and Fantasy Activity

Locomotor and Fine Movement Activity:

What has been achieved so far in the development of locomotor capability is further developed by the child. We see greater mastery and facility in running, in coordination as in tree climbing and acrobatic movements, in efforts to jump rope, to ride tricycles, to move four-wheeled toys; all are much evidence of further developing large movement skills. A number of children during this period move can even learn to ride a two-wheeled bicycle, some even without training wheels. Some talented children add an athletic and artistic bend to large body movements in gymnastics and dancing. Some learn to swim, and some learn to swing a bat or a golf club and can do well (for their age) throwing and catching a ball.

Fine movement coordination (like using the fingers) is well underway as well. Many children begin to learn to write, some develop skills in drawing, in fascinating constructions with building toys as tinker toys, LEGOs, etc. Some begin to learn how to play musical instruments.

Speech Development:

Enormous growth in speech is evident during the years from 3 to 6. Vocabulary enlarges enormously, as does the more complicated use of phrases and sentences. The whole range of speech goes from fragmentary phrases and one sentence communication to extensive dialogues that facilitate and greatly enrich communication. Indeed, the course of the day, many a mother of the three to five year old is frequently wearied by many "Why" questions.

The use of books, reading to children:

During this period, many a child is eager to learn the alphabet and many begin to learn to read, some achieving the ability to read and write (their names and more) by age 6. In families where reading books is valued, many children enjoy being read to; some use books themselves in the pursuit of trying to learn to read, of exploring pictures and identifying their contents. In many cases, the child makes large efforts to imitate the adult or older child reader, some with success in actually learning to read. The use of books at this age furthermore, is especially enjoyed by children in the stimulation of their fantasy life and in the gratification of some of their own fantasies as these are described in stories read to them. Most child development specialists believe that the average child, under optimal conditions, can be helped to learn to read during this age period. Interestingly too, many children's stories, including Fairy Tales, concern themselves in

direct or disguised forms with 3 to 6 year old children's wishes, fantasies and conflicts -- which we shall detail in Section 3.2311.

Many a child will come to especially value one or several books that he/she will want read to him or her over and over. The child will even know every word in the story. The request that it be read again and again indicates its value to the child that probably comes from the pleasure associated with the parent's reading this book's contents. A particular book may reflect a special time of good feeling or the particular story may resonate meaningfully with some of the child's fantasies (see Section 3.23). Some books resonate with the child's fantasies about love relationships¹⁴, or about morality issues¹⁵, or about experiences that were or are frightening or hurtful, like books about moving to a new house, or about a visit to the doctor's or a stay at the hospital, etc. Books that appeal to children 3 to 6 years obviously do so because they deal with issues that are part and parcel of these children's actual or fantasy life.

Play with toys and games, alone and with others:

The child's ability to play with toys increases and becomes a vehicle for learning how to manipulate physical things, how to make certain toys function whether by some activity the toy performs or is not intended to perform, all of which contribute to the child's continuing mastery of the environment in which he/she lives. Much of the child's playing with toys, some very simple, some quite complex, is a step to learning how to use tools for the purpose of adaptation. At this age, play with toys continues from earlier play to be carried out individually, but there is a large increase now in the use of toys in collaboration with, or in competition with, a peer, an older sibling, and even an adult. Individual play, peer play, or group play can be readily enjoyed by the child. It is also well known and readily observed, however, that in such play many a child suffers disappointment, anger, and pain. During these years, games begin to be introduced, table games as well as movement games. At this time in the playing of games which can be enjoyed individually or with another, actual rules are usually not understood or grasped when first encountered by the average 4 to 5 year old child. During the introduction to games, children at this age often give the impression they are playing according to rules of their own creation. These rules are often quite flexible and changeable, the child seeming not yet able to grasp the definiteness of established rules for specific games. Learning to play satisfactorily according to established rules, such as with checkers or cards is usually achieved during the years from six to ten (see Unit 4). Because feelings that are difficult to tolerate enter into the ability to play games, such as feelings of being too little, of not being as "good" as others; because it is difficult to learn to lose without feeling too hurt or inferior, and because of important fantasies children have associated with winning and losing, playing games at this age seems often a difficult activity. Children often end up very frustrated and disappointed in their own performance and in the conduct of others who win. This often makes playing with toys and games hard work for many a child, a matter of serious effort, of failure and achievement, and of the

¹⁴ See Section 3.23.

¹⁵ See Section 3.26.

development of capabilities.

Fantasy play, alone and with others:

Fantasy play prior to 3 years of age is quite primitive in comparison with the increasingly elaborate and story telling, situation or event-enacting fantasy play that becomes evident during the 3 to 6 years of age period. Fantasy play enriches the child's experiencing. It is also an excellent way of learning about what is going on in his or her mind during this age period. As during the preceding years, fantasy play on an individual basis continues in all children. But especially enriching at this time is the development of fantasy play in conjunction with one or two or more peers, or fantasy play with a parent or an older sibling. Also, whereas earlier fantasy seems to consist of single thoughts or wishes, such as "smell the flower", or "I wish mommy or daddy would come back", now stories can be made up, played out to remarkable length, in many variations, with many details. It can be rich, exciting, and frightening.

The increasing complexity of the fantasy play is, of course, at least in part due to the greater development in the child's thinking (cognitive) capabilities. During these years, the ways in which fantasy play contrasts with the fantasy play of the second and third years of life can be described in terms of 1) its greater situation or event unfolding content, 2) its greater specificity and richness of detail, 3) its much longer duration in time, 4) its common and frequent use in play, 5) the enactment of meaningful experience events rather than of a fragment of event as might have occurred during the 2nd year, and 6) the greater adaptive and problem solving capability inherent in the 3 to 6-year-old's fantasy play. In addition of course, fantasy play is often carried out, by all of us in a way that is not apparent to the onlooker; that is, a child may be physically inactive while in a daydream be very busy in some problem solving or wish-fulfilling fantasy activity. Because of the problem-producing wishes the child now experiences the 3 to 6 year old child is often engaged in this kind of activity (see Section 3.23).

3.2132 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize the Development of Cognitive Activity, Play and Fantasy Activity

Locomotor, Fine Movement Activity, Speech, Books and Reading:

Parents quite naturally help their children in the development of skills and capabilities in locomotion, in riding tricycles and bicycles; many help also in the giving of dancing lessons, music lessons, gymnastics and swimming lessons, etc. Parents also, by the time their child is this age, have been making many efforts to help their children learn to speak; many also help their children to draw, to recite the alphabet and count; many even teach their children to read. Many children request having books read to them, a request which when sufficiently gratified may set the stage for the enjoyment of reading on the part of the child and, of course, establish a positive influence in the child

to wish to read and learn from books in the future. The same can be said of all the instructions the parents give to the child including swimming, catching a ball or swinging a bat or golf club, dancing, music lessons, etc.

All of these efforts, doubly so because they are made by the parents, are of enormous importance to their children. Consider that the 3 to 6 year old child is a student. Indeed, every child is a student from birth on since most of what we eventually know and the skills we acquire have essentially all been learned. Of course children have various inborn talents and limitations; but, most of what we know and can do, we have learned. The parents, then, are the child's first teachers. The efforts parents make to teach them help their children in a number of ways. First, they facilitate the child's learning -- of everything. Consider a child trying to learn to ride a two-wheeler bicycle without help from his/her parents; or learning to speak, or read, or play an instrument. Consider also learning the rules of games. Rules are difficult for young children to accept as well as to learn. Peers help children learn rules. But they are often not so generous or sensitive about it. As a rule, no one will be as patient, concerned and eager to help the child as her/his own parents. Surely, some things are more easily learned without help than are others. But some things would take much longer to learn without the invaluable help parents can give their children when that help is needed.

In selecting what to help the child learn more about, it is well to take the child's interests and natural inclinations into account. Coercing a 4 or 5 year old child to swim or ride a bike, in a child who is afraid of deep water or the bike may produce more tension and conflict than learning. It is not easy to separate out the difference between encouraging, demanding, and coercing a child to learn to do something the child finds difficult. By encouraging we mean to suggest supportively that a child try to do what the child feels intimidated by or afraid of; here the parent lets the child know he or she can count on the parent's help if needed, or the child can put off doing it to another time, or refuse to do it altogether. To demand we mean that the child is told he has no choice; he has to do what he or she is expected to do. This can be done while acknowledging the child's not wanting to do it, explaining (again if necessary) why he or she must do it, saying again that in this he or she has no choice. It is important to convey to the child that he or she has responsibilities too to himself or herself and to the family. By coercing we mean that the child's feeling of self, feelings of anxiety or fear, are put aside or even discredited ("You're not afraid!"), and the will of the parent(s) is the only thing that counts.

Notice that the difference between "demanding" and "coercing" as we use them has to do with how we view the child. In demanding, the child is acknowledged as an individual with rights to respect and explanation; she has a voice but not a vote. In coercing, the child's sense of self is disregarded; he may even be shamed for being anxious or afraid. His or her will is battered. The child is emotionally abused.

4 1/4 year old Doug used to really enjoy splashing in the portable kiddie pool they had when he was 1 and 2 years old. Mom thought he'd like to learn to swim. But when taken to the pool, Mom and Dad found that Doug was afraid to go any deeper than his knees and becomes frightened when Dad tries to get him to get into the water to learn to swim. Dad said to Mom that Doug is just not ready to learn to swim. No way will he do

what his Dad did to him! Dad loves his own Dad, but some memories make him still very angry with his Dad. One, for sure, is that when Doug's Dad was a boy, he too was afraid of water (to swim in). Doug's grandfather thought the best way to get Doug's Dad to learn to swim was just to throw him in the deep end of a pool to force him to swim his way out! Many Dads did that in those days. No way will he do that to Doug!

But Mom was worried that Doug was afraid of the water. "What's wrong with that kid anyway?" She said. Mom didn't realize that 3 to 6 year old kids develop fears of things like swimming or riding a bike due in part at least to some of the fantasies normal kids have. Trying to talk them into not being afraid often does not work. Mom couldn't help feeling mad at Doug sometimes for this. Last week she called him a sissy and Doug felt very embarrassed and mad at Mom for doing that. Mom was sure that her son was the only kid in Philadelphia who is afraid of water. She was very surprised when 50 year old Bernie's mother happened to ask her advise on what to do about Bernie's just refusing to try to ride the new two-wheeler bike his grandparents gave him for his 5th birthday. He refuses to try it even with the training wheels on.

Parents tend to feel bad when their children are afraid of learning what most children seem to do with no trouble at all, like swimming or riding a bike. A number of things contribute to these fears. First are the fears of getting hurt, of failing, of feeling embarrassed, etc. Then, there are also more complicated fears, that come from other sources than the bike or the water itself. This has more to do with normal fantasies children have which we shall detail in Sections 3.23 and 3.24. For now let's just consider what Doug's Mom and Dad and Bernie's Mom (his Dad is not living with them) could say that would be growth promoting.

Doug's Dad knew how it feels to be coerced as a 4 year-old into doing something that frightens you. He remembers. Unfortunately many parents do not (let themselves) remember; this is regrettable, because it would increase their understanding of what their child is experiencing. Dad can say, "I was afraid of swimming when I was your age too, Doug. It really is important to learn how to swim though, so I hope that someday soon you'll wanna try to learn. We can do it slowly. You don't have to know how to swim right now."

Mom would help a lot by apologizing to Doug for calling him a sissy. "Doug, I'm really sorry I lost my cool the other day when I said you're being a sissy. I'm sorry; I wasn't at my best then. I do want you to learn to swim; it can save a person's life; one can never tell if one will ever need to know how to swim. You have to try to do it someday soon, I'll try to be better about helping you overcome being afraid."

Bernie's Mom should not push Bernie so hard since learning to ride a bike is not essential to survival or constructive adaptation. She can tell Bernie though that riding a bike is a lot of fun, feels really good, and would help Bernie feel good about himself. It can be embarrassing if a friend says, "Let's ride our bikes" and you have to say, "Uh, well, uh, I'm not allowed" or something like that.

There are many things the 3 to 6 year old child must do whether the child likes it or not like washing up, eating with reasonable manners, going to bed when told to do so, etc. To coerce learning where not yet necessary may, in many children of this age, lead to resistance to learning -- which can later be costly to school learning. Later, of course,

demanding that the child do homework may be necessary. Encouraging or even demanding a child to practice special skills can readily be done during the 3 to 6 year period. Some talented ones should be respectfully pushed (by demanding) to develop their talents. But caution and due respect for the child are needed along with some monitoring of both positive and negative reactions to such pressured demands.

The parents' teaching the child not only facilitates the child's learning process, it also encourages the child to learn on his or her own; and that in turn, is facilitated by the parents approving of the child's efforts and successes. Parental approval brings with it pleasure and pride in making efforts and in succeeding, and raises the child's self-esteem. There is, therefore, value in parents helping their children develop skills in playing and in learning activities.

But parents also have to know when not to help and when to let the child try to cope on her or his own even at times to struggle some. Struggling to do something on one's own, trying hard to learn to dance or do gymnastics, to draw or read, to swim, to ride a bicycle or hit a ball with a bat, brings with it not only its own development of skills but also the child's feeling she/he is competent, capable and can be reasonably self-reliant. It makes the child do things he/she never did or mastered before and with it new skills are learned -- an essential step in learning to adapt to the many challenges of life and to grow. For this reason, children need opportunities, time and space to learn to do things by themselves.

But when the task is too difficult, when the child tries again and again and fails, when the child is likely to give up, the parent should step in and help. One of the best times to help, of course, is when the child asks for help. Pushing a child too hard to learn, and not pushing a child hard enough to learn, can both interfere with healthy growth of skills at learning and/or playing.

At this age too, children will also want to help mom or dad fix things. Some parents will not allow a child to help--if even just to hold the tools or handle utensils, to hand them to father or mother when needed. This often makes a child feel hurt and resentful and can lead to the child's feeling unimportant and incompetent, a feeling that can last in some instances for many, many years. In this context one often hears a parent say to a child impatiently, "You can't do this" or "You'll hurt yourself", or the like. Of course, many times limits must be set to protect the child; we are speaking only of the opportunity for the child to learn age-appropriately to do things that are safe, to develop skills under reasonable conditions, and to grow in self-confidence and self-value.

We should say here too that teasing and ridiculing a child's performance, in whatever task, whether speaking, throwing a ball, drawing, etc., is hurtful, shames, may enrage and create resentment and is a poor way of trying to get improved performance. Usually, encouragement works better.

Let's consider briefly the issue of answering a child's frequent "Why" questions. It is not necessary for parents to be paragons of virtue or of patience. There are times when children will really wear their parents' patience with their numerous questions "Why". But for the most part answering the child's questions are enormously useful to the child. The information that parents convey to their children by answering their questions helps the children learn what the real world is like. We will talk in a moment about children's

wild fantasies. The need to know, the need to understand how things work, what makes them work, seems to be very strong in some children. Of course it is the kind of interest and curiosity one hopes a child will have when the child goes to school and it is time to learn from books as well as experience. This is where it all begins: with the child asking the parent why something happens or does not happen. The pressure to know is so large that if the parent does not answer the children's questions the children may seek out other teachers to answer these questions. Some of these teachers may very well be a neighbor who is 6 or 7 years old who can give the child much misinformation, to the child's detriment. But, let's remember again, that it is not necessary for parents to answer all their children's questions, especially when a parent is exhausted and would like a few minutes of peace.

How to optimize children's learning to play with toys and games, alone and with others:

Most children use toys very well and these help them learn all kinds of basic principles as of physics, such as wheels facilitate moving a load of blocks from one place to another, or toys always fall downward, they go up only if you toss them up (i.e., gravity), etc. They also learn that toys break and cannot always be repaired. But children also may use toys as weapons and they may break them partly intentionally say when angry with mother or father or big brother. When Jennifer's Mom told Jennifer she can't go into her brother Mike's things without asking him first, one of the reasons was that Jennifer did manage to break two of his erector constructions, Mom thought, maybe because Jennifer is jealous of Mike for a number of reasons, e.g., he's older, he's a boy, he goes to bed later, he can build things she can't (yet), and foremost, she is at times convinced that Mom loves him better than her. Jennifer's Mom was helpful to both Mike and Jennifer when she told her daughter that she is not allowed to just break Mike's toys, nor her own for that matter. "It's better to talk about feeling angry or jealous than to just break something! Besides, toys cost money and breaking them is wasting money. Cut it out!"

That is different from what Doug does which is that he likes to take some toys apart, he says to see what's inside them. He actually tries to put them back together; when he can't he has asked his father to fix them for him. Even though Doug's father can't always fix them, he does not get mad at Doug because he knows Doug's not just breaking his toys, that he is exploring how they're put together and how they work. That is why Doug's parents have gotten him toys that are interesting to take apart and can pretty much be put back together. In fact, they plan to buy him a pretty complicated erector set for his 5th birthday.

Playing with other children is very useful for them but it is not always fun. 5 1/2 year old Bernie's mother likes Bernie to have a friend or two over to play with him. He does have 2 nice friends who go to the same kindergarten to which he goes. Bernie is quite good about playing with them, but from time to time he seems to get upset and then things don't go well. He then does not want 5 1/2 year old Suzy nor 5 3/4 year old Tom to play with his toys. Then, of course, Suzy and Tom get mad at him and gang up on

him. Last Tuesday, Bernie's Mom really got angry with him for this; she can't even remember what was troubling Bernie. Mad at him for again not wanting Suzy or Tom to play with his toys, Mom got very upset and said "You really are a spoiled kid! You don't deserve to have friends like Suzy and Tom! If you don't let them play with your toys, I'll just have to send them home -- and you'll have no friends to play with!" That really made Bernie feel awful. Now he felt everyone was against him; everyone hates him. And he hates everybody! Interestingly, Suzy felt very bad for Bernie. So did Tom. Suzy put an arm around Bernie's shoulders. Tom spoke up: "It's OK Mrs. W, I sometimes do that too. Can we all go in the backyard and play?" Bernie, Suzy and Tom have been playing together for about 2 years. This kind of episode had happened before between them.

Bernie's mother was not helpful in the way she handled this situation. Life is difficult for mothers and it is difficult for children. Many demands are made on children; there are many difficult things to learn, many frustrations, hurts, and disappointments. A major one for Bernie is that, after years of arguing and a lot of hostile interactions and even insults, Bernie's Mom and Dad have separated. Suzy and Tom were fully aware of this. Of course, life is difficult for parents too, especially where there is a separation between them. Bernie's mother though, as should all parents, should have asked herself "How would I want my Mom to treat me when I did what Bernie did?" If parents apply this Golden Rule in their parenting it would guide them to be growth-promoting more than 80% of the time. It could have led Bernie's mother to say something like: "What's going on guys? Can I help? Bernie you look pretty mad. What happened?" Some complaint might have been registered and Mom could have tried to get the kids to resolve their problem together, these are actually good opportunities to help one's child solve problems constructively with friends. Bernie's Mom could have said: "Bernie, you're the host to you friends and that means you should let them play with your toys; I am sure that they let you play with their toys when you go to their houses. It's ok if you kids get mad at each other sometimes; but you've got to learn how to play fairly together, and how to settle your arguments reasonably. And you and I can talk about this more later." Respect for the child, knowing that there always is a reason for a child feeling hurt or angry, recognizing that when a problem arises it often can be made into an opportunity to help your child grow well -- these are essentials for growth promoting parenting. Helping the child get along constructively with friends in play contributes to the child's learning how to get along constructively in all social life situations, be it in play, in work, in society.

Optimizing children's fantasy play:

Fantasy and fantasy play are problem solving strategies. They are not silly, useless child's play. When a 3 year old gets an antibiotic treatment shot at the pediatrician's and for the next few days or longer goes around playing doctor or nurse and giving every available person a series of shots and expecting variable reactions, the child is trying to master a situation in which the child felt afraid, helpless, hurt and probably angry. Each fantasy and fantasy play is an effort at mastering some aspect of life and adapting to it. Most common fantasy play of 3 to 6 year olds centers around family experiencing: playing house. A mother is taking care of a child, or going shopping, or going to the

office to work; a mother and father are doing everyday chores with the baby; or they are on a trip together, etc. Also common is playing doctor. Here parents are wise to be alert since bodily examinations and poking can lead to infantile sexual explorations which requires parental attention and guidance (more about this in Section 3.23). Parents should know that this "playing house" may be quite complex. A child may one time be the mother or the father (the sex of the child playing is not always determining of the part played), at another time, the baby. Although there is a tendency for girls to engage in playing house more readily than in boys, it is quite normal for both girls and boys.

It is important for parents to also know that quite normally children's fantasies can be extravagant, distorting, and even bizarre. Because there is a strong need to understand and know, to have explanations for how and why things happen if left to themselves, children will fabricate their own theories about anything and everything. The experiences they have, of course, is what determines the theories they will develop. Where the child's experience is limited, where the experience has not made certain things clear or known to the child, the child will fill the gaps from his/her own imagination, fantasies, in an effort to cope and to master life and the world in which he or she lives. Understanding the usefulness to coping of a child's fantasies will make a parent more tolerant of the child's fantasies. The child's efforts to fill gaps in the experiences he or she has lead the child to spin distorted, even bizarre fantasies. The parent's helping the child correct some of the child's distorted fantasies gives the parent an opportunity to help the child read reality better and with it adapt better.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.2211 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Self and Human Relationships

The Development of Self:

The remarkable development of each person into a "self" which begins from birth, has undergone complex development during the first 3 years of life. Through the dual process of (1) an unfolding of the most primitive sense of self, hand in hand with (2) the separating out of that budding sense of self from the all-important sense of being one with mother through the process of separation-individuation which Dr. Margaret Mahler describes, by 30 to 36 months the sense of self as an individual progressively acquires stability and reliability. The child who develops favorably has negotiated and established well the sense of "being together with" and "being distinct from" those emotionally closest to the child, as Dr. Louis Sander proposes. The child now knows, is aware of being a self, an individual person. And equally important, where life experience has been good enough, this "self" has deeply meaningful relationships with those the child now loves, parents and siblings especially.

Differentiation of Gender Self:

Now a major internal organization of the self begins to unfold. From about 2 1/2 to 6 years, the first of two major developments of one's gender and sexuality occurs. The second development occurs at puberty, which brings with it adolescence. The less than 2-year old child already has some sense that she is a girl or he is a boy. This comes from the child's biology as well as from the way she or he is identified and treated by the parents. "Good boy!", "Good girl!"; "Bad boy!", "Bad girl!", etc. have already been said to the child many times. The way the child is dressed, the toys that are bought for the child, the way the child is treated by the parents all already instill in the child an increasingly stable sense of being a girl or a boy. In addition, in many instances, the child already has seen and reacted to exposed genitals of other children and knows that there are differences between boys and girls.

From about 2 or so years of age on, as a result of some internal maturations the child's behavior shows much concern and preoccupation with sexual matters, sexual differences between male and female, and the recognition of the self as a boy or a girl (see Section 3.23). Quite more than before too, between 2 1/2 and 6 years of age the child is becoming a certain type of self, a male self or a female self. Most children seem to appreciate that they are a male or female with pleasure, pride, and good feeling. But certain factors make it more or less difficult for many a child to accept features of being a male or a female (we shall detail in Section 3.23).

From the child's behaviors, during the 3 to 6 years period, one sees that the self

achieves and establishes the all important differentiation into a gender self, that is, a male self or a female self. This is an infantile form of being a female or male self, as compared to the adult form of being a female or male that begins with puberty (see Units 5 and 6). This infantile form of gender formation, though, is important and tends to be decisive for becoming and feeling oneself to be a female or a male person.

Other Differentiations of the Self:

Children's behaviors, especially visible in their fantasy play but also in their actual daily ways of being themselves, suggest that they see themselves as a particular type of person. Among the many things they may pretend to be, be it a teacher, a doctor, or a dancer, many a girl will most pretend that she is a mother; a boy will mostly pretend he is a father. Most often, this results from identifying more selectively with the parent of the same sex. It is important though to know that both girls and boys identify with both their mothers and fathers. These behaviors indicate a further shaping of the self into a mother-self, or father-self, as well as a or a teacher-self, or doctor-self, or a secretary-self, or policewoman-self, etc.

Developing Relations:

As was detailed in Unit 2, the development of the self proceeds hand-in-hand with the development of our relationships to others, with the stabilizing negotiation of "being together with" and "being distinct from" those the child most values emotionally. This is especially so in our primary relationships, with those who invest emotionally in us and play a vital part in our lives from the earliest days of life on.

During the 3 to 6 years period, the child's relationships with her or his caregivers, especially the parents, dominate the child's emotional life. The parents because of the high level of emotional investment in their child (which constitutes primary relationships) continue to be most important to the child's emotional development, now in a new way as will be detailed below and in Section 3.23. The child's primary relationships also continue to include increasingly more meaningful interactions with their siblings. Grandparents too become increasingly meaningful. Some young children now also form more or less meaningful secondary relationships (at a substantially lower level of emotional investment than in parents) with one or several peers or a neighbor. In many instances a child may also have developed an important, but still secondary, relationship with a caregiver other than the child's own parents, e.g., a daycare person. Then, when children 3 to 6 go to school, they also develop relationships with some schoolmates and teachers.

The child's relationships with the parents becomes more complex. What do we see? To see more clearly, let's simplify matters. (We shall detail this further in Section 3.23.) Let us assume two families where there is a mother, a father, one with a daughter (Jennifer) and one with a son (Johnny) between the ages of 3 to 6. Jennifer and Johnny are both 4 years old. And let's also assume that the family gets along pretty well, that there is good love feeling when things go well, and when mother or father gets angry

with the child this is made clear but there is no child abuse or violence.

Relationship to mother:

Mother continues to be experienced by most children as the one who most effectively is able to nurture and comfort, to calm and soothe, to perform the functions she has performed since the child was born. In addition now, at four, Johnny has warmed even more toward his mother. He often wants to be physically close to her more than since he was an infant, to touch her, even caress her arm and be amorous with her. Clearly he prefers to be with mother than he had in some time. In fact, Johnny has now said on several occasions that when he grows up he will marry her. At age four these behaviors which have been going on for about 1 year or more continue; but some increasing annoyance with mother appears also. Johnny at times becomes annoyed with mother, even angry, when mother is paying attention to father or other men; Johnny seems to be most angry with mother when she gives father a hug or a kiss. We assume that like most boys, by the time he is five or six years old he will be less amorous, and no longer say that he will marry his mother. He may even give mother a hard time then. He may also cling quite tightly to her at times; and at other times virtually ignore that she exists.

Why is this happening? Briefly now, we shall explain and detail further in Section 3.23, those biological development-inducing factors that produce the sense of self as being a boy or as being a girl also bring with them the fact that the boy's biology (and the psychology to which this biology leads) makes him choose his mother as the one he prefers over all others.

Jennifer, for similar reasons, chooses her father. Mother continues to be experienced by Jennifer as the one she prefers for nurturing, calming, soothing, and those other functions mother has most performed with Jennifer. But at four, Jennifer, whose relations with her mother during the first 2 or so years of life have been quite warm and comfortable has become much more difficult during the past year or so. Jennifer's Mom was very worried and sad that her relationship with her daughter seemed to have gotten bad for no apparent reason. Mom was surprised but a little relieved when her friend Gloria told her playfully but with some exasperation that she was ready to lend her own 2 1/2 year old daughter out for a year! "She has become so difficult!" "Would you believe it, she wants her father to take her camping without me!" At 2 1/2, this girl wanted father to take her on a trip and leave mother home. In fact, Jennifer's mother recalls that 4 1/4 year-old Diane had put on her mother's powder and perfumes and then dumped them in the toilet. According to Diane's mother, she did this three times!

But these difficult behaviors alternate with periods of the old well-known warmth, closeness, even clinging, like when Jennifer was 1 1/2 years old. Jennifer will probably continue in this vein till she is about 6 years old but we expect with less hostility toward mother and in some instances that hostility will give way to predominantly very positive relatedness.

Relationship to Father:

The relatedness to father that has evolved during the first 2 1/2 or so years continues. The various functions he performs, the comforting and calming, the playing with, the occasional rough-housing, the fixing of a hurt or broken toy, etc., continue. But for the average four year old girl like Jennifer, her father has become even more exciting than before and she just adores him! She has said that when she grows up she will marry her Daddy. When he comes home from work she is the first to greet him and gives him a glowing welcome home. She becomes annoyed with him when he pays attention to mother or to other females. Mostly so, when he hugs Mother or gives her a kiss. Interestingly, even though Dad is the one who kissed Mom, Jennifer is more likely to be angry with mother than with father. Every now and then, however, she retreats from this behavior, will ignore her father and be all kindness and warmth with her mother. She is also at times angry with her father for ignoring her needs in favor of her mother. As we noted in Section 3.2121, one 4 1/4 year old Diane sashayed up to her father, fluttered her eyelashes and asked him to take her out to the movies and dancing. We see less of this in many 5 and 6 year olds although it tends to continue, in perhaps slightly modified or slightly hidden ways for some years to come.

For Johnny too, the relationship of the first 2 years continues into this period of development. Like the average 3 year-old boy who is emotionally valued and engaged in interaction by his father, Johnny finds his father very much fun, exciting, and adores him. He may even idealize him. His father is great! But now and then, he wishes Dad wouldn't come home, or that he would stay on his business trip longer. When he finds mother and father hugging he tends to express most of his anger toward his father, as if the father were to blame for this parental behavior. At 4, this behavior will continue. From time to time we will also find Johnny's behavior suggestive of competing with father, of wanting to do things better than his father, of wanting to be big like father. We even see instances of Johnny showing that he believes himself to be stronger than his father. When he is 5 and 6 year old, Johnny's relationship toward father will more or less abruptly change to again a more positive one with occasional expressions of fear of father as well as episodes of competitiveness and rivalry with him.

This is a simplified model of the new behaviors that appear in 3 to 6 year old children in their primary relationships to their mothers and fathers. These become superimposed on and admixed with the types of relationships and behaviors we saw in the first three years of life, from the very infantile positive and negative behaviors through those characteristic for the first 2 to 3 years of life.

Relationships to Siblings:

Siblings are enormously meaningful to 3 to 6 year-olds. During this age period, we may expect siblings within 2 years of the 3 to 6 year old to be experienced as peers, whereas more than 2 years older or younger puts more distance in peer-experiencing. As years pass, these differences in years become less distancing in being peers. For the 3 to 6 year, where the relationship is mostly positive, siblings older in years tend to be looked up to with admiration and are often used as models. This is so for both boys and girls.

Younger siblings may be readily accepted and become very meaningful to the 3 to 6 year old. But they also are commonly experienced as competitors who are taking a lot of Mom and Dad's time away from the self. This leads to the well known "sibling rivalry", a virtually unavoidable problem in all sibling relationships, even, albeit less so, in twins.

Siblings are the closest persons to whom the child normally attaches, next in line to the parents. During the 3 to 6 year period, where the relation is good, an older sibling will from time to time be experienced as a parent substitute. This can serve both the older and the 3 to 6 year old well. For instance, like the time when Jennifer's mom has to go for a doctor's appointment. Her brother Mike had to go to a cub-scout meeting after school just one block away from home. So Mom asked her friend and neighbor Gloria to take care of Jennifer until Mom got back from her appointment. Gloria and Jennifer's Mom did this from time to time for each other; and besides Jennifer and Gloria's 2 1/2 year old daughter Jane got along pretty well. After some time there, the doorbell rang and Gloria let Mike in. Mom had called Mike at the Cub Scout's and told him to please pick Jennifer up because Mom was going to be later than expected. When Jennifer saw Mike, her face lit up. Gloria thought! Jennifer reacted as if, she had seen her Dad or Mom! But it was only her brother. She was surprised at how happy or relieved Jennifer was to see her brother. She also noticed that Mike seemed very pleased when he saw Jennifer's pleasure at seeing him. In this event, Jennifer experienced Mike as a stand-in for her parents.

This meant a lot to Gloria because she recalls every now and then how Jane had once sadly complained to her Uncle Jack that her 8 month-old sister Sara "has stolen my mommy!" Gloria hoped that maybe someday soon Jane would recognize that Sara really likes her and values her. 2 1/2 year old Jane then had acutely experienced sibling rivalry. So has Jennifer who at times envies Mike. But Jennifer also values and loves Mike a lot; and it is likely that the same will happen to Jane and Sara.

Siblings are also important to 3 to 6 years olds as playmates. But here too, play can end up causing hurt feelings and lead to argument and fights between siblings.

Relationships to Secondary Caregivers:

The 3 to 6 year old child's world still, like during the first 3 years of life focuses most emotionally around the nuclear family, mother, father, and siblings. Substitute caregivers or day care workers who work with children under 5 know that much care-giving including nurture is needed by them. This in large part is due to the still dominant need to be taken care of, to have caregivers available for emotional sustenance as well as for help with physical needs. The less than 5-year-old's dependence on caregivers is still much larger than his or her self-reliance. This is why many children in preschool often turn to a teacher for comfort or reassurance.

Children who experience such a substitute (for parents) caregiver as helpful, kind and friendly may very well develop very positive feelings for that person which can stabilize into a quite meaningful relationship. But the child emotionally perceives that this kind of relationship is usually less emotionally invested than with the parents, that while this caregiver is very nice, that the caregiver would not "take the child home", nor

would the child want to go home with her or him. Regrettably, we do from time to time see young children whose relationships at home are so poor and painful -- due to parental emotional illness, or neglect, or abuse -- that they would welcome a very nice caregiver's offer to take them home. Under such conditions, the 3 to 6 year-old child may attach to such a caregiver and then, separating from her may cause painful separation reactions. Some children who are in emotionally very poor home situations may attach to an aunt or an uncle who offers the young child feelings of love, respect, and enjoys being with the child. Such an attachment may become the major source of feeling loved and valued and provide the child with positive identifications which give the child positive images of the self and others, provide models for coping, reacting, and behaving. Such a relationship may have all-important consequences to the child's developing ability to cope constructively and to his or her personality. Clearly, the child whose relationships with her or his parents are loving, respecting and gratifying enough is enormously advantaged over the child whose sole source of positive relatedness is a loving aunt, uncle or teacher.

There was a time when throughout the world, families including grandparents, even aunts, uncles and cousins all lived together. In many countries now, including the USA, grandparents generally no longer live with their grown children and grandchildren. There are, however, many families in the USA that are constituted of a grandmother, a young mother and child(ren). Some two-career families wisely convince grandparents to live with them to care for the child when both mother and father are at work. 3 1/2 year old Victor's Mom and Dad both work long hours outside the home. His paternal grandparents have lived with them for 7 years, since the birth of his 7 year-old sister. Victor has developed very good, loving relationships with all those in his family, his Mom and Dad, grandmother and grandfather, and his older sister. His relationship with each is different, as is the case with all children. At 3 1/2, he seems to turn to his grandfather for protection, and any time he needs something done he cannot do himself. In fact Grandpa and his Mom seem most comfortable for him. Victor has formed primary level relationships with his grandparents as well as his parents and sister.

Relationships to Peers:

In the USA, peers are now introduced in the lives of 3 to 6 year olds more than was the case years ago. Peers are introduced to 3 to 6 years in countries where daycare is needed; in the USA and Western Europe it is because parents need to work outside the home; in other countries, such as Russia, China and Israel, it is because of social philosophic convictions as those that come with socialism. Child developmentalists (of certain schools) believe that the nuclear family is where the 3 to 6 year of child's basic developmental tasks lie. These professionals do not think that peer relations are necessary as they will become during the 6 to 13 years, and especially during adolescence.

However, there are advantages to 3 to 6 year olds having some peer relations to pave the way for their learning to get along with peers during the years that follow. For instance, 5 1/2 year old Bernie had a hard time sharing his toys with Suzy and Tom. Although Bernie's Mom didn't do the best job in helping him with this problem, it was a

valuable lesson for him; and it was helpful to him that Suzy and Tom were sympathetic and quite positive about it. You could see the relief on his face when Suzy put her arm around his shoulders and Tom said he feels like this sometimes too. And, of course, Jennifer's Mom was really very helpful to Jennifer when she told her she could not take or play with things that belong to her brother Mike without his permission. And then it is also quite useful that Jennifer has a chance to play with 2 1/2 year-old Jane who seems to enjoy Jennifer's "mothering" her; Jennifer seems to take that play and that relationship pretty seriously; in fact Jane likes Jennifer quite a lot, probably because Jennifer's practicing at being a Mom is thoughtful, considerate and caring.

Relationships to Teachers, Others:

Teachers become quite meaningful to 3 to 6 year olds. Some become so more than others. They can become important to the child because the child likes them or because they have hurt the child and evoked feelings of hate for them. Of course, a young child being hurt (emotionally or physically) by a teacher may have serious consequences for the child's feelings about school. On the other hand, a 5 year-old liking or even having a "crush" on his kindergarten teacher will make him look forward to going to school and like school.

The last situation mentioned can be very real for the child. 5 1/2 year-old Bernie showed the degree to which a child can feel "in love". We learned of it gradually, but its proof came later. For the past 2 months Bernie had been asking his mother to have her invite the young woman who lived in the apartment below theirs to come to visit. One time she said that when she came he wanted mother to leave them alone. Reasonably enough, mother did not invite her, but she was sympathetic to her son's very strong feelings for this 24 year old woman. She was taken by surprise that her 5 year old could feel so infatuated with a young woman he hardly knew; he saw her a few times and she was always very pleasant with Bernie and his Mom. But the proof of the depth of his feelings for her showed when Mom told Bernie that the young woman was moving away, out of Philadelphia. Bernie became sad, looked forlorn, and gave the impression of a broken-hearted lover. We shall talk more about this in Section 3.2312. A child's romantic attachment to a teacher, or a neighbor may surprise parents by its intensity. Although its disappointment caused Bernie much pain, that he could develop such a romantic attachment for someone other than his mother was quite advantageous for him. We shall explain why in Section 3.2312.

3.2212 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize the Development of Self and Human Relationships

Optimizing the Development of one's Gender Self:

We will withhold a full discussion of the child rearing aspect of this issue until Section 3.23 because it will make more sense after we have talked about a major

emotional-psychological development that comes with the emergence of the child's sexual life. For the moment, it may suffice to say that the parent who does not know to expect these kinds of normal behaviors, the concerns children express about being a boy or girl, the concerns about their genitals, the boy's preference for and erotic feelings toward his mother and rivalry and competitiveness with father, the girl's rivalry, competitiveness and increased hostility toward her mother and preference for and erotic feelings toward her father, that parent will be startled by these behaviors. Many also will be hurt by what they will experience as unreasonable, unfounded hostility, be surprised by and made uncomfortable or anxious by the expression of erotic-romantic feelings. While the girl's adoring her father and the boy's adoring his mother are pleasant to the parent in question, they commonly reach proportions of erotic experiencing -- like Bernie showed -- that will from time to time make most fathers and mothers feel uncomfortable. Most parents deal with this reaction within them by ignoring or denying (believing it does not mean what it appears to mean) the child's behavior. As a result many parents tend to not see that it is happening and then cannot help their children cope with these behaviors in ways most advantageous to the child. Knowing that these behaviors occur normally and understanding what causes them and what their implications are can make easier the parents' efforts to help their child become a self who likes being a male or a female (see Section 3.23).

Other behaviors, as well, that enhance the development of the child's gender-self can be encouraged or discouraged by the parents' reactions to them. Obviously, a parent who ridicules or is indifferent to her/his child's pretending to be a mother or a father or a doctor or a secretary or a truck driver may have a significant discouraging impact on the child's self image. The parent who appreciates the genuine interest the child has in pretending to be or wishing to be a mother, a father, etc., and is optimistic (and says so) for the child's future as a mother, father, truck-driver, etc., enhances the child's self attitude about these wishes and ultimately helps to make them part of the child's future, achievable goals.

For now, we can say that Doug's mother did not do well when she called him a "Sissy" for fearing learning to swim. Calling him a Sissy due to such a fear can undermine his sense of being a boy -- besides offending him (hurting him) and making him angry with her. Doug's Dad was much more helpful because he essentially told Doug that being afraid of swimming or riding a bike (like Bernie was) does not mean one is not a fine boy who can grow into a strong and capable man.

Jennifer's Mom and her friend Gloria are being helpful to Jennifer's sense of being a girl when they make opportunities for Jennifer to "mother" (pretend) Jane now and then when they play. Jennifer's pretending is a trial experiencing, as if the child were saying "This is how I will feel when I am a Mom". It is very helpful that Jennifer's Mom said to her; "You were acting like a very nice Mom when you were playing with Jane. Jane really likes you." Had Jennifer been mean in her pretending to mother Jane, Jennifer's Mom could have asked her why she was acting like such an angry Mom with Jane? What had Jane done to make her so angry? Such attention by mother further supports Jennifer's sense of being a girl who will grow into a woman who can become a mother. Also noting that Jennifer was acting like a good mother, or, had it been the case, noting

that Jennifer was acting like a mean mother can help Jennifer further sort out what it is to be a growth promoting as compared to a growth-disturbing mother.

Diane's father too helped in a growth promoting way Diane's sense of being a girl. When she sashayed up to him and fluttered her eyelashes, etc., he did not ridicule her. He said he couldn't take her to the movies and dancing like he does with mom, but maybe they could all go the movies together some day soon. And, Dad took her seriously; we'll see later what else he said to her about this (see Section 2.312). And Bernie's mom too contributed well to her son's feeling he is a boy, with real boy's feelings about a (grown) girl that she approved of.

Developing Relationships:

All children throughout their development identify with the people they value emotionally and to whom they become emotionally attached, that is, with those with whom they have a primary relationship. All 3 to 6 year old children identify most with both their mothers and fathers and in some with their grandparents, or an aunt or uncle to whom they feel very close. Children identify with both the positive as well as the negative attributes in both their parents. Parents cannot influence which aspect of themselves their children will select for identification. They can expect, however, that children are more likely to identify with what their parents do than with what the parents wish their children would do.

We will also withhold a full discussion of the child rearing aspect of developing primary relationships during the 3 to 6 years period until Section 3.2312, after we discuss some basic emotional-psychological dynamics brought about by the child's first major phase of sexual development. The relationships to the parents in all its aspects is of such large importance to normal psychological development that a fuller understanding of it for the 3 to 6 years period is warranted before we proceed. We will only note that the concern many parents have that their children need peers in these early years or they may never learn how to get along with other people is erroneous. The relationships we make, as children and as adults, as peers, as mates, and as parents are first and foremost dependent on the primary relationships we formed with our own parents during the first six years of life. Later experiences with our parents, experiences with our siblings and then peers and others count also toward the kinds of later relationships we make. But there is no urgency to children under six years of age having a steady diet of peer relationships; there is urgency to their having a good enough relationships with their parents and their siblings.

Optimizing the Relationships to Siblings:

It is useful to bear in mind that relationships between siblings are usually the longest lived and experienced relationships any of us have. Usually siblings come into our lives very early if not from birth on, and on average, will live as long as we are alive. Our siblings will be around 20 to 30 years longer than our parents and our mates. It is reasonable to say then, that optimizing these relationships is of great value.

One factor that adds value to siblings relationships is that sibs are not only individuals with whom we have a primary relationship, as we do with immediate family members, but that they are also peers. In this then they also belong to that unique world outside the family: peer relationships. As peers they are not yet as important to the 3 to 6 year old child as they will become during the 6 to 12 years period and especially during adolescence and later.

It is therefore very helpful for parents to try to secure and protect good-enough relatedness between their children. In Sections that follow we shall especially focus on how to handle sexual behaviors between siblings -- and they happen much more than most parent recognize -- and how to handle aggressive, especially competitive and hostile behaviors between siblings (see Sections 3.2312 and 3.2412).

Although Jennifer's parents were aware that they did not want to make unreasonable demands on her 7 year old brother, Dad especially would say to Mike "Take care of your sister," or "You're her big brother, you have to protect her when she needs it". That helped, even though Mike felt, most of the time anyway, that nobody needed to tell him that, he knew that. Mom helped this too, when she trusted Mike to take proper care of Jennifer and asked him to please pick Jennifer up at Gloria's because Mom would be late. Some mothers or fathers would not trust their seven year-old to do this. Parents have to use their judgment about it. But where the 7 year-old has shown age-appropriate responsibility, it is confidence and self-esteem building for a mother to ask her 7 year old to help her as Jennifer's Mom did. The skill needed by the parent here is to be able to determine and make a demand that is not beyond the child's capability or sense of responsibility and at the same time not underestimate what the child can do.

Jennifer rewarded Mike too by reacting on seeing him like he is someone she trusts and loves. Parents can help siblings have such rewarding experiences with one another.

Gloria and her husband had their work cut out. 2 year old Jane feels very angry that they had another baby, Sara. She did not ask to have a sister and she feels that this little unasked for sister "stole" her mommy from her! (See Section 2.2212 for how Jane's parents tried to help their children.)

Optimizing Relationships to Secondary Caregivers:

It is important that parents continue to allow their children to make immediate family members, mother and father especially, the central relationships they have. One young mother of 3 had somehow come to understand that 3 to 6 year old children are no longer as much in need of being with their parents as they were during their 3rd year and before. The way they need and use their parents differs, but parents are still very much at the center of children's lives. This young mother was no less drained by the demands made on her by her 3 children, ages 2, 6 and 8, when she received this information, but she was relieved that it told her there was nothing wrong with her children's needs for her attention.

But it is also advantageous for their 3 to 6 year old children that relationships with substitute caregivers be good. It is important that children be prepared for substitute caregivers, whether they come to the child's home, are in daycare or in preschool.

Parents need to find out what these caregivers are like. How do they seem to feel about children? Do they respect them? Enjoy their behaviors and efforts to cope? Do they welcome the child's efforts to communicate? Can they facilitate the child's efforts in communicating, in coping with challenges, in being sociable with others (where appropriate), etc.? Are they too distant? Do they allow the child to take their hand in times of stress? Can they comfort the child reasonably when needed? Are they interested in what the child says, does, and feels? Is their view of children and child rearing very different from the parents and, if so, are they unable to treat your child according to your views? This last issue is important in selecting a private substitute caregiver. Day care centers and preschools too have ways of treating children parents need to become well acquainted with.

It is also very useful to keep close track of how the 3 to 6 year old feels about her day care center or preschool caregivers or her home substitute caregiver. Does the child enjoy them or her or him? Is the child afraid? Is the child experiencing a good deal of separation anxiety? Fear differs from separation anxiety. Fear comes from an outside source, that is, fear of a dog, or of a scolding, punishing caregiver, or of a bully in daycare, or of sexual abuse. If the child is afraid, parents are wise to take this seriously and explore with the child what she is afraid of. Anxiety, like in separation anxiety, comes from within the child. It is activated by separation from all the persons to whom the child is attached, which is an outside event. But there is no external threat that the child is losing the loved parent or will be abandoned; this false perception of being abandoned, or of loss comes from within the child and results from the still not stable enough inner emotional construction of a self and a loved one who love and value each other no matter what. Therefore, if 4 year old Jennifer is very angry with her mother because she felt Mom prefers Mike over her, this anger toward Mom could make her feel anxious about leaving Mom to go to school out of guilt for being angry with the Mom she loves. The guilt makes her feeling loved and valuable unstable.

It is much help to the child if the 3 to 6-year-old child becomes especially fond of a day care worker or preschool teacher. If the relationships at home are good-enough, such an outside-of-the-family relationship takes nothing away from the child's love for the parents. Children and parents do not have a limited amount of love; love does not need to be distributed. It's time and energy that are limited. When a parent (or child) cannot be emotionally available at a given time it often is not because of a lack of love, but because a parent cannot be in 2 places at the same time, just as Gloria cannot get some food for 2 1/2 year old Jane while she is diapering 6 month old Sara. It is useful to be aware of this and say so to Jane and Sara; and it is well for parents to know that a child really liking or even loving a substitute caregiver is no threat to the parent-child relationship. Quite the contrary.

In this way, for example, 3 1/2 year-old Victor has the advantage of being cared for by very reliable, very loving grandparents. They provide him with emotional experiences of everyday life that make him feel valued, paid attention to with interest and respect. In this, the grandparents add to the good life experiences he has with those with whom he interacts, which he internalizes in his store of experiences, memories, expectations of others, and become part of his personality. It is good and to Victor's advantage that his

mother and father are grateful to Victor's grandparents for the way they take care of their son; and the grandparents know they feel that way.

Optimizing Relationships to Peers:

Parents know how often their 3 to 6 year olds need them to referee their play together. It is unavoidable that children this age will become upset and that this will be reflected in their interactions with peers. It was not clear to Bernie's mother, nor to Bernie either for that matter, why Bernie did not want to share his toys with Suzy and Tom that day. As we already said, we know there was a reason and his mom was not helpful when she just scolded him. It could have helped if she had let Bernie know he must have a reason for feeling upset, angry, and not wanting to share his toys. What was it? If it was that Suzy and Tom were being mean or were teasing him, Mom could have helped them to stop that by telling them she knows they wouldn't want to be treated like that and to cut it out. Or if she could take more time, she could get into it more extensively with them. It would be worthwhile; there are many reasons this would pay off. Mom would not only be helping Bernie learn to deal with his friends better, but she would be helping Tom and Suzy too, all at the same time. In addition, she would get to know Suzy and Tom better herself. It is highly useful for parents to get to know their children's friends. This is important not just for adolescents. Some 5 year-olds can be surprisingly hostile when an adult is not looking; but this can be picked up by talking not only to one's own child but to his friends too.

In what actually happened with Bernie, Suzy and Tom, Mom could have repaired some of the hurt her scolding caused Bernie by taking her cue from Suzy and Tom. She could have apologized for what she said; "I'm sorry Bernie, that wasn't a helpful thing for me to say" would have done a lot to undo her premature scolding. She could have complimented Suzy for wanting to make Bernie feel better (she did try to comfort him) and Tom for admitting that he too at times feels like Bernie did then. And again, then everyone would have benefited from this unpleasant event.

Jennifer's Mom was very helpful because what she did when she told Jennifer she cannot play with her brother's constructions without his permission includes Jennifer's seeing that Mom protects her children's property and rights, that Mom is trying to help Jennifer be fair and reasonable, that she protects her against doing things that will get her in trouble, and more. Jennifer could remember times when she told Mike that being Jennifer's big brother doesn't mean he can play with her things without asking Jennifer if it's ok, and Dad has told Mike he should protect her against anybody trying to hurt her when they are outside.

Optimizing Relationships to Teachers, Others:

Bernie's Mom did a good job because even though she was surprised by Bernie's reactions to the young woman in the apartment below theirs, she let Bernie's behavior inform her. Parents often tend to feel that what their children show in their feelings cannot be like what adults feel. That is not true at all. Letting the child's emotional,

verbal, and behavioral expressions inform the parents is by far better for all than when parents have a preset notion of what children are supposed to feel, experience and understand. We shall talk more about handling such a situation in Section 3.2312.

Facilitating 3 to 6 year old children's relationships with teachers, neighbors and others is not simple, nor is it trivial. Parents want to help their children try to sort out whom the child can trust and whom the child should not trust. This is difficult. Some teachers, neighbors, others are very fine people who really like children; some are not; and some are people with emotional problems who may be hurtful to children. With 3 to 6 year olds, it is wise to caution children to not accept candy or car rides from people their parents do not know. It is wise to help them understand that unfortunately not everyone can be trusted. It is especially to help the child sort such questions out that parents must talk to their children, must try to facilitate their children's talking to them. It is easier to do with children under 6 years than later. Furthermore if it is not done with young children, it will not all at once become possible to do so when they are teenagers. If parents want their children to talk to them when they are teenagers, we say, talk to your children when they are babies (from birth on), talk to them and listen to them, listen to what they say.

It is not wise to tell children they cannot trust anyone because this may do much harm to the child's learning to socialize reasonably. So parents must have their children develop the ability to use their judgment, and this should begin even before age 3 years. There are many opportunities to help children learn to use their judgment. For instance Gloria should talk with 2 1/2 year old Jane about her complaint that Sara had stolen her Mommy. It's true that Mom needs to spend a lot of time to make Sara feel loved and valued, and a lot of time feeding, diapering, holding and comforting Sara, but Mom really loves Jane too. Talking with Jane about the way things really are can help Jane try to use her judgment about things she feels and thinks.

Bernie's Mom, who did so well with Bernie's feeling terribly forlorn that his beloved neighbor was going to move, but did not do so well when he did not want Suzy or Tom to play with his toys, has many opportunities to help Bernie use his judgment. And so did Jennifer's Mom when Jennifer took her brother's erector construction. Both mother's could have added: "How would you feel if this was done to you? Please think about that." They would be asking their children to use their judgment. This contributes to the child's being in a situation, when she or he needs to think, "Is this a safe person? Should I do what he or she says? Does my Mom or my Dad know him?" And add, "If you're not sure, don't do what he tells you to do."

Some better informed parents who talk to their children about their bodies and other things, tell their children to not let others, especially grown-ups other than Mom or Dad or the Doctor touch their private body parts. Those can work well.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.23 THE BEGINNINGS OF SEXUAL (REPRODUCTIVE) LIFE

For thousands of years, we have known that sexual and reproductive life become possible and evident from early adolescence on. Centuries ago, when life expectancy was between 30 and 40, and many who survived childhood died in their 20s, marriage and family life began much earlier than in our lifetime. 14 and 15 year old girls marrying and becoming mothers seemed a necessity. Things have changed dramatically since then and we have learned much. Advances in biological sciences have long extended life expectancy, giving more time to the individual for fuller development, from the development of self as simply preserver of self and of the species to large developments in the self as a person of talents, skills and remarkable capabilities (consider, for example, the development of professional individuals).

We have learned, contrary to what may have been believed centuries ago, that adolescence is not adulthood; it is only that period of physical and psychological-emotional development that transforms the child into the adult. The tasks of this transformation are so complex that the process takes nearly 10 years to fully unfold. The tasks are so demanding that they require all of the child's energies and healthy self-interest to navigate well the course to becoming an adult who can adapt well to the challenges of that adulthood. We shall describe this in detail in Units 5 and 6. For now, suffice it to say that we have learned especially through studies of human development and through mental health clinical work that adolescents are not as ready nor as well prepared for becoming parents as when they are young adults (ages 21 through 30 years). The younger the adolescent, say under 17, the less prepared to (1) experience life as an adult and (2) carry out the arduous tasks and demands of caring for a baby, of being a parent. The work of parenthood is constantly demanding, very complicated with continuous requirement for problem solving, for dealing with a large responsibilities, and with many anxieties and concerns other than those of the self.

Why bring this issue of reproductive and sexual life up when we are talking about 3 to 6 year-old children? Because we have learned during this last century that human sexual-reproductive life does not begin at puberty. Except for a handful of writers from past centuries, it is only since the very end of the 1800's that biological and psychological scientists have found that sexual life begins during the period from 2 to 6 years. Psychoanalysts especially, mental health professionals in general, have found that sexual life develops in 2 major stages. First is a stage of "infantile" sexuality, from about 2 1/2 to 6 years of age; some have found evidence that it may begin even earlier, during the middle of the second year of life. This stage of infantile sexuality is followed, psychoanalysts assume, by a period of relative sexual dormancy extending from about 6 to 10 years. This is then followed by a pre-pubertal period from about 10 to 12 or 13, which is then followed by the second major stage of sexual-reproductive development,

adolescence. Adolescence is generally considered to extend in 3 subphases: The first from about 12 to 15; the second from about 15 to 18 and the third, late adolescence melting into young adulthood from about 18 to 24 years of age.

Here we shall take up the first major stage of sexual-reproductive development, the "infantile" sexual stage. It is a stage of development that causes much anxiety for parents for a number of reasons. Foremost is that eventually sexuality, in puberty, can cause many problems as we all know only too well, physical problems, behavioral and emotional problems as it can cause unwanted pregnancies -- all of which is more likely to happen when sexuality is not paid sufficient attention to and thoughtfully talked about with their children by unknowing parents. Although it causes many parents much anxiety, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and educators believe that knowing that sexuality develops in children from the third year of life on will make parents and society better aware of the fact that young children know about sexuality at age 3 years, have fantasies about it, and that they can be seriously harmed by being involved in sexual activity by persons substantially older than they are. It is sexual abuse.

But when children are sufficiently understood and cared for, rather than causing much anxiety and bewilderment, the emergence of infantile sexuality during the period from 3 to 6 years is a rich, dramatic developmental period. It is embedded in simultaneous growth in adaptive capabilities, including the development of intelligence and language, in development of self and human relationships, as well as in the development of conscience and morality (see Sections 3.21, 3.22 and 3.26).

3.2311 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Sexual (Reproductive) Life

Interest in sexual matters, in the self, in others, in the male, in the female:

Much of children's activities during the 3 to 6 years center around the wide range of issues that pertain to our sexual, reproductive lives. There is much interest in where babies come from, in being a mother, a father, or in being a baby; in matters of family life, of love and affection. For example, 4 year old Jennifer, like many a girl, pretends that she is 20 year old Jane's mother taking care of her baby, or preparing her baby for daycare as she readies for work, or for going shopping, or getting dressed and ready to go out with her husband for an evening on the town. 4 year old Johnny, like many a boy, pretends to be his father preparing to go to work, saying goodbye to the baby and to his mother and kissing her as if he were kissing his wife before leaving for work. Much of the child's interest will be evident in the girl's wishing to be a wife, the boy's wishing to be a husband, wishing to be a mother or father, and in a very serious manner many times carry out these roles in play. The seriousness of these activities is striking and many child development specialists believe they are preparatory for someday being a wife or husband and a parent.

Especially from the third year of life on but in some children even earlier during the latter part of the second year, children's interest in their own genitals and those of others and toilet activities are openly talked about and evident in their behaviors to a greater or lesser degree. Toilet training, usually best achieved during the third year of life, will stimulate in children much interest in urinary and bowel functions and the body parts that perform these functions.

The child's preoccupation with his or her own genitals becomes especially evident. Commonly encountered also though, is a marked interest in and reaction to the genitals of members of the other sex. Both female and male children will show a wide range of reactions to the differences between their own genitals and those of the other sex, from an apparent mild interest to reactions of constant preoccupation, acute anxiety, anger, and even depression. Also notable will be frequent reactions of distortions of what is seen, with rejection of what is seen and realistically possible. For example, 4 1/4 year old Doug, like many a boy, still finds it hard to believe that a girl does not have a penis. Like many a girl, because she is not able to visualize the remarkable internal anatomy of her own genitals and reproductive system, 4 1/4 year old Diane has on a number of occasions expressed discontent and distress at not having a penis. Many a girl has said that she once had a penis which she lost, or that her penis has not yet grown and will do so at any time now. Sometimes a boy will express the wish to have a baby in his own abdomen. Some boys may go so far as to disregard the statements made to them that it is normal that a boy cannot and will not be able to have a baby in his own abdomen. For example, when he was 3 1/2 years-old, apparently not wanting to hear he could not have a baby in his abdomen, Bernie once stuffed a pillow in his shirt, and walked around repeatedly saying that he has a baby in his abdomen just like his mother had when she was pregnant with his brother Dan. These are normal reactions in normal boys and girls.

On close observation one can now begin to see behavior and activity, which in the healthiest and most respectful sense of the word, seem to be gender specific in character. For example, 4 1/4 year old Diane who as a 1 1/2 year old walked in a hefty robust fashion when she was 2 1/2 years old began to walk in a much more feminine way, with a greater softness and fluidity in her movements than before; when nearly 4 years old she fluttered her eyelashes, began to behave in a coy, feminine-seductive manner, even though her mother did not do these things at all. 5 1/2 year old Bernie and 5 3/4 year old Tom's body movements are much heavier than before, sometimes they flex their arm muscles in an exhibitionist manner, adopting "he-man" postures. Of course, the range of such gender specific modes of movements, postures, and activities vary, some boys behaving in more masculine ways, some girls behaving in more feminine ways than others.

Several other aspects of sexual, family life will be seen frequently and explicitly. We have already mentioned it in discussing developments in the 3 to 6-year-old's relationships (Sections 3.2211 and 3.2212). Some of these activities are: (1) amorous, erotic behaviors on the part of little girls toward their fathers especially, but also toward other men. As we already mentioned in Section 3.2121 (Affects), Diane sashayed up to her father, fluttered her eyelashes and said to him: "Will you take me to the movies and dancing?" This, she said one evening when mother worked the night shift and father was home caring for her and her brothers. And we see the same type of behavior on the part of little boys toward their mother in particular and other women in general. Both 4 year old Johnny and 4 1/4 year old Doug have declared that they will marry their mothers when they grow up. Of course, in both boys and girls one will also see occasional amorous, erotic kinds of behavior toward the parent of their own sex. (2) One also sees much activity, especially so in girls, of the child's wish to have a baby, to be a parent. When she was 2 1/2 years old Diane became very involved and attached to infant Rose, Johnny's sister. She begged her mother to go over to Johnny's all the time; she would then pay attention mostly to Rose. One time she told Johnny's mother that Rose is Diane's baby. Johnny's mother gave her quite a look, but Diane did not even notice. Much of this wish is evident in many a child's playing with dolls; but in some instances dolls are rejected and outright statements are made as was by 4 year old Jennifer that she wants to have "a real baby".

To the dismay of many a parent, in the normal child one also begins to see much genital touching, both by direct manipulation of the child's own genitals, as well as by indirect contact such as by straddling the parent's thigh, or a toy horse, or the like and the child then rocking his or her pelvis while astride the parent's thigh or on a toy. A parent who does not know that such behavior normally occurs in children may become alarmed by it; one mother in fact, in alarm, feared her child was becoming abnormal because she was touching her own genitals. These behaviors are strongly suggestive of the emergence of quite strong genitally associated sensations.

It becomes, furthermore, very apparent in many a child that these sensations are not only sexual but also erotic. And these, tied up with love feelings, are directed especially toward the parent of the other sex, and somewhat less so, but not infrequently toward an older sibling of the other sex. Impressive is that many a 3 to 6 year old child's genital

sensations and related erotic feelings are observably associated with love feelings of high intensity as we saw in 5 1/2 year old Bernie. Again of course, these feelings can also be expressed in many children toward the parent of the same sex as well as a sibling of the same sex. In conjunction with the emergence of such erotic love behavior toward the parent of the other sex, one also sees behavior suggestive of rivalry and anger toward the parent of the same sex. These behaviors are normal and bring with them much conflict, anxiety, discomfort, anger, and depression in the normal child. Here is how psychoanalysts explain all these behaviors which are at times worrisome, but ultimately produce very important adaptive psychological and emotional growth.

Infantile Sexuality and The Family Romance:

What causes the behaviors described above? From both their work with emotionally troubled adults, adolescents and children and their observations of normal young children, psychoanalysts have proposed the following explanations.

First, some normal maturational process must be responsible for such universally found behaviors in 3 to 6 year old children from all sorts of cultures throughout the world. Like with other physical, physiological (the way our bodily systems function), and psychological developments, there must be some underlying bodily maturation which compels these developments to occur; they are probably programmed by genetic factors and an inborn maturational timetable. Because we do not yet know what these factors are -- there is no detected hormonal evidence for such activity at this age --, we infer that these behaviors may be produced by the first maturation of what psychoanalysts call "the sexual drive".

We assume that the preservation of the species must be secured by a powerful biological force and program within each of us, including all animals and plants. Whatever it is, the force within us programmed to preserve the species becomes first activated from about 2 1/2 years of age on, and unfolds dramatically during the 3 to 6 years period. We see interest in, indeed preoccupation with babies, genitals, wanting to love someone special, we see a new form of jealousy and rivalry, etc. All point to the child's having sexual sensations, feelings and developing a sexual interest in another person.

It is remarkable that when sexual feelings emerge in the 3 year-old child they become channeled to those persons the child values most, those persons the child already loves. After all, it is well known that full sexual love is not just sensuality; rather it is an amalgamated mixture of "sensuality" and deeply felt "affectional" love. Romantic love, that magnificent force that brings 2 individuals together and which commonly and naturally leads to reproduction is constituted of affectional and sensual trends of love. It therefore should not be surprising, yet it does surprise parents who are not so informed, that the child's emerging sexual feelings should follow the path forged in them by affection and attachment, to those the child already loves most, her or his parents.

This too we discuss below and in the child-rearing Section 3.312.

Infantile Masturbation:

This activity creates much difficulty for children (as we already noted) as well as for parents. For long, infantile masturbation has been and is by many still mistakenly assumed to be a sign of disturbance. This is not so according to medical and psychological professionals. Masturbation, the direct or indirect manipulation of the genitals in reaction to mounting feelings of excitation coming from them, while already evident prior to the third year of life in normal male and female children, now takes a new form. In the first and second years of life, the child occasionally touches his/her genitals in reaction to stimulation that arises both from within the child himself/herself and from the unavoidable manipulations of the genitals associated with diapering and cleansing. Generally such genital manipulation occurs only on occasion, and during the first 2 years, is not a significant focus of interest for the child. From the third year of life on, however, masturbation takes on a new, has a more compelled character and is initiated now by the child himself or herself. The increased arousal of the genital area which we believe is due to the increasing biological maturation of sexuality in every 2 to 3 year old child combined with the high sensitivity of the genitals, compel the child to pay much more attention to them and to make physical contact with them. The child is pressured from within, from sensations that arise from the genitals themselves to manipulate them, or to bring their genitals into contact with something against which the child can rub them indirectly. We now know that two to six year old children masturbate and that it is normal. In Section 3.2312 we shall talk about constructive ways of dealing with infantile masturbation.

Children's Concerns About Their Genitals:

Boys and girls have worries about their genitals, some minimal, some large. When these are unattended, discouraged from expression, or dealt with poorly, it can be hurtful and have later disturbing psychological-emotional consequences. But boys' and girls' concerns differ. Let's take each in turn, girls first, then boys.

3 to 6 year old girls experience sexual excitations every bit as much as boys do. They, like boys, focus on the features of their own genitals in reaction to the strong and compelling sensations that come from them. They find that they can produce pleasure when they touch their genitals whether directly by the child's hand or indirectly as by straddling the parent's thigh or a toy. By touching herself and when by chance she sees a boy's genitals, the little girl becomes aware that whereas the boy's genitals are amply visible, she does not have such an external-visible anatomical structure. Not yet knowing that her genitals are internal, and being under the oppressive influence of the powerful phenomenon of "I want what the other kid's got!"¹⁶ She wonders why her genitals differ from the boy's.

Four and 1/4 year-old Diane when she was 2 1/4 years old became emotionally very involved with Johnny's newborn sister Rose. She had said it was "her baby". At 3 1/2 she had sashayed up to her father and asked him to take her dancing, etc. When she was about 2 years and 7 months, for several months she became somewhat preoccupied with

¹⁶ See Unit 2, Section 2.2141.

"When she would get her penis." She first asked her mother, then her father, and then her next in line older brother. She did not seem to be anguished about it like some girls are, but she did persist in asking about it. This told us that she had a significantly felt concern but it seemed not to trouble her too much.

Four year old Jennifer made no mention of her wondering why she does not have a penis nor whether or not she would have one. Also, she gave no definite evidence of being concerned about it. When 5 1/2 year old Suzy was 3 1/2 years old she had a hard time believing she would not grow a penis. She seemed convinced her mother had one. On one occasion she insisted that her mother show her penis. (Mother quite reasonably did not comply). Suzy then insisted that she be allowed to search in her mother's purse for mother's penis. In the child rearing section we shall talk how Diane and Suzy's parents handled it.

These are reactions of 3 quite normal girls. A number of feelings and fantasies are generated in them: she wants a penis too; hers has not yet grown out; or, hers somehow fell off, or fell out of her body perhaps like a bowel movement, or by her masturbating manipulations; and more.

Young children, because they believe their parents to be magnificent and all-powerful tend to hold their parents responsible for any disappointment or problem they have. Here now, fueled by her marked increase in hate for the mother she now rivals for father's love, many a girl blames her mother for the fact that she does not have "her" own penis. Some bright, imaginative girls may be convinced that their mothers have a penis and that they will therefore grow one too.

This is not a light matter. Many a girl is very pained by this, as she experiences it, this "lack", and feels cheated, deprived or, even, "inferior". She may develop envy of the boy, feeling that he is more privileged than she, that he is "better", and have other equally irrational thoughts based on her not being able to know at a glance the marvels of her own genitals and reproductive system. How this is dealt with by parents can make a large contribution to how the girl deals with it (see Section 3.2312).

Boys too have their fair share of concerns about their genitals. 2 to 3 year old boys, under the influence of their biologically determined emerging maleness, experience their genitals as vital to their sense of self. It is as if they experience their genitals as being most indicative of their emerging maleness and masculinity. Narcissistically (self-admiringly) exhibiting their muscles seems to do this too.

Experiencing his genitals as vital to his maleness, when the 3 to 4 year old boy discovers that he cannot fully woo his beloved mother, many a bright, imaginative boy blames his small size and the small size of his penis for this failure. He has quickly figured out that his father succeeds where he fails. And, given the importance he attaches to his penis, he assumes that his father's larger sex organ is a very large contributor to father's success with mother. Now, given also that the 3 year old boy experiences his beloved father as a rival for his mother's amorous affections and that hate toward his father has intensified, the boy at times entertains the fantasy of undoing his father's success by robbing him of his obviously more effective genitals, thereby acquiring them for himself and destroying his father, all in one blow! Having such a fantasy, which is common among 3 to 4 year old boys, immediately brings with it the feeling of being a

treacherous transgressor who deserves only one fate, namely, to in fact be the one who is deprived of his own highly valued, even though admittedly smaller genitals. In fact, given that his father is much bigger and more powerful, the little boy concludes that this would certainly be his fate if he even attempted to attack his father, be it his genitals or any other part of him. And he now, from this moment, fears that in some way, by some undetermined circumstance, he might lose his vital genitals. And he suffers then from "castration anxiety". This is why boys from about 3 or so years of age on are in repeated dread of injury to their genitals, in young boys it often being manifest in concerns over things being broken, if broken whether they can be repaired, or over fears of being injured. They will need attention to the smallest scratch, make a large to do over even the slightest accident or damage to the self or others or things. Girls do the same at this age also because of their linking injuries to their conviction that their genitals have or may become damaged.

Intensive psychotherapies with adults and with children has led to the uncovering of what causes certain types of fears in 3 to 6 year old children. 4 1/4 year old Doug became afraid he would be hurt by deep water and became afraid of learning to swim. 5 1/2 year old Bernie became afraid of learning to ride his bike. These fears are different from fears of doctor's needles or barking angry-looking dogs. The fear of injury that Doug and Bernie experienced is believed by many clinicians (psychiatrists, psychologists, and others) to be due to the fantasies children this age have caused by their "family romance" and the dread by both boys and girls that their genitals will be destroyed due to their transgressive wishes and their guilt.

Again, these are not light matters. Castration anxiety can create enormous pain and lead to substantial emotional problems at this age and in later years. These genital concerns are in fact so anxiety producing in both boys and girls that they contribute to two crucial phenomena. First, the fantasies generated by these concerns, as well as those generated by the wishes and feelings that give rise to the child's family romance, produce anxiety of intense dimensions. To protect against this anxiety the fantasies, wishes and feelings become vigorously repressed, virtually fully pushed out of awareness (see Section 3.2511).

Second, because these fantasies as well as the child's genital concerns are tied up with the child's sexual excitations, they become tied up with the child's infantile masturbation. Such masturbation then of itself becomes a source of acute anxiety. It is as if masturbation itself will cause the dreaded injury. As a result, many a 6 year old child will stop touching herself/himself, stop masturbation. Because this masturbation is tied up with those fantasies and wishes which cause so much anxiety, when those wishes and fantasies that are not resolved (given up) become repressed, the recall of masturbation and much that surrounds the child's family romance and this time of life will be pushed out of awareness as well. This is one explanation for the remarkable fact that humans tend to remember so little of their life prior to 6 or so years of age, and why people tend to not recall memories of this personal family drama except under conditions when their recall is facilitated by special (psychotherapeutic) uncovering methods.

Reactions to Mother and Father Love Behavior:

Most normal children under three years show some negative reaction to mother's paying attention to another person, whether it be father or a sibling, or even another adult or child. During the 3 to 6 years period this occasionally shows itself in the need to have all of mother's attention and love, but as we already suggested, it takes a new form. It seems that often when mother and father are being affectionate with each other, whether they hug or kiss, the child will come between them, or cause a stir of one kind or another, as if to need to disrupt the parents romantic love behavior. This, of course, does not happen all the time. Some children react so more than do others. Hand in hand though with these negative feelings, in all children, one also finds reactions of pleasure, of a feeling of family security, and also much curiosity about parental love behavior and about their private love life.

Sex Play, Actual and Symbolic:

Since children of all ages busy themselves with those things that are most on their minds, what most interests them, it is unavoidable that many a 3 to 6 year old will engage in some sex play, whether alone or with a little friend. Self-explorations, in addition to infantile masturbation, in normal girls may lead to the introduction of objects into their vagina or anus, sometimes the cause of minor injuries and much distress to the child and the parents. Self-explorations are at first carried out in the open, but as family romance fantasies associated with these begin to produce conflict, self explorations tend to be done more and more in private and in secret. Reciprocal explorations, at first perhaps also done in the open soon become secretive too. Both tend to be done with some excitement and soon begin to create guilt (which will be discussed under Section 3.26). Sex play between siblings is common because siblings spend much time together, are frequently exposed (naked) to each other but also, because an emotional attachment already exists between them (see discussion of this important child rearing issue in Section 3.2312).

Symbolic sex play runs the wide range of carrying out sex roles in fantasy play, or with dolls or animals, in fantasy without play, to activities which bear little direct resemblance to sexuality, such as drawing or building structures representative of genitals, such as building structures using peg-in-hole methods (tinker toys), etc. These latter activities found invariably in normal children, are a major step toward creativity, through sublimation (see Section 3.2511).

3.2312 CHILD REARING: How to Handle and Optimize the Development of Sexual (Reproductive) Life

A Major Challenge for Parents: The Child's Emerging Sexual Life:

Sexual behaviors in children the ages from 3 to 6 years create much discomfort for parents, if not down-right problems. Understandably, parents would like for their

children to be free from "getting in trouble" sexually. Indeed parents' job of parenting would be less difficult if they were not burdened by the worry that sexuality can cause problems for their children. If only sexuality began in adulthood!

But it does not. And it is remarkable that for centuries with a few known exceptions, parents and professionals, physicians, teachers, clergy, biologists and others believed that sexual interests of young people begin in puberty. It is remarkable that for centuries, parents and all these professionals were unable to recognize that in fact a young person's sexual life begins at about age 2 to 3 years. Why have so many millions of highly intelligent, inquisitive, insightful, disciplined observers of human nature and of children not have seen what has for the past century become quite clear to us -- that sexual excitement, interest, wishes, fantasies, and play are a large part of the preschool child's life? Of course there have to be good reasons.

Sexuality is recognized by society to be a potential major source of problems. But before we state some of the reasons why the early emergence of the child's sex life has gone unrecognized, let us say that although it is a source of problems, sexuality is also recognized to be a most vital part of life, as the means for the preservation of the species and of our own particular families -- to keep the family name alive. It is also recognized to be a source of very unique pleasure, a pleasure that can cement marital couples and enhance their love for one another; it is also a principal means of expressing romantic love to the person so loved. In fact, that problems in being able to normally enjoy the pleasures of romantic sexual love can interfere with the healthy maintenance of a marriage relationship is one major reason why mental health clinicians and researchers have explored the part sexuality plays in our lives, and why we concern ourselves with it here. Fine then, we recognize that sexuality is a vital part of life, has the major goal of preserving the species, is highly beneficial to the maintenance of a marriage and family, brings a unique pleasure to humans, and, of course, that it can cause large, painful problems. But why have we ignored for centuries that a person's sexual life begins at about age 2-3 years?

First, recognizing that sexuality can create many problems and that rearing children brings so many challenges to parents may have caused them to ignore its manifestations in young children. Hoping to avoid having to deal with yet another burdensome challenge, parents perhaps hoped these were not manifestations of a real or serious interest and concern, that it is just child's play, and that there is no need to pay attention to it until puberty when, every parent knows, "Look out, because now it counts!" Of course we know "it counts" then because 11, 12 year olds have gotten pregnant -- indeed have been "serious" in their sexual activities.

But we cannot be harsh with past parents; we know only too well how difficult it is to be a parent and that parents (all humans) will tend to put off a problem until they have to face it. And parents, along with many good doctors and others of the past, would hope and pray that a child would outgrow any troublesome behavior! So, needing to avoid what parents saw because they hoped it would go away, or it was not considered to be meaningful, may be one reason.

A second reason, which is tied to the first, is that because sex has come to be regarded as destructive under certain conditions, or as a vice or evil and sinful under still

other circumstances, it has brought with it disbelief that innocent, nice children could seriously have such feelings and thoughts as is now said to be the case by clinicians and researchers who work intensively with young children. So, "Nice children don't have such bad thoughts" is another possible reason.

A third reason may be that the defenses which were made necessary by the intense conflict due to ambivalence parents experienced when they themselves were children 3 to 6 years of age, are still active. Or it is that they may become reactivated due to parents' identification with their own children when their children go through this period of life. Let us elaborate here. When now-parents were children 3 to 6 years of age, they too experienced the conflict we described in Section 3.2311, namely, now-mothers developed intense infantile romantic love feelings for their fathers and jealousy, rivalry and hate toward their beloved mothers; now-fathers did the same but in the reverse genders. Faced with acute anxiety, fears of loss of love and even of injury to their conflict-producing genitals, and suffering from intense guilt, they too set up the various defenses of taming hostility and hate, of regression, reaction formations, identification and repression. Repression is especially critical now when they are parents, for two reasons: (1) they cannot remember having thoughts and feelings like their child is manifesting because these are now out of their awareness, and (2) their child's behaviors are stirring and making the parents' feel their old repressed conflicts and anxieties, especially because parents identify with their children as these children go through the course of their own development. Repression tends to put things as if "in cold storage" which means that repressed thoughts and feelings will at least to some degree remain unchanged, undealt with and, therefore, potentially still conflict and anxiety producing. It may be that this reason then, the parents' own residual defenses against the reactivation in them of their own repressed conflicts and anxieties, that this is the most powerful reason for parents and professionals over centuries having failed to recognize the seriousness, the anguish, the problems children experience during the 3 to 6 years period arising from their emerging sexual life.

What are some of the Consequences of Avoiding Recognizing the Emergent Sexual Life of Young Children?

First, it means that parents will not adequately understand what their child is doing or is experiencing and are, therefore, not likely to know how to best handle their child's sexual behaviors, nor the conflicts to which these give rise, nor the defensive behaviors, nor the sharp guilt the child may feel and show evidence of. As is the case throughout this curriculum, we feel that the more a parent or parent-to-be understands a child's behavior, what may cause it and what it means, the more likely that parent or parent-to-be will know how to handle the behavior in growth-promoting ways.

Second, it means that, not feeling understood, the child will not be as likely to turn to her/his parents for help in solving the problems that may and do arise out of the child's emerging sexual life. Not feeling an empathic understanding from the parents, robs the child of the most crucial source of help (see the third reason, below). The child is likely to turn to no one for help or turn to young peers -- who, for many years to come still, are

the worst source of information on matters of sexuality.

Third, but to be sure among the most important of the consequences to the child, parents (but other adults as well) who do not recognize the seriousness to the child of (1) the young child's being capable of experiencing sexual stimulation and excitement, (2) the 3 to 6 year old child's sexual wishes and fantasies, whether conscious (in awareness) or already repressed, (3) the conflict these create in the 3 to 6 year old, and (4) the anxieties and guilt the child's wishes and fantasies bring, will not recognize the potentially enormous harm engaging in sexual activities with their children will create. It is recognized by mental health professionals as child abuse. The convictions that the 3 to 6 year old child will not know what the parent (or other adult) is doing, or will not understand what it is, or will not remember what happened are all false. Because sexual experiencing is central to the 2 to 6 year old child's life, sexual activity is intensely experienced, creates much anxiety, intensifies the child's already intense conflict due to ambivalence, intensifies guilt and may lead to serious emotional problems including symptoms and life long inhibitions and distortions in relationships and in the child's eventual sexual life.

We also want to caution parents who with very good intentions may however cause problems for their children. In general parents want to help their children to not be troubled by their bodies and their sexuality as adults. Some parents, in an attempt to help their children not feel ashamed of their bodies, to help them feel that bodies and sexuality are natural, allow their children to be with them while parents dress and undress, during toileting, and may bathe and shower with their children. However, when one understands the facts about childhood sexuality -- the child's fantasized family romance, the internal conflict, ambivalence, and guilt it creates, the boy's concerned about castration, the girl's concerned about not having a penis, all children's concerns about being small and inadequate compared to their parents -- one can see that these practices may well trouble the child and have the opposite effects than the parents intend. The child will most likely find such mutual nakedness exposures with the parents, as well as being allowed to sleep with the parents, as over-stimulating and may feel disturbed and unprotected by the parents. We feel that should a child attempt to involve the parents in these sexual of activities, that attempt can be dealt with as one would deal with any overly personal question. With sympathy and respect the parents can explain to their children that it is most helpful for children if parents keep these activities private.

It is especially to protect children against sexual abuses that may cause them life long harm that recognizing and understanding the 3 to 6 year old child's emerging sexual experiencing is necessary. Empathic understanding of it is more likely to encourage the child to turn to the parents for help in dealing with the problems that may arise both within and outside the family. Let's look at some of the less traumatic problems than sexual child abuse, because these too can create difficulties.

The Child's Interests in Sexual Matters:

Education for parenting and clinical experience informs us that many parents do not know that normal children, some from the second, even the first year of life on touch

their genitals with pleasure (infantile masturbation). Many parents also do not know that at 3 and 4 children are very curious about genitals, theirs and others, about where babies come from, and many girls want to have a baby of their own, pretend to be a mother, and boys a father, etc., and that most get upset or worried about their own genitals. Many parents don't know that little boys become remarkably preoccupied with their penis and seemingly unreasonably worried that some harm or damage will come to it. Nor, do many parents know, that many little girls become upset because they believe there is something wrong with them, since their genitals, not being so visible, don't look like little brother's or Johnny's next door and experience their genitals as defective; nor that when a little girls says she wants a baby she often means a real live one of her own, made with the help of the man she most loves, her father, and that she is not talking of wanting a doll.

Of course, if a particular child shows none of these behaviors this topic will cause no concern to the parents. Child development specialists, however, know that these behaviors occur in all healthy children and that during the 3 to 6 years period, and even before, they will be of concern to the parents as well as their children. Some parents have called mental health professionals in alarm, convinced that their child is a sexual pervert or some other mistaken awful label because "She touches herself, you know where!" Since, as explained in Section 3.2311, the child comes to think badly of herself/himself due to the unavoidable inner conflict and the ambivalent feelings that emerge in early sexual life, this type of parental reaction will become conveyed to the child and only affirm, mistakenly, the child's greatest fears: "I am bad, I am evil".

In addition to the problems often created when a parent avoids recognizing this fact about children's lives, not knowing children worry about these matters may lead a parent to ridicule the child's worry, or to not be able to allay the child's irrational fears. Diane's mother had heard about but did not believe that little girls wish they could have or get a penis--along with all the other normal (reproductive system and) genitals they have--until her own three year old daughter Diane, a cheerful, lusty child asked her when she would get her penis. Startled, by this truly unexpected question, Diane's mom did well as she told her daughter that little girls are very nicely made the way they are, that they don't have or get a penis. Diane's mother was distressed that this answer did not satisfy her daughter, because she learned that Diane then went to her father and asked him the same question. After she got a similarly reasonable answer from her father, still not satisfied, Diane asked her 6 1/2 year-old brother Jack when she would get her penis. Her question was not so well received by Jack as by her mother and her father. He told her with a good deal of disdain that she "Is just a girl!" Fortunately, the parents could address the issue more sympathetically and helpfully than did her young brother, and could repair the blow to her self-image which she sustained at the hands of her anxious brother's "You're just a girl!". They also had a talk with Jack about what he said to Diane, pointing out to him that girls and boys are equally wonderful kids to have, that they are different in some ways but not in others and that both types of persons are needed in the world. Young boys are also vulnerable to anxiety from their own sexual conflicts; in this case, most likely was the fact that by her question, Diane stirred her 6 1/2 year old brother's own castration anxiety, a condition that is likely to rob any boy of the empathy of which Jack

was in fact capable.

The concern about genitals children have, a boy being especially afraid that his penis might be harmed or fall off, or a girl's distortion that the penis she once had fell off or the one she will grow might become damaged, lead to seemingly irrational concerns by displacement. For instance, when she was 3 years old Suzy for some time refused to eat cookies and crackers that had any part broken off and would insist that she get an unbroken one. Many a parent believes it is because the child is greedy and must have every little bit of cracker she has coming to her. Much more likely is that she cannot tolerate the thought that things that have an expectable shape can be broken, a direct derivative of her feeling the penis she had broke off. Similarly, 5 1/2 year old Bernie refused to learn to ride his bike followed an incident in which he fell while playing with Tom, in which he scraped his knee pretty harshly. But he cried and was in anguish for several days as though his leg was broken. A boy or girl might insist that a band aid is absolutely needed, in order to cover over the injury as well as to magically guarantee healing. When the parent understands the symbolic meaning of seemingly irrational reactions as these, empathy and reassurance which can work wonders are much more likely to follow from the parent.

Unfortunately, Suzy's mother, who was very burdened rearing Suzy without the help of her father (they had divorced 2 years before), did not help Suzy well enough with her worry about not having a penis. She was right to not respond to 3 1/2 year old Suzy's asking Mom to show her mother's penis -- she seemed to want Mother to just take off her clothes and show her. But while Suzy was looking through Mom's purse for Mother's penis, she teased her by pretending she was hiding it behind her back and laughed at her as Suzy frantically demanded to see it. This was more hurtful than Mom realized: Suzy felt teased, momentarily believed that indeed Mother does have a penis she is hiding, was later embarrassed that she had believed her mother, felt hurt and became very angry with her mother, and moped for the rest of the afternoon. Mother didn't know that she diminished her daughter's trust in her, that she intensified feelings of hate in Suzy toward her, and that Suzy felt her mother to be a mean mother. And it would have been so easy to be helpful and avoid all these negative feelings. It also did not give Suzy as clear a picture of herself as a lovely, lovable girl whose body is very normal and pretty. Each of these events is an opportunity for the parent to reassure, explain, correct distortions; missing these opportunities are also often accompanied by harm to the child and the mother-child relationship, as happened to Suzy.

Handling the Child's Family Romance:

It is clear that children can live out very fine lives whose parents are not at all aware of their children's fantasies of wanting to marry their mothers or fathers, fantasies activated in these normal children by their emerging infantile sexuality. Children have been reared so for thousands of years. The mental health field, however, has found that many emotional problems do come from failures to deal effectively enough with the 3 to 6 years period of development, and quite specifically, for not resolving well-enough the child wishes and fantasies that come from the child's fantasized family romance.

Furthermore, as has come into public awareness during the late 1980s and early 1990s, engaging in sexual activities with children 3 to 6 years of age especially, but earlier and later as well, can have consequences ranging from non-harmful to severely harmful depending on certain conditions. Although more research is needed, these are some of the current findings.

Sexual play between 3 to 6 year old children like playing doctor, etc., is common, usually causes children no harm when duly and reasonably attended to by parents and other caregivers (more about this later). Sexual activities between 3 to 6 years old with nonsibling older children and adolescents can create problems for the younger child (and the older one too) when there is physical hurt or threats of harm if the 3 to 6 year old does not comply or if he or she tells what happened. Some 3 to 6 year old children have been threatened with death if they tell. This of itself can be equally harmful to the sexual transgression of the young children. When the older child or adolescent is a sibling, the hurt to the 3 to 6 year old usually is greater than when it is not a sibling. Physical hurt and threats add to the severity of the potential emotional hurt the 3 to 6 year old may experience and carry with her or him for many years to come. When an adult sexually transgresses a 3 to 6 year old child the consequences tend to increase in severity. Most acts of sexual abuse of children are carried out by adults they know, whether neighbors, substitute caregivers, preschool teachers, uncles and aunts (or cousins), stepfathers and stepmothers, even grandfathers and grandmother, or fathers and mothers. The degree of severity of the consequences for the child increases in the order just stated, from less severity by non family adults to highest severity when by one's father or mother. Again, physical hurt and threats intensify the emotional assault on the 3 to 6 year old. Some of our most emotionally disturbed people, and there are many, have had histories of sexual abuse during childhood or adolescence. Generally, the younger the child when the sexual abuse occurs, the greater the severity of emotional problems.

Why is sexual activity carried out by parents and older siblings more damaging to children, especially children from 2 to 12 years of age, but to children less than 2 years and to adolescents as well than when done by non family individuals? Because they are the people the child expects she or he can trust most to do them no harm? Yes. But why can activity that is part of being human cause them so much harm? Whatever answers one comes up with, none seems to better explain it than to put the sexual transgression against the child in the context of the child's fantasized family romance.

When a father engages his 3 to 6 year old daughter into sexual activity (always an emotionally disturbed man), he is fulfilling not only the child's wish and fantasy that father be her lover and give her a baby, but also the girl's wish to take father from mother, that he prefer her over mother, which the girl believes would make her mother very unhappy. Furthermore, the girl now comes to believe that she is the cause not only of mother's being rejected by father, but of her mother being harmed and even destroyed. All the fantasies of removing her rival for father from the scene now are possible, including the fantasy that her hate will destroy her mother. This leads the little girl to feel intense, tenacious guilt. She believe that she is the one who caused father to do this with her; everything that has gone wrong in the family, she believes, is caused by her. She feels she is bad, evil and unlovable. The same can be said for the boy whose mother

engages in sexual activity with him.

This sequence of thoughts is not an invention of ours. It is found repeatedly in psychotherapeutic clinical work with children and adults who have suffered sexual abuses by a parent, or a sibling, or a close relative.

Sexual activity on the part of a father with his son or a mother with her daughter is more complicated but leads to equally serious emotional disturbance. The family romance plays its part here too but becomes distorted and the child's gender identity may become confused.

The major reason for the more hurtful effect of sexual activity by an older sibling than an older peer is that the sibling is often experienced by the younger child, as a substitute for the parents. Recall that 4 year old Jennifer was as happy to see her 7 year old brother Mike pick her up at Gloria's as if it had been her mother or father. There is a primary relationship between siblings and their becoming substitutes for the parents is experienced by all younger siblings from time to time. Similarly, this applies to aunts and uncles as well.

The greatest protection against children's being sexually abused will occur when parents recognize the harm it causes, and when they understand the normalcy of, the nature of the child's fantasized family romance, and the harmful consequences of gratifying these specific fantasies which the normal child has. What would have happened if 4 1/4 year old Diane's father had allowed himself to be drawn into Diane's fluttering her eyelashes and sashaying up to him seductively as many a normal child might with her beloved Daddy? Or what if Johnny's Mother was to respond to his sweet talk to her with showing preference for him over his father? Fortunately, Diane's Father not only did not become seductive or sexual with her, he also did not ridicule her feelings and behavior. He said that they all could go to the movies together someday soon and even added wisely that some day Diane would have a real nice boy friend of her own who would take her dancing and to the movies like Daddy does with her Mom. And Johnny's Mother said that she was really glad Dad was coming home for dinner so they could all enjoy it together. Although she did not, she could have added that someday he'll have a nice wife and he'll be able to take her out to dinner or have dinner at home with her alone.

Fortunately, although sexual abuse of children happens more frequently than we would like to think, most parents are truly responsible people and recognize the potentially harmful effects of such abuse. Diane's Dad and Johnny's Mother probably did.

Also very protective against child sexual (and physical) abuses would be if parents recognized that young children do understand what the parent is doing when they engage in sexual activity with them, that they are made anxious and guilty by it -- which is the major reason they do not tell the other parent it is occurring -- and that they do not forget (even if they repress the experience into their unconscious mind for years).

When children are helped through this very enriching and development inducing period of life, they grow in the ability to love, to form meaningful love relationships, and they also grow in many adaptive abilities and in conscience formation. We shall talk more about the last 2 issues in Sections 3.25 and 3.26.

Several more points on handling the child's family romance. Bernie's Mother was especially helpful when she was sympathetic with her son's "being in love" with their downstairs neighbor. She respected his being upset at the thought of her leaving. She had reasonably not accommodated Bernie's wishes to invite her to visit him; she did not feel this would be reasonable. After all, she knew that the neighbor was old enough to be Bernie's mother and she would not foster these feelings in him for her. However, had she been 5 1/2 like Suzy, it would have been fine to invite her over to play. It would also have been wise to supervise their play. It would not be reasonable to let Bernie invite Suzy into his bedroom and close the door.

There is a major benefit to Bernie's being in love with their neighbor. It meant that Bernie had taken steps to give up on his wanting to marry his Mom; he was in fact, in love with another woman altogether! It is for this reason too that Bernie's liking one little girl especially, would be a step in his development. It is also very helpful to help a child deal with his jealousy and the guilt that come with the child's family romance. 4 year old Jennifer's Mom recognized that her daughter felt jealous of her 7 year old brother Mike because he was older, better able to do things than she, able to go to bed later, and when she felt (quite wrongly, but with conviction) that her parents preferred Mike to her. But she also recognized that Jennifer's saying she wanted to marry her Dad and when she became mortified when asked with Mom there "Who she was gonna marry". Mom knew that her lovely daughter -- who could at times be a pain to deal with -- probably envied her. It helped a lot that Jennifer's Mother remembered what she kind of preferred her Dad over her Mom at times, and what that felt like. And she wondered if Jennifer's not wanting to go to bed could also be because Jennifer was jealous of Mother being alone with Father. She did tell Jennifer from time to time that her time would come too, that someday she would have a very nice boy friend and then a husband and she could then have the things Mom has. It was somewhat like Diane's Dad telling her she would have a nice boy friend someday; and Johnny's Mother did a similar thing. What these parents did then was to reassure their children that they would get to have what the parents have and that it would be very nice for them too. The child's jealousy is softened a bit when the parent understands and is sympathetic.

Handling guilt is more difficult and we shall talk about it in Section 3.2612.

Questions about sex:

All 3 to 6 year old children have a lot of questions about sex. When they feel their parents value answering their questions, many children ask. Curiosity arises out of the child's adaptive and self-protective mechanisms. Wanting to see, to touch, to explore, wanting to know and understand, are all part of learning to adapt to oneself, to others, and to our environment. There is much evidence that children are pressured from within to know, to explore, as a means of adapting to the environment, the self, and others. Adapting gradually to life brings with it the need to master, to gain a sufficient degree of control over oneself and one's environment in order to feel safe with both.

In their powerfulness and pressure, sexual feelings will arouse in the child an enormous interest both in seeking their gratification and in wanting to understand what

they are all about. Both will lead to many questions and fantasies in a child's mind; some children will ask more questions than others; some will dare to ask or play out only a few; some children will not ask.

If one wants a child to have a good understanding of sexuality, to have useful and appropriate information about it, to learn how to deal with it reasonably, with appropriate controls, with reasonable anxieties and guilt, it can be most helpful to answer the child's questions as they come up. It is never too early, nor is it ever too late. Any question asked sincerely can be dealt with reasonably and openly. Clinical experience teaches us that truthful answers in the long run are much easier for the child than are fabrications. Personal questions, as to how frequently parents have intercourse, for instance, are private, can be stated to be so, and not answered. Such questions can be left to the child's imagination.

No question is ridiculous if asked earnestly. Both little boys and girls, for example, will want to know why boys have penises and girls don't; an honest, empathic (children are often serious when they ask them), appropriately informative answer is the best answer. When 3 1/2 year old Bernie stuffed a pillow under his shirt and said that he is going to have a baby, his mother told him that boys can't make a baby in their belly because they don't have a uterus, which is sort of like a pouch for a baby. And she added she is glad he is a boy. She also said it would be nice if he could talk to his Dad about this. Again, an honest, empathically concerned answer is the best answer. Because the conflict and feelings detailed in Section 3.2311 produce distortions in normal children's fantasies, and as they try to sort out these facts of life, it is important to answer questions with an eye for clarifying and undoing distortions children may have. For example, as Bernie's mother did, it is well to point out that if a boy cannot have a baby in his tummy, it is not because there is something wrong with him but rather that boys are made in such a way that they cannot have a baby in their own tummy; however, when a boy is old enough he will be able to help a woman he loves to make a baby, and then he will a father. It is well to answer little boys and little girls questions about having a penis and not having a penis as a fact that arises out of normal developments in both boys and girls; that little girls are not human beings who once had a penis and which due to misbehavior or some other funny or tragic event somehow broke off. Rather, it is well to point out that a girl is beautifully made the way she is, that she has a vagina or uterus or baby sac and ovaries and that someday when she is old enough to be a mother she will be able to have a baby if she wants to; and to tell the boy that he is beautifully made the way he is, and to tell him about anatomy and the contribution that he can someday make to the making of a baby.

In answering children's questions there is no need to give them a lecture. It is best to answer what they ask about and no more. If they need more, they will ask. We cannot overemphasize how seriously concerned children three to six years of age, and beyond, are with these issues, how frequently they think about these matters, how frequently they fabricate explanations that will suit their particular fears and anxieties, and how often they will distort these realities. It is also well to know that these views of sexuality which all normal children experience at this very young age, may lead to long-lasting consequences both of a positive and of a negative type depending on the theories they

evolve in their own heads. A parent who is well informed, and who can be comfortable enough to talk about these matters as normal and casual concerns, will be the best source for preventing distortions on the part of the child. If the parents do not answer these questions, somebody else will. They will be asked. That somebody else may be a six year old neighbor, who, with his/her own distorted theories may fill the child's ears and mind with frightful distortions which can have a long-lasting influence.

Infantile Masturbation:

As noted earlier masturbation is the direct and indirect manipulation of one's genitals in reaction to mounting sexual tension the aim of which is the reduction of that tension and the re-establishment of a calmer emotional and physical state. This definition intentionally does not emphasize the pleasurable aspect of masturbation, but rather emphasizes its function of reducing unbearable inner physical and emotional tension which becomes a source of great distress for the child during the course of growing up. The reasoning here is that masturbation has too long and too often been wrongly stated to be a sign of feeble-mindedness, evil or perverse thought and interest, has long wrongly been blamed as the cause of physical and emotional disease (everything from causing insanity to causing defective egg cells and sperm), while its protective and emotional integrative aspects have too often been ignored. Until the age of six or so, when the intensity of sexual tension lessens because of the child's many psychological defensive operations¹⁷ and, possibly as well, due to a biological calming of the sex drive until puberty, masturbation is an important safety valve. Parents can be helpful to their children if they are understanding of this, and accept masturbatory activity when it occurs in reasonable degree. It is useful to suggest to children when they masturbate openly during the three to six year period that they do so in private, and convey to them a reasonable, moderately self-controlling attitude about it. Among the important issues here, is that the parent's reactions to the child's masturbation will convey the parent's particular attitudes toward sex. Parents should know that children are inclined to believe that sex is bad; they do so from the conclusions to which their family romance conflict leads them. That is, it is plausible that Jennifer or Diane or Suzy, or all 3 might feel: "My sexual feelings have caused me to be jealous of and hate my mother. Therefore, sex is bad." The boy does a similar thing. The child may accept this conclusion and it can be re-enforced by a parent's alarm and disapproval of masturbation. This can, in turn, lead to later sexual inhibitions and problems in relationships. Of course, if a child masturbates many times a day, seems compelled to do so too frequently, it is a neurotic symptom that is created by emotional conflicts and requires professional attention.

One more point, quite commonly, people will say and believe that the masturbation that begins in early adolescence is the first time they ever remember masturbating or knowing anything about sex. But observing healthy young children, one readily sees masturbation and erotic activity during the three to six years period, as well as much "knowledge" about sex and babies. The seeming loss of memory of this period results, as

¹⁷ As we detailed in Section 3.2311 and 3.251.

we have said, from the repression of wishes and fantasies which pertain to the child's conflict-laden, but normal and salutary fantasy of the family romance we have described.

Reactions to Mother-Father Love Behavior:

Understanding what causes negative reactions to parents showing affection to one another like hugging and kissing, is essential to knowing what to do about this type of reaction. It is normal for children to behave in this way; it requires empathy and tact in handling in order to be helpful to the child. Sometimes it also requires the setting of limits. For instance, 4 year old Jennifer at times is angry and pouts because when Daddy comes home, although he gives her a big hug and a kiss, he also kisses mother. Many a parent would ignore Jennifer's reaction. Being aware of the hurt she feels, her Dad is helpful by being sympathetic but staying with the facts. He said to her one time when she reacted like that: "You wish, sometimes, you could have Daddy all to yourself. But listen, Mommy and I have been married for a long time." And with nice humor (not teasing!): "Guess when you get big you'll find yourself a nice boyfriend, all of your own." In this way too, Jennifer's father gently helped her with her feelings of jealousy. Jennifer probably did not like her father setting the record straight, but she did feel understood, not chastised or threatened, and it probably made her feel she is not evil for her thoughts and wishes.

As we said before, when 3 1/2 year old Diane put on her mother's powders and perfumes and then dumped them in the toilet, her mother was shocked and very angry with her. It was helpful that she told Diane that this was absolutely not to happen again -- it had once already and did one more time later but without the dumping the perfumes in the toilet. Mother was not nasty. Mother told Diane she did not mind her putting a little powder on her face, but she did mind having the powder all over her dresser, and if Diane could not be more careful, then she had to keep away from Mom's powder -- and, she is not to take mother's perfume on her own, though mother would put a dab on her next time she used it herself. And then she had added: "Someday when you're bigger, you'll have your own powder and perfume and that'll be very nice!" And, when 3 year old Johnny asked his mother if Daddy would be home for dinner and Mother said he would, Johnny had said; "Oh, does he have to!" Mother could have ignored this. But she lessened her son's pain by not ignoring it, by a sympathetic, "It's nice to be alone with Mommy at times." And then, again with, non-teasing humor, but helping her son face reality, mother added: "I like it when my husband is home for dinner with us. I can see that when you grow up you'll be very happy to be alone with your own girlfriend."

In all such instances parents can help their children by (1) recognizing the expression of pain the child is experiencing, (2) understanding the meaning of the child's behavior, (3) being empathic, that is, putting oneself in the child's place and asking "How would I feel if I felt what he or she feels" and then, "How would I like to be dealt with if I felt like this?" (4) Respecting both the child's feelings but also his/her need for honest, appropriate and realistic handling. Being aware of these 4 steps in dealing with one's child will guide the parent to growth-promoting handling of difficult experiences which unavoidably occur to children during the 3 to 6 year period, and even longer in many. In addition,

warmth and humor, not teasing or ridicule, can make this bitter pill -- "I can't marry my Mommy or Daddy" -- easier to swallow.

Parents have the beneficial right to kiss and hug, and have the right to privacy in and about their sexual relationship. It is in fact desirable that children see evidence of affection and signs of romantic love -- though not overt sexual behavior -- between their parents. Children, it is true, are made jealous by such behavior. But they are also reassured by it. First they are reassured that feeling love, expressing love feelings, romantic love feelings where appropriate, is not only permissible and safe but is, in fact, desirable. Secondly, children are reassured that their parents' will not separate/divorce when mother and father express love for each other, they then feel that their family life is secure. But we want to emphasize that parents should not carry such demonstrations of love into sexual erotic interaction. Exposing children to sexual acts (beyond affectionate kissing and hugs), from passionate kissing to sexual intercourse, is highly conflict-producing. It is so by being too stimulating and too bewildering; and because the love behavior causes the child to feel jealousy and hate it makes the child distort the quality of the parents' sexual experience. Quite commonly because of the child's own hate feelings color what the child sees, the child distorts the love (sex) act as one of attack and fighting. This contributes to the child's experiencing such exposures as bewildering.

Sex Play, Actual and Symbolic:

Under Infantile Masturbation (above) we discussed briefly what parents ought to bear in mind with regard to self-explorations and infantile masturbation. These are normal, expectable phenomena. But, limits are needed when during such activities objects are inserted into the vagina or the anus, or when the child engages in any activity that can cause self-injury. It is not uncommon for children, usually 4 to 6 year old girls, to be brought to the Emergency Room or the Pediatrician because of genital or anal area bleeding due to just such object insertions.

Mutual explorations by children are best discouraged and restricted during this age period, with explanations that the child is too young for this type of activity, will be able to use better judgment about it in later life. For the most part, symbolic sex play -- i.e., children embracing, pretending they are mommy and daddy, but not enacting the actual sex act -- causes no problem except when it is excessive, a more than usual preoccupation, or when it leads to too much excitement and/or irritability, or when it gets out of control.

4 year old Jennifer and 4 1/4 year old Diane were playing "boy chases girl" with 6 1/2 year old Jack, Diane's brother. They were all three clearly enjoying themselves, their squeals and laughter gradually increasing as they chased and, in turn, were chased. They also got overheated and were sweating. The sounds began to reach a pitch of being overly excited, overly stimulated, and disruptive of the adults talking together. Jennifer's mother took her cue from this and nicely but firmly said: "Heh, you kids, you're making too much noise. Enough of that game. Jennifer, sit down for awhile." It worked well. Jennifer collapsed onto the floor, sweating and panting. The game stopped.

A word is needed for parents about the supervision of and restriction of sex play

between siblings. Sex play between siblings is common, is understandable, and needs control. It is understandable because of this. When the 4 to 6 year old begins to accept the fact that he cannot marry his mother, or she cannot marry her father, the child will take steps to attach his/her romantic love feelings to another person, usually but not exclusively, of the same sex as the idealized parent the child wants to marry. Given that the child already has formed a more or less affectionate relationship with his or her sibling, we cannot be surprised to find then, the romantic love (and sexual) feelings becoming displaced or diverted onto this sibling. This then heightens the tendency to engage in sexual exploratory activity between them. Although hearing a 5 year old declare he will marry his sister when he grows up is usually experienced by parents as cute, it should alert them to be aware of the facilitated potential for sex play. A benevolent awareness of this possibility, and benevolent limits when needed are recommended. "You kids aren't old enough for this: why don't you draw or color (or something like that)," and at some point something like this will be needed: "Sorry, but brothers and sisters can't get married to each other; you'll have to find somebody else to marry when you get big!"

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.24 THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGGRESSION (Assertiveness and Hostility)

Aggression is essential for successful adaptation, for emotional health and well-being, and for the protection of one's rights and property, and for the attaining of our goals. At the same time, it can cause much hostility, hate and destructiveness and be enormously problematic for both child and parents. It was so as it emerged during the first years of life, it continues to be so as it undergoes new developments during the three to six years period, and it will still be so for years to come. The better the early developments of aggression, the more stable nondestructive aggression and the better modulated and controlled the hostile aggression, the less troublesome and the better its later developments and the emotional and personality developments it brings about and serves.

As we have explained in prior Units, we think of aggression as consisting of two major forms, namely nondestructive aggression which motivates assertiveness and goal directed behavior, and second hostile destructiveness which is what gives force and character to anger, hostility, hate, cruelty and rage reactions. Both types (or trends) of aggression evolve due to specific maturation that is typical for this age period. We will detail this as we discuss each type of aggression in the sections that follow.

Important is this: because a healthy degree of nondestructive aggression which fuels assertiveness and goal-directedness is essential for healthy emotional (psychological) development, and this trend in aggression is bound up with the hostile destructive trend which creates enormous problems for child and parent, it is essential that parents take on the enormous responsibility and task of helping their children cope with both trends constructively. This means that hostile destructive experiencing, which gives character to the negative affects (anger, hostility, hate, rage, etc.) is most challenging for the parents to handle. In this chapter we will address this point especially.

Equally important is how to handle nondestructive aggression. How to foster its good development into a healthy degree of assertiveness and goal-directedness, will also concern us here and be addressed. Our key concern will be: how to foster the capacity to be constructively assertive and how to help our children learn to control and mediate constructively their feelings of anger and hostility so as to make their own lives more pleasurable, more successful in a constructive way, less hurtful and destructive of themselves as well as those they love.

One more word before proceeding. The model of aggression we use (which grew out of our research in the development of aggression¹⁸) holds that children are not born

¹⁸ This work is reported in the following references:

Parens, H. (1979). *The Development of Aggression in Early Childhood*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Parens, H., Scattergood, E., Singletary, W. & Duff, A. (1987). *Aggression in Our Children: Coping with it Constructively*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

feeling or having accumulated hostile destructiveness. They are not born hostile, hating or full of rage. They are, however, born with the mechanism or system which when activated by specific experiences will produce (or generate) hostile destructive feelings. The specific experience which activates this inborn mechanism (or system) is "excessive unpleasure", which means excessively felt emotional or physical pain. Anything the child feels to be too painful to tolerate at any given moment, whatever the experience may be, will generate hostile feelings in the child. The most common experiences in early childhood are too hurtful deprivations (physical or emotional), too hurtful frustrations, personal insults and abuses, (verbal or physical) physical injury (accidents, doctors' needles), or very painful emotional feelings like anxiety, panic depression, shame and guilt. We therefore say that hostility, hate, rage, and other such feelings come from the life experiences we have from early life on. The 3 to 6 years period brings with it unavoidable experiences the child feels as too painful even in the best of life conditions. These experiences include disappointments and frustrations which we shall detail. Common also but variable is the continuation of battles of wills between child and parent(s) and the limit-setting that are required to protect and socialize the child. Then unfortunately too common are the stresses and strains that come with poverty, with hostility and fights between parents, with abuse, separations and divorce, with serious illness of child or parent, with mental illness in parents (like depression), alcoholism and drug addiction, and other life stresses. Of course high on the list of what generates hostility and hate in children is child abuse, whether physical, sexual, emotional.

Parens, H. (1989a). Toward a reformulation of the psychoanalytic theory of aggression. In: *The Course of Life, Vol. 2.*, ed. S. I. Greenspan & G. Pollack. New York: International Universities Press, 2nd ed., pp. 643-687.

Parens, H. (1989b). Toward an epigenesis of aggression in early childhood. In: *The Course of Life, Vol. 2*, ed. S. I. Greenspan & G. H. Pollack. New York: International Universities Press, 2nd ed., pp. 689-721.

Other references on this work are not listed.

3.2411 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Aggression

Nondestructive Aggressive Behavior, Assertiveness, Goal-Directedness:

Contrary to common expectation, researchers in the development of aggression have found boys and girls under 3 years of age are equally assertive, demanding, and when they are allowed to reasonably express themselves, are equally persistent in making their needs and wishes known to those who care for them. Studies show this occurs more with the child's own parents; children with substitute caregivers are less likely to persist in making their needs known and are less able to be demanding. Girls and boys under 3 pursue their goals with equal vigor; it is readily evident in their activities. Inborn dispositions, not gender differences, makes for a child's being more or less demanding and assertive at the beginning of life. This innate tendency to be assertive, to be goal-directed furthermore can be supported and can be interfered with. Many factors can interfere with the child's continuing to sustain a healthy degree of assertiveness and goal-directedness, including the child's fear of his or her own inner pressure to be assertive which may arise from accidents or injuries that may have occurred in the course of pursuing and persisting say in climbing up the stairs and falling, or in coming to some mishap in the course of pursuing self-initiated activities. A second major source of interference can come from a child's having been told too many times that he or she "Can't do this, can't do that", over and over. A third interferer with the development of healthy assertiveness is the child's having been insufficiently told that he cannot do this or cannot do that; take for example the child who hurt himself by playing with an electrical outlet from which he got a very powerful jolt and was insufficiently protected by his caregivers during this activity. Another interference may be the child's having been shamed for his/her behaviors excessively, to a discouraging degree.

A new interference to the ongoing development of sound, adaptive assertiveness which is specific to the 3 to 6 years period is guilt. Guilt is a major by-product of developments which occur during the three to six year period (see Section 3.23). It is of major concern to us now; we will discuss this below, under "The Upsurge of Aggression Arising From the Family Romance".

Yet another obstacle to a continuing healthy development of nondestructive aggression is the quantity and quality of ongoing battles of wills that occur between child and parent(s). The battles of wills, which unavoidably follow upon the child's inner push to do things himself or herself, what we call the thrust to autonomy which lead the child into doing things for which parents need to set reasonable limits, continue into the three to six years period, already fairly well patterned between each child and his/her parents. Battles of wills have been going on to a greater or lesser degree now since the end of the first year of life in many children, have been worked on by both child and parents for this long and continue as indeed they will into adolescence. Major efforts have already been made by the child and the parents to deal with and where possible prevent battles of wills, and much has already become internalized and patterned in the child's mind and personality. Now the 3 to 6 years period offers further opportunity to add to the

constructive evolving of the child's handling his/her goal-directed behavior, the handling of assertiveness in a situation of disagreement, and ample opportunity presents both in the child's relationships to his/her parents as well as in relationships to siblings (particularly) and to peers to further secure and develop a healthy capacity for assertiveness.

Of course, hand in hand with the development of nondestructive aggression, which motivates assertiveness and goal-directedness, in these ongoing battles of wills there will also be ample opportunity to deal with the child's hostile destructiveness in its varied forms and degrees, be it anger, hostility, hate, cruelty, or rage reactions.

During the 3 to 6 years period, the child shows evidence of two major maturations in aggression. These are readily discernible, important for normal development and determine special features in the child's personality. The combination of the child's biological endowment and of the parents' (caregivers') handling the child's behaviors are, as is the case with so many aspects of the child's development, most determining of how these genetically determined maturations will unfold. The first is an upsurge of aggression which is found to a larger degree in boys than in girls, and is believed to be a masculinizing form of aggression. The second is a powerful increase and change in hostile destructive aggression resulting from the family romance which brings a heightening of hate and ambivalence in both boys and girls. We emphasized this development in our discussion of the family romance in Section 3.2311. Let's take up each of these two types of aggression in turn.

The Upsurge of Masculinizing Aggression:

Clinicians and researchers of early childhood have long recognized a particular form of aggression which becomes evident in boys' behaviors particularly during the 3 or so to 6 years period. When 5 1/4 year old Bernie and 5 3/4 year old Tom play together one of their common games includes much "showing off" of their assumed strength and power. They push and test themselves physically against one another. They race (by foot or with toy cars), they wrestle, and above all they do a lot of posturing, exhibiting their arm muscles to each other. There is much energy that goes into this play. Often, when they do this in Bernie's home, his Mom ends up telling them to stop being so noisy and stop acting like apes. As do many boys this age (and older as well) variations of King of the Mountain game best illustrate this inner push of usually non hostile aggression; it leads to much competition but it is primarily to show that the boy is stronger, more powerful than others, than to hurt or destroy. There are of course times when Bernie or Tom goes a bit too far with the other and then, hurt and angry, hostility breaks out and they fight. But they are pretty good with each other and they seem to always make-up and have been friends now for about 2 years.

Some clinicians as well as direct observers of children have also found some degree of this kind of aggressive behavior in girls, but more recent research suggests that this is an important development in the masculinization of little boys. The kinds of behaviors which show this emerging type of aggression are the little boys' commonly found roughhousing, pushing into objects and people, adopting postures that seem reflective of large muscle activity which can be seen in their games as well as even in their walking, namely

adopting a he-man like stance or an ape-like stance, brusque play with crashing of trucks and cars, all in all an exhibitionistic, penetrating, intrusive, ramming, heavy muscle movement type of aggressive behaviors. Some theorists propose that this kind of nondestructive aggression, we emphasize that this is not hostile aggressive behavior (though it often does lead to hostile behavior), may be an essential development which parallels the sexual developments we talked about in Section 3.2311. Some have proposed that this aggression is essential for the masculinizing process in boys, and is an essential part of the gender-self development evident in boys during this developmental period.

In girls, during this same period, one often finds a trend in quite another direction with regard to heaviness in movement, in physical pressing, pushing, heavy large muscle movement behaviors. In fact some girls, like 4 1/4 year old Diane, who during the first two years of life are quite chunky and robust, seem to acquire a lessening of such movement robustness, become apparently lighter on their feet, some acquiring movement and posturing characteristics of a feminine type we commonly find in adolescents and adult women. Robust 2 year old Diane, at 3 1/2 sashayed up to her father and fluttered her eyelashes! We assume that again, the influence of the differentiation of the gender-self, in the girl of course toward feminization, plays an important part in the form taken by this nondestructive trend in aggression. It seems that girls generally do not acquire this masculinizing aggression which contributes to the beginning distinction that can now, during the 3 to 6 years period, be made. We can now more readily than before tell if a child is a girl or a boy.

In sum, it does seem that masculinization of the boy brings with it a change in nondestructive aggression which creates a distinction between boys and girls, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the biological endowment of the particular child. It does seem that the masculinization of the boy brings with it this modification in aggression toward the kind of exhibitionistic, narcissistic (self-aware, self-admiring) large muscle and prowess- displaying behaviors which in their extremes one finds in some sport figures and in machismo behaviors in males.

We want to emphasize that this development in nondestructive aggression, in boys especially, does not mean that there is a lessening in degree, level, intensity, or capacity for nondestructive assertiveness in girls. There is an increase in apparent forcefulness in boys' assertive behaviors due to the change in the form of expression of assertiveness without there being an increase in the capacity to be assertive. In other words, little girls continue to be as assertive and goal- directed as are boys, continue to show evidence of nondestructive aggression as do boys, but the forms of their expression of assertiveness differ. Although some may argue that boys under 6 years are overall more aggressive than girls under 6 years, some researchers of aggression propose that differences in the expression of nondestructive aggression, of assertiveness and of goal-directed behaviors formed between boys and girls lie more in inhibitions of assertiveness than in the assumption that boys are more assertive than girls. While the forms of assertiveness may give the impression that little boys are more assertive than girls, these researchers propose that inhibitions of assertiveness are more likely the product of what we will discuss in the next paragraphs, namely inhibitions arising out of ambivalence and guilt.

The Upsurge of Hostile Aggression Arising from the Family Romance:

We described in Section 3.2311 how the remarkable early development in sexuality brings with it the enormously important evolving of gender in oneself, of the gender-self (the masculinization of the self and the feminization of the self). We also described how the development of infantile sexuality brings with it, in the child's mind, a complex family romance, experienced by every boy and girl with his or her mother and father. This family romance brings with it much hurt feeling due to disappointment, frustration, jealousy and, as a result, this hurt generates or produces hate toward the parent of the same sex whom the child loves. Hating someone we love (which is ambivalence) leads to guilt. This is especially so when the hated person is a loved parent. We have also emphasized how this painful conflict and the unavoidable increase in hostile destructiveness it brings, surprisingly perhaps, is enormously salutary due to the highly beneficial developments it activates within the child. We will talk further in Section 3.25 on the adaptive functions it instigates and in Section 3.26 on the critical development of morality and conscience that this conflict generates. For now, let us look at the increase of hostile destructiveness that comes with this family romance.

Both boys and girls experience such an increase of hate. 4 year old Johnny did not want the father he loved to come home for dinner. Although it was his mother who was frustrating him by saying she was glad her husband was coming home for dinner, Johnny was most angry about this with his Dad. 4 year old Jennifer got into many battles with her mother over not wanting to go to bed before everyone else in the family, told her mother she hates her, appeared jealous (of Mom and her brother), disappointed and angry that she could not have a real baby, and was mortified when asked in front of her mother who she said a few minutes before she is going to marry. All these caused Jennifer too much pain (excessive unpleasure) and generated in her feelings of hate toward her mother especially. She was more angry then with her mother than her brother Mike whom she envied for a number of reasons. And 4 1/4 year old Diane must have been furiously jealous of her mother that she dumped her powders and perfumes in the toilet on 3 occasions. She was also indignant with her Dad and jealous of her Mom that Dad brought Mom a dress and not Diane, until she complained hurtfully about it. And she was jealous of Mom that Dad took Mom dancing and to the movies but not Diane. Diane and her Mom had many a disagreeable moment together with Diane being especially nasty with her Mom. And then, there was Gloria who jokingly said she was ready to ship out 2 1/2 year old Jane for a year. Their relationship had been so good for the first 2 years and now had gotten very difficult with much nasty feelings expressed by Jane toward Mom.

In both boys and girls, the hate generated by intense feelings of hurt, in turn brings with it anxiety and guilt. Feeling guilty especially leads the child to direct much of the hate she or he feels toward the self. The increase in hate is large, usually leads to hostile fantasies, wishes and behaviors toward the parent of the same sex. Because of the anxiety and guilt, the child will deal with her or his hate in a variety of ways, including discharging it on people other than the hated (and loved) parent including particularly

siblings, but also onto others. Rivalries which of course already exist between siblings will now intensify as will rivalries with peers. Nonetheless, the largest consequence of this increase in hate will be an increase in difficulty in interaction with the parent of the same sex and intense guilt in the child.

Research on the development of aggression and clinical experience with children has led some researchers to propose that hate and large loads of hostility within the child play a large part in the development of the child's personality, the quality of relationships, the quality of intrapsychic (within the mind) conflicts, with serious consequences to the capacity to adapt, and specifically the capacity to be assertive and goal-directed. The part this hate plays is especially through the experience of ambivalence, namely hating someone we love. This is so because the hate gives rise to guilt which then becomes a major inhibitor of healthy nondestructive aggression, assertiveness, and goal-directedness which are needed for healthy adaptation and development. Given then that ambivalence may be the initiator of such inhibitions, the following model is important for parents and future parents to take into consideration.

Some researchers have proposed that the child begins to experience ambivalence in the course of battles of wills (which principally arise out of the child's need to do things himself or herself, all due to the child's large thrust toward autonomy). This develops between child and parent from the end of the first year of life on with a greater or lesser degree of intensification of these battles of wills during the second and third years of life. The ambivalence these battles of wills generate is experienced by most children, both boys and girls in their relationships with their mothers. Throughout cultures, because they are most commonly the young child's principal caregiver, mothers tend to be the principal limit setter with young children. It is the mother, therefore, who because she thwarts her child with protective limits becomes first hated by the child who loves her. The first experiences of ambivalence then for both boys and girls are in their relationships with their mothers. We can assume, given the trend of fathers becoming more involved in the care of very young children, that battles of wills will occur with fathers with greater frequency than we have seen in the past and that this may lead to these early feelings of ambivalence to be attached then to both mothers and fathers. Up to now, however, these large feelings of ambivalence in both boys and girls are first experienced toward their mothers. This is one of the factors that makes being a mother extremely difficult.

Now then, during the 3 to 6 year period, the family romance brings with its own harsh conflict due to ambivalence. In this case, however, the ambivalence on the part of the girl tends to again be primarily experienced toward the mother; whereas, the boy tends to experience this ambivalence mostly toward his father.

Although this is a simplified model of what happens in every boy and girl, it does nonetheless shed some light on a major interference, a major obstacle, with the maintenance of a firm capacity for nondestructive aggression, for assertiveness and goal-directedness. Some researchers have suggested that the following hypothesis may be helpful toward understanding why assertiveness tends to be more inhibited in girls and women than it is in boys and men: given that the girl experiences her conflict due to ambivalence arising from her autonomy conflict with her mother, and also experiences

her family romance conflict of ambivalence, again, with her mother, the guilt produced in her toward her mother is greater than it is in the boy. This is because the boy's conflicts of ambivalence are distributed between both parents: he experiences his battles of wills ambivalence with his mother, and his family romance conflict of ambivalence primarily with his father. It is possible then that the girl's guilt is more focused and intense by virtue of this polarized distribution of ambivalence, and that it therewith leads her to experience greater inhibition of her assertiveness (nondestructive aggression).

Sibling Rivalry Continues:

As already suggested, the increased load of hostility toward the parents which come from the family romance, is often, at least in part, displaced onto siblings. This will intensify the hostility toward siblings which is already there from the child's prior history.

Rage Reactions and Temper Tantrums:

Those children who are particularly vulnerable to rage reactions and tantrums and have experienced them especially in association to battles of wills (conflict of autonomy) in the past, may now find the increase of hostility coming from their family romance to create an especially harsh situation for the child in the following manner: a child who experiences rage reactions and temper tantrums by age 3 has already internalized much hostile destructiveness in the form of hate toward those in the child's environment as well as toward the self. Here again then the increase of hate that comes from the family romance is likely to intensify the guilt reaction with a further intensification of hate toward the self, higher levels of guilt, and the possibility of producing neurotic symptoms in such children is facilitated.

3.2412 CHILD REARING: How to Handle Aggressive Behavior Constructively

Nondestructive Aggression, Assertiveness, Goal-Directedness:

Helping the child secure a healthy degree of assertiveness and goal-directedness and the capacity to use nondestructive aggression when needed, applies to both boys and girls. It is well to be wary of the assumption that boys need to be assertive more than do girls. This is highly questionable and is well known by mental health clinicians to be problematic. That is to say, it is equally important for girls and for women to be able to be assertive in constructive and self-protective ways. It is therefore, cautioned that parents not simply accept girls 3 to 6 years of age retreating from pursuing their goals, pursuing their wishes and their needs, and backing down too easily in the face of obstacles. We emphasize that we do not mean that boys or girls should be encouraged to be hostile, or to take from another child what belongs to that other child, or to provoke other children into hostile reactions toward themselves. We mean that parents will serve

themselves and their children well if they support positively a child's constructive assertiveness, a child's standing up for her rights in interactions with others.

Continuing Battles of Wills (Resulting From the Child's Thrust to Autonomy):

By now the parent knows the child's patterns of eliciting limit-setting, of bringing about battles of wills, and how the child deals with them. 4 year old Jennifer's mother knew that when bedtime came, Jennifer would give her a hard time. She felt she knew her daughter pretty well. It is true that while she knew her daughter was giving her a hard time, this good mother was not as aware that her daughter too was really having a hard time accepting the frustration and disappointment of having to go to bed before the others. But mother did well with the limit setting. She found after a number of trials that did not work so well, that when she was more firm with Jennifer, not more hostile, more firm, that the struggle of getting her to bed was shorter. "Look Jennifer no more arguments; it's time to go to bed!" worked well. Mother used to reason with her, explain why Jennifer needed to go to bed at that hour (to get enough rest), which was very good. But it was mother's pleading, almost begging Jennifer to go to bed that just did not work. It usually does not work with children. When Mom came to see that being firm does not mean being nasty (hostile), she could be firm and did not feel she was hurting her daughter. Jennifer did not like Mom's being firm; but it worked much better than her pleading. Actually Jennifer really did not like Mom to plead with her as if she felt "Moms shouldn't do that."

Diane's mother too had her hands full with her daughter. She was shocked by Diane's dumping her powders and perfumes. That did take her by surprise. She was angry with Diane and really let her know. She did not hit her. She said she was really mad with her for doing that. "How would you like it if I threw away the nice (little) purse Dad and I bought you?" The second time Diane threw mother's powder out, Mom almost lost it. This time she told her: "That's a mean thing to do, it's not fair; and I'll have to think twice next time you ask me to buy you something you want. Maybe I'll need that money to buy new powder." When Mom saw that Diane felt bad she calmed down some. "Don't do that again! You hear me?" Diane nodded. But then, 4 year old Diane did do it again, and this time mother told her she had gone too far and that she would talk to Dad about punishing her for this by not taking her to the movies like they had done a month ago.

5¼-year-old Bernie was pretty mad at his mother that she did not invite his favorite neighbor to visit. But they worked it out pretty well. Mom told him she did not feel it was a reasonable thing to do and after some back and forth he did get the idea that Mom would not do that. He knew his Mom pretty well, and she knew him pretty well too.

The 3 to 6 year old child is still learning how to mediate her or his thrust to autonomy (feeling pressured from within to do things oneself and to go after what one wants and needs). He or she needs continuing help and parents need to be tolerant of the fact that such battles of wills are still continuing. It is well known to people who have reared children through adolescence that battles of wills continue throughout the child's development, and that there is a continuing need for parents to deal with these in constructive and growth-promoting ways. That is to say, there is a continuing need for

explanations when setting limits, reasonable firmness and distinguishing between setting limits and punishing (see Unit 2, for a discussion of growth-promoting limit-setting). There is the continuing need for the parents to use their judgment as to when to explain why certain behavior is unacceptable and when enough explanations have been given. The parent has to use her or his judgment as to how quickly to proceed from limit-setting to forewarnings of and eventual punishment (depending on the child's history and sensitivity to parental prohibitions). It is as true now as it was before that loving a child is not enough; that respecting the child as a human being is necessary from infancy on. No where is the need to respect the child required more than in setting limits. This is so because setting limits always goes against the child's sense of being a self, a person with value and rights. This is a time when the child must give in to the authority's wishes. Without feeling respected a child can then feel humiliated which generates hate toward the limit setter.

It is equally important to remember that firmness in a parents' setting limits does not mean to be hostile. To be sure, all parents get angry with their children, it seems unavoidable; but it is important to remember that whatever the child's apparent reaction, parental anger frightens the child and makes the child feel very bad, be it that the child feels shame or guilt. And when parents love and respect the child the parent's anger toward the child will leave no harsh consequences so long as that anger is reasonably expressed by the parent.

Gender-Self Development and The Role of Masculinizing Aggression:

Many normal little boys act the "macho" way 5 1/2-year-old Bernie and Tom do. They show off their muscles (little as they may be but awesome to them nonetheless), strut as if they were big and powerful, act gruff and full of energy. The parents' reactions are important. Some mothers and fathers like to see this "boy-like" behavior in their sons; some do not. Mothers who have been hurt by men may find this aggressive behavior offensive and discourage or even reprimand their sons for it. There is a risk there. Some child developmentalists say that this type of aggression is a key factor in the masculinization of the 3 to 6 year old (and even later age) boys. Bernie's mother did no harm to their masculinization when she told Bernie and Tom they were getting too noisy and acting like apes. She was telling them to contain their behavior, to not let it get out of reasonable bounds. If she had looked disgusted and told them she "really hates it when Bernie shows off his puny little muscles and is acting like a disgusting bully", Bernie's pleasure in experiencing his masculinization might have stopped. Such experiences repeated a number of times, in some boys could interfere with the fuller evolving of their masculinization. The boy's inborn endowment plays its part in this; some boys would not be held back from sufficient masculinization by a parent's, especially a mother's (not fully aware) disapproval. Some may; some have.

We want to note here that we are speaking of the role of masculinizing aggression in the boy's gender self development and of the boy's need for parental guidance and approval in how this aggression shows itself in his behavior. Children need their parents' approval of their being a boy or a girl. Bernie needed to contain the degree to which he

became noisy and acted like an exaggeratedly rough he-man; but his mother did not disapprove of his and Tom's better contained noise-making and rough-housing. In fact she thought they were really cute. So too, when Diane sashayed up to her father and fluttered her eyelashes, her father was surprised. But he too thought she was really cute, essentially approved of her feminizing behavior, but did let her know that he could not take her dancing but when she got older he was certain that some very nice boy friend would. Father also let Diane know in no uncertain terms that her dumping Mom's powders and perfumes was totally unacceptable. She was not happy about his disapproval of this aggressive behavior.

Note that the point we are emphasizing here is that boys and girls need their parents approval of their becoming and being a boy or a girl, respectively. In this the mother's approval of her son's masculinization and a father's approval of his daughter's feminization is of special importance; it is especially so during the 3 to 6 years period and during adolescence. Note also that in her behaviors, Diane was quite ably assertive with both her father and her mother.

Parents who look closely enough will most likely see the types of behaviors which pertain to the influence of "masculinizing aggression" on the behavior of boys. Similarly, observing parents will find the influence of feminization on their girls, in each case to a greater or lesser degree depending on the biological endowment and inherent tendencies in their specific child. Like all other inherent tendencies in children, namely those tendencies toward behaving in certain characteristic ways which are the product of their biological endowment, respecting these particular inherent tendencies in a given child will, of course, facilitate the child's adaptation, development of skills, and sense of inner comfort.

It is however the case that in some children, parents need to foster tendencies toward certain ways of behaving which may not seem to be typical, easy, or "natural" for a given child. For instance, a 4 year old boy who tends to be afraid of a ball that is tossed to him, or of swinging a bat, or like Doug's fear of swimming, or Bernie's fear of trying to ride a two wheel bicycle, may need to be encouraged to do such things. Fears like that experienced by Doug and Bernie did not seem to come from their lack of masculinization, but rather from their fear of injury to valued body parts. But some 5 year old boys who seem to fear falling, or fear getting into some rough-housing and tend to prefer to play with soft toys rather than cars and trucks, tinker toys and LEGOs, that tend to carry themselves in a soft "feminine" manner, may need encouragement toward "masculine" activities and behaviors. The cues may be subtle but parents do tend to have a good feel of when a boy seems to show insufficient masculinizing aggressive behavior.

Interestingly, parents tend to be less troubled by 3 to 6 year old girls behaving in what we all tend to feel are masculine-like ways than by boys behaving in feminine-like ways. Mental-health clinicians tell us that parents are more alarmed by boys who do not manifest masculinizing behavior tendencies, a factor which may reflect our general appreciation of the importance to the boy of "masculinizing aggression" in the development of his gender-self.

Caution needs to be exercised by parents when in their efforts to facilitate masculinizing or feminizing tendencies, respectively in their boys and their girls, that

they not ridicule, shame, or humiliate the child. Although shaming techniques are commonly used by parents, and under certain conditions work to the child's advantage, in general, shame can be very discouraging, hurtful, and provoking of hostility within the child. Shame often leads to hostility toward the person who shames the child but it also leads to the child's hate being turned against the self, thereby intensifying self-depreciation. Facilitating weak tendencies in children needs support, respect for the child, recognition of that child's tendencies, explanations that the child will feel better if he or she learns to feel more like a boy or feel more like a girl. We should add that parents concerns about insufficient evidence of masculinizing aggression as well as, but less so, femininizing tendencies in girls, should be taken seriously and where concerns persist, professional consultation is advised.

Handling the Upsurge of Hostile Aggression Arising From The Family Romance:

In order to cope with the marked upsurge of hostility and hate which emerges in children from about 3 (and earlier) to 6 years of age toward the parent of the same sex, it is important for parents to know the normal nature of the family romance which each child experiences (see Section 3.2311). It is important to not disregard this increase in hostility and to deal with it in growth-promoting ways. This means of course that parents need to handle their children's hostility and hate, their quite normal jealousies and the conflict producing ambivalence which comes with these.

We have emphasized throughout that the parent must respect the child; so too do we aim for the children to come to respect their parents. This means that expressions of anger, hostility, and hate while permitted because they are normal feelings all children have, these expressions should nonetheless have reasonable prescribed limits. That is to say, the parent should not accept insults from a child, verbal or otherwise. Of course, we all experience as insulting words and actions differently. It is important to be able to allow the child to verbalize feelings of anger, hostility and hate toward the parent, so that expressions such as Jennifer's "I hate you" while hurtful to her mother is a statement of feeling which in and of itself is not insulting. Were Jennifer to accompany her "I hate you" with pejorative name calling such as "bitch" or other words 4 year olds become capable of, that should not be permitted. Jennifer's "I hate you", by being a clear expression of feelings she has makes it possible for her to better deal with these feelings and makes the assignment for her parents of what to do very clear. As we have said before, telling a child "I know you don't mean that" is not helpful.¹⁹ It leads to the child's not being able to accept feelings she cannot prevent herself from having, feelings she needs to know she has in order to learn to govern them age-appropriately, and more.

We must understand that it is excessive unpleasure (pain) that leads to our feeling hostility and hate. Feelings of hostility and hate are normal reactions to excessive hurt, to hurt the child cannot tolerate. And, in order for a child to get over feeling excessively hurt, it is best (according to mental health professionals) to help the child express her (or his) reaction in acceptable ways. The parent does not help when she says "I know you don't mean that" because it is equivalent to saying "Don't have the feelings you can't help

¹⁹ See Unit 2, Section 2.2412 for a fuller discussion of the reasons it is not helpful.

having", or "You're a terrible child to mean that", or "If you do mean it then look out, you're in deep trouble, etc."

Although Jennifer's mother got upset when Jennifer said she hates her, she told Jennifer "I get pretty mad at you too kid! Hopefully you won't hate me tomorrow." That was not bad at all for a parent to say.

Two notes here. First, it is unavoidable that when a 3 to 6 year old says "I hate you," parents are hurt and feel angry with their child. There are many things children do that make parents angry with them. "I hate you" is one of them. Resisting parents' limit-setting is another big one. It is quite normal for parents to occasionally get very angry with the children they love. It is quite normal for parent to momentarily feel furious and think: "Why did I every have this rotten kid!" or even "I could kill the ...!" It is, of course not OK to say that to the child nor to lash out of control at the child. Most parents, emotionally pretty healthy parents, feel this for a flash. The thought of killing their kid does not stay in their minds for hours. It is a fact that a child's feelings of ambivalence toward the parent taps into and activates the parent's feeling of ambivalence toward the child.

The second note has to do with just this. The infuriated parent's thought does not last for hours, it is momentary, it comes and it passes. And when it passes, the parent's love feelings for the child are felt again. The same holds for the child. Jennifer's hate is episodic. She hates her mother at that moment. She also loves her mother dearly. Her mother would have done well to say: "I guess you hate me right now. I'm not always thrilled with you either. But I am glad that most of the time you love me, and that even when I'm mad at you I still love you. I'm glad you love me a lot more than you hate me." Of course, the parent who has a good enough love relationship" with her child has the great advantage of being believed by her child.

The handling of anger, hostility and hate should not follow only on the child's overt expressions of them. Parents can help their children in drawing the child's attention to behaviors which suggest that the child is feeling angry, hostile and hateful even when the child does not clearly express these. For instance, it can be enormously helpful if a parent, recognizing that the child is being hostile and hateful, to raise the question with the child as to what could be going on that is making the child behave in ways that suggest something is making him or her very angry and very upset. For instance, Bernie's mother was troubled by his not wanting to share his toys with Suzy and Tom who had come to his house to play. She did not help him just by scolding him and telling him he did not deserve such nice friends. Even though she seemed to have no idea what made Bernie angry, and many times neither the parent nor the child knows (consciously) what makes the child angry at this moment, it would have been helpful to help Bernie see that he did not want to share his toys today because something made him angry. "What's going on Bernie? Something must be upsetting you that you don't wanna let your friends play with your toys. What's up?" This could have led Bernie to think about what was causing his anger. Even if Bernie answered "Nothing" or "I don't know", mother's approach guided Bernie to think about what he was doing and try to know why. Behavior is always motivated by some idea, some reason; it is well for children (and parents) to know this. To get a child to think "What is making me angry?"; and, better still; "What is

hurting me that is making me angry now?" is a powerful way to guide a child to understand his behavior and solve whatever problem may be causing it. The child who is just told "You're bad", is not guided to understand why he does what he does that gets him into trouble.

In dealing with the 3 to 6 year old child's hostility, caution is warranted in getting into talking about issues that pertain to the family romance. Children often experience their fantasies as very private and fear explorations of them by even a well-meaning parent. Sometimes, even very overt behaviors, like 3 year old Johnny's wondering why his father needed to come home for dinner, or nearly 4 year old Diane who sashayed up to her father and fluttered her eyelashes, even such overt manifestations of the child's family romance need to be addressed very cautiously with regard to the expressions of hostility, jealousy, rivalry. Such feelings automatically create in the child a need to deny having them, given that they cause the child much distress. Therefore addressing what may be causing the child's hostility and hate must be done cautiously. It is not well for Johnny's father, for instance, to declare to his son "I know you would like me out of this house and never see me again so that you could be all alone with your mother!". This would be highly anxiety producing, guilt producing, as well as frightening. Similarly Diane or Jennifer's mother's saying even gently to her daughter "I guess there are times you wish I would die because you would like to marry your father" would also produce much fear, anxiety, and guilt in the child. The distinction to be made here is that while honesty in human interaction is securing of trust and is highly desirable, sometimes stating what one can read in a child's behavior can be experienced by the child not as honesty but as the opening of a topic the child is not yet able to handle even with help from Mom²⁰, may be felt to be intrusive, an invasion of the child's privacy, and thereby be hurtful. For example Johnny's Dad and Mom could sympathetically say "It's nice to be alone with Mom, isn't it." Mom could add "I like being alone with Dad; you'll like being alone with your wife when you get married." Dad could say that he too "likes to be alone with mom and is sure glad she is his wife". The usefulness of this is that it addresses Johnny's conflict indirectly and sympathetically. And it sets the record straight, putting reasonable doubt in the child's fantasy that he can marry his mother.

Diane's mother had a difficult task. She was able to set limits with Diane (so could Jennifer's Mom), but she knew (from talking with us) that she could not just say to her: "You threw my powders and perfumes out because you're jealous of me for being married to Dad". That would have been true. But it could have been much more than the child is able to admit to herself or to her mother. Recall that Jennifer was mortified when asked in the presence of her mother to repeat who she had said she wanted to marry. Telling Diane to think of the possible consequences of her actions before she does such an unacceptable thing as throwing out mother's valued possessions is helpful. So is to tell her she is being unfair and mean to mom and she needs to think about what is making her do such unacceptable things so she can stop herself from doing them. "You have to control yourself better," would help too. "You're jealous of me", would not. And, when

²⁰ Parents usually cannot openly and directly help their children with the child's family romance conflict because they are the object of the child's jealousy and hate, as well as of love. Commonly, the child just cannot talk about this with his or her parents.

such intrusions are accompanied with hostility they can even be more harmful.

On the other side of the issue, is the fact that children need their parents help in handling their anger, hostility and hate in constructive ways and there will be many occasions for such help during the 3 to 6 year period.

Handling Sibling Rivalry:

The handling of sibling rivalry continues to be required of parents, given that it will also be amply evident during this developmental period. Jennifer's mother was helpful to her when she told Jennifer she just cannot play with her 7 year old brother Mike's things, any of them, without first asking his permission. "I don't let him play with your things without his asking your permission, and the same goes for you." The more difficult source of Jennifer's rivalry and it has been with the family since she was about 1 year old, is her feeling that Mike has more privileges and is able to do things better than she can, which leads her to feel her mother loves Mike more than her. Mother has been trying to reassure Jennifer that she loves her every bit as much as Mike but there clearly are times when Jennifer cannot feel that. Now with her hostile feelings toward her mother being intensified by her family romance fantasies, feeling Mom loves Mike more than her is becoming a regular feeling. Parents need to know that dealing with sibling rivalry is something that comes up more or less constantly for many years. Patience, talking about it, are needed. Reassurance is needed. Jennifer's mother could say that Jennifer's "anger toward me is making you feel I love you less. What are you so mad at me about?" Jennifer might be able to tell her mom she wishes she could be a grown person like mom is and be able to do the things mom does; or do things like Mike can. Being able to talk about her complaints helps. So too, Diane's mother talking with her about her brother Jack having a penis, that it is because he is a boy, not because it means he is better than Diane, reassured her some. And mom saying that Diane is like she is, and someday she'll be a woman, and that Jack is like Dad that way, made Diane feel good, even though she knew that anyway.

The parents help will also be needed in the child's dealing with peers in manners that are too hostile and hurtful. Bernie's mother was not helpful that time he did not want to share his toys. Most useful is trying to get the child to think about what is making him or her feel hostile then, and help the child deal with the underlying hurt and handle his hostility better. Taking hostile feelings out on his friends is not acceptable. Because its burden is large for the 3 to 6 year old, a displacement onto peers of the child's hostility and hate generated by the family romance may occur. The problem with this is that, because the peers will have their own load of hate and jealousy to deal with they will not be very sympathetic with other children who are unduly hostile toward them. Parents will often be called into mediating disagreements between the child and his or her visiting peers. Judicious thoughtfulness is needed; one's child is never always right and is never always wrong.

Rage Reactions and Temper Tantrums:

These traumatizing reactions require the parents help now as they have before. The principles that we detailed in Unit 2 on the handling of such reactions apply now as well (see Section 2.2412 on handling rage reactions and temper tantrums). Knowing that tantrums have structure continues to be useful for both parent and child. It is far better to catch a tantrum in the making, before it occurs. By 3, parents know pretty well what the signs of a coming tantrum look like. Acting by urging the child to control himself or herself, to count to 10, and by talking about what is upsetting, hurting the child can prevent the large distress a tantrum brings to both the child and the parent. With a 4 years or older child (not with children less than 4), if talking about what upset the child seems not to calm the child, going to his room (or to the bedroom if he shares it with siblings) and continuing to talk there may be useful. This is so that if after enough has been said to help the child understand what is hurting him and more self-calming is needed, the parent can tell the child to stay in his room until he feels in better control of himself. Being alone at age 4 and older does not bring with it the same feelings of separation anxiety and abandonment felt by the younger child. This is the reason why less than 4 year olds should usually not be sent to his (or their) room. Being alone can then be felt by the 4 year old as an opportunity to calm down further and get in better control. Tantrums are sufficiently painful for children that it is unwise to punish them for having them. If in the course of a tantrum the child breaks something that belongs to a sibling, the child should be held responsible and appropriate amends be made. Above all parents striking at, beating a child who is having a tantrum is highly inadvisable. Although it may frighten the child into stopping the tantrum, the additional rage and hate it will generate in the child will be very costly to the child and eventually the parent.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.25 THE CHILD'S ABILITIES TO ADAPT -- PART II

Having examined the major developments of sexuality and aggression in the 3 to 6 year old, let us now continue to examine major developing adaptive functioning of which the 3 to 6 year old child increasingly becomes capable. We delayed this examination of the child developing these adaptive capabilities in order to first highlight some of the major developmental challenges to which the child needs to adapt, his or her gender-self as well as major normal aggression developments. Now we will take up the continuing but modifying dependence of the child on those in his or her environment, a dependence modified by the child's increasing sense of autonomy and initiative, and of adaptive capabilities. We will then explore that major personality shaping sector of developing psychic defense mechanisms which serve the child's efforts to cope with stresses of life during early childhood, including those that come from the child's own internal conflicts and painful affects (feelings). We will talk about the modification or "neutralization" of hostile destructiveness, about regression, reaction formation, identification and repression. And third, we will talk about new and further evolving adaptive capacities of large consequence to both the self and human interaction, namely empathy, altruism, and sublimation.

Let's bear in mind that these emerging and gradually developing adaptive capabilities add significantly to the already discussed development of cognitive functioning, of the capacity for fantasy, language, the enriching unfolding of gradations and varieties of affects as well as the child's organization and patterning of sleep and wake cycles. These were discussed under The Child's Abilities to Adapt, Part 1, Section 3.21.

3.2511 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Age-Appropriate Dependence -- On Whom and For What

The 3 to 6 year old child is still largely dependent on the caregiving environment for the sufficient gratification of his or her physical needs; the child is still totally dependent for shelter, clothing, hygiene, and feeding. However, even though dependent on the adult world for the provision of these needs, that is, the 3 to 6 year old cannot buy or secure all these for himself or herself, the child does begin to make more and more meaningful contributions to self-care such as by his or her growing capability to keep warm or cool enough (re clothes), to feed herself or himself as well as get food from the refrigerator.

With regard to the child's emotional needs, needs as crucial for health as good (for health) food, shelter, rest, and hygiene, these needs are most actively fulfilled in the growing relationships the child has to primary caregivers. The role of the siblings as gratifiers of emotional needs for the 3 to 6 year old child continues to grow, as we saw

when Jennifer saw her brother Mike come to get her at Gloria's, with more and more peer quality relatedness added to it. The needs for love, for feeling valued and respected, for emotional support, comforting, for play and other emotional interactions continue to be large and to be centered around the nuclear family, those who constitute the child's primary relationships. 3 1/2 year old Victor was fortunate that although his parents both worked outside the home, his grandparents were very good at showing him they loved and respected him and tried hard to comfort him when he got upset, including when mother left for work each morning. Many 3 to 6 year old children are also in contact with persons outside the family, those with whom the child develops secondary relationships which can be a source of very meaningful emotional gratification or disappointment and hurt. For instance, daycare caregivers, teachers, begin to play an increasingly meaningful part in gratifying or frustrating the child's emotional needs when away from home. Although Johnny, Doug and Diane's preschool teacher Mrs. Nell was really nice enough, she was not always as emotionally available as Johnny and Diane would have liked. She would not regularly take the time to help them deal with getting along and sharing problems. And she just did not seem to always be ready to comfort kids. She even told Johnny once to stop being a baby when he almost began to cry, which made Johnny pretty angry with her for a while. Doug did not feel she was mean, like Johnny said; he did seem to like her more than his friends did. In addition, peers who are at daycare or at school or in the neighborhood also become meaningful emotional gratifiers as well as, of course, emotional frustrators both of which occurred when Johnny, Diane and Doug played together. We all know only too well that the needs for emotional gratification in both primary as well as secondary relationships is not always met with desired success on the part of any child and that many emotional frustrations occur side by side with fun and gratification. If the equation is such that emotional gratification substantially outweigh frustrations of basic emotional needs (love, respect, comforting), the chances are good that the child is being adequately cared for and is having positive enough emotional experiences. The fact that Johnny and Diane had quite good-enough relationships at home made it so that their experiences with Mrs. Nell in school were not as upsetting to them as they might be.

With regard to adaptive functional needs, the 3 to 6 year old child has already come a long way from being a nearly totally helpless neonate and will during the three to six years period expand his or her adaptive functional capabilities to a remarkable degree. Nonetheless, the child is strongly dependent on the adult environment for guidance, for instruction in many key areas of functioning, in learning how to tie his or her shoes, perform modest tasks in the household, learn the alphabet, colors, to read and even to write, to count and perhaps to begin to add. 3 1/2 year old Victor would try to help with getting dressed. He could put on his coat and take it off with some help. He could easily take off his shoes and socks. He could pull his pants down to go to the bathroom, but could not yet pull them up well; with this he needed and automatically got help. 4 year old Johnny and 4 1/4 year old Doug could put their socks on, not exactly right but they were on their feet. They were getting their coats on and off pretty well. So did 4 year old Jennifer and 4 1/4 year old Diane. 5 1/2 year old Suzy, Bernie and 5 3/4 year old Tom were experts at handling their coats, socks, getting pants on and off with toileting. Suzy

could tie shoelaces. Bernie and Tom could not yet. Suzy and Tom would pour themselves a glass of juice. Bernie still spilled some when he did. Johnny, Jennifer, Doug and Diane needed help when they tried or it could get spilled. Victor did not try yet. To his mother's distress, Bernie ably got cookies out of the cookie box himself. In addition there is the large number of other often unrecognized areas of learning which the adults in the child's environment provide like learning to recognize physical properties of the world around such as a cup pushed may spill its contents, it is wise to conserve electricity, that electricity can be dangerous, that the child is expected to try to keep his or her things in some order, etc. In these learning and organizing instructions, the child is strongly dependent on the external environment.

3.2512 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize Age-Appropriate Dependence

The parents are the major source of gratification of the child's physical, emotional, as well as adaptive functional needs. However long the child may be in daycare or in preschool, emotionally the child experiences her/his primary caregivers as being at the center of her/his universe. Studies show that children generally turn to primary caregivers with greater facility than to secondary caregivers in all three spheres of needs-dependency. That is to say, comparative studies of child interaction with primary caregivers (mothers especially) as compared to secondary caregivers (substitute caregivers, preschool teachers) show that the child will turn more frequently, with greater facility for help in the gratification of the basic needs than they do to secondary caregivers. These studies, which are inconclusive to date, suggest that on the one hand children do not express their needs with secondary caregivers as readily as they will with primary caregivers; but on the other hand, they tend to rely more on themselves for the fulfillment of some of these needs and turn to peers more readily than parent care for children for gratification of their dependency needs.

A major task for the parent at this time is to try to determine how to sufficiently gratify the child's age-appropriate dependence in balance with reasonably encouraging the child to progressively develop age-expectable self-reliance. Efforts to push children too quickly to gratify their own needs may deprive them of the pace and time they need to grow. And insufficient encouragement or support of the child's own efforts to gratify his own adaptive functional needs may slow down his or her growth or rob them of self-confidence. Parents and other caregivers are variably able to help children in developing adaptive functional skills. They do it in many different ways as well. For instance, 3 1/2 year old Victor's mother was good at asking him what he thought a particular item is and what is it for. His father was pretty good at playing with him and trying to show him how things work. His grandmother who had been a teacher often helped him learn to pick things up, clean up the messes he made, and asked him about letters, numbers, colors, animals, pictures, cautioned him to not spill water, and more. His grandfather was helpful in a most sensitive, loving, respecting and understanding way. He was Victor's most security giving caregiver, next to Victor's mother. He was, like Mom, able to wait

and see what Victor could do and let him struggle until he lost patience and then grandfather would help him and encourage him to try again. He "read" Victor's abilities and limitations very well. So did his mother. Grandmother did pretty well in this. His Dad at times got too impatient.

Most parents derive much pleasure in seeing their children develop coping skills; during the 3 to 6 years period many parents actively become their children's teachers. Those who teach their children with patience, trying to read the child's abilities, pace in learning, who enjoy the child's successes, are sympathetic with and tolerant of failures and then encourage trying again, facilitating the task where so needed, these parents can virtually be assured of success in helping their child learn to adapt as best as the child can. And there is the added benefit that these children will find learning to be feasible and worthwhile, and they are prone to accept and adapt better at learning in school.

Of course, although we have suggested separate categories of needs children (humans) have, the gratification of adaptive functional needs (to learn skills for adaptation) brings with it the child's feeling valued, respected, and liked. And where this gratification is done by the child's parents (or siblings) it usually brings with it feeling loved. For the 3 to 6 year old, the gratification of the child's emotional needs are in largest part still dependent on the primary caregivers being the gratifiers.

3.2521 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Psychic Defense Mechanisms

Psychic defense mechanisms are usually activated by the child without awareness (unconsciously), as if automatically, when the child feels the need to protect himself or herself in the face of some perceived danger. Many, though not all, actual external dangers are readily recognized by young children. An advancing barking dog will usually frighten a child unless it is a dog with which the 3 year old child is very familiar. In addition, there are also dangers the child experiences that come from within himself or herself which do not have a basis in reality. The fear of loss of parental love, the fear of being abandoned, are perceived by the child at times as real (when they are not) and then are experienced as dangers. These internal sources of danger lead the child to experience anxiety.

Anxiety is the feeling produced within us by experiencing a sense of helplessness in the face of an internal danger. It appears like fear, as if the self is threatened by some imminent danger. It can range widely from minimal anxiety to an intense inner feeling of impending doom which manifests as panic. To protect himself or herself against this wide range of anxiety the child sets up a variety of psychological (mental) defense mechanisms. Such defenses are also erected against another major source of internal pain, namely against feelings of depression.

Depression like anxiety is a source of pain that arises not from outside but from within the self. Depression, is the painful affect experienced by the child in reaction to feeling that a terrible event has occurred. Whereas in anxiety the experience is a perception that a catastrophe is going to occur; in depression the experience is that a catastrophe has occurred. "Mother no longer loves me", or "I am abandoned".

Feelings of anxiety, depression, like all other affects occur in all 3 to 6 year old children. The degree to which children experience these is co-determined by the child's biological givens and the child's experiences. We see a wide range of sensitivities in children that reflect their biological, inborn dispositions and tendencies to react to events. For instance shy children are pretty much that way from the beginning of life on; they seem to naturally experience feelings more intensely than others. Some infants, quite the contrary, from the outset look squarely into their caregiver's face, eventually actively seek contact and are not made uncomfortable in new situations. Their ways of reacting are variable, because their inborn tendencies to react are variable. Then, the experiences they have will influence how their tendencies become organized and patterned. For instance, a shy child who has been subject to frightening noises like parents arguing and having hi-pitched fights is more likely to organize the shyness and it become a stable reaction to new situations. Bernie and Johnny were a bit shy as infants. At 4, unless one knows Johnny well, one is not likely to pick up that his being somewhat quiet when he first gets to preschool is some of what remains of his shyness. He interacts quite actively with Diane and Doug. Bernie, at 5 1/2, still shows some of his earlier more visible shyness. That is in part why his mother has liked to have his friends come over. As much as he likes Tom and Suzy, he prefers to have them come over than go to their houses. Such predispositions, as they are forged by experiences, also determine the degree to which a

child is vulnerable to being anxious or depressed.

The defense mechanisms the child sets up when these painful feelings are activated seem to be programmed by the child in ways which cannot be governed either by the external environment or by the child himself or herself. Whether the child is going to use regression, reaction formation, or denial to deal with too painful feelings, cannot be predicted by the child nor by the adult. We can come to predict what kind of defense mechanisms a child may use by virtue of having seen the child use certain defense mechanisms in the face of specific experiences or situations before. In addition, we can also predict to a degree what kind of defense mechanism a child is likely to use by virtue of the child's age. That is to say, mental health clinicians have found that children under the age of 2 years will use defenses of denial (what happened did not happen) or avoidance (turning away from what is perceived as painful or threatening), or early forms of reaction formation (to turn what one is feeling into its opposite, for instance I am not upset, I feel fine) or displacement (to attach to another, lesser important person or to things feelings of hostility experienced toward a primary caregiver) etc. During the 3 to 6 year of age, the defenses that become erected are more complex, more elaborate, can be more specific than prior to 3 years of age. Some of the major defenses that emerge now or that become more elaborate now include the mitigation or "neutralization" of hostile destructiveness, (more specific) reaction formations, identifications, regression, and repression.

The Mitigation or "Neutralization" of Hostile Destructiveness:

We discussed in Section 3.23 and 3.24 how whatever previously accumulated hostile destructiveness within the child arising out of excessively unpleasurable events from the first 3 years of life, normal events of the 3 to 6 years period, especially the hurts and anxiety coming from the child's family romance, generate a markedly heightened degree of hostile destructiveness within the child. This heightened hostility creates large feelings of fear, further anxiety (fears of loss of love, fear of genital mutilation, etc.), guilt (associated with the child's own strong disapproval of his or her own transgressive wishes and fantasies). All of these, especially guilt, put much pressure on the child to lessen the intense feelings of hostility that are being generated. The beneficial results of this normal conflict created by the child's fantasized "family romance" then cannot be overestimated; the adaptive strategies it sets in motion are of enormous importance to the individual and to society.

Clinical experience especially has led theorists to propose that the child sets in motion a remarkable coping strategy (a defense) to decrease the intensity of this hostility and hate. Some form of "neutralization" of the hostility is developed. It has been proposed that in some way hostile destructive emotional energies are converted into nondestructive emotional energies which can then be put to use in processes of adaptation and sublimation (creativity). Although there are problems with this theory -- specifically that there is much difficulty in explaining what "emotional energy" is -- nonetheless, the idea of hostile destructiveness being converted into constructive aggressive energy seems to have merit from both research (observational) and clinical

standpoints. We can use this explanation in a meaningful way, recognizing that it is only a model to try to explain a critical process which, in one way or another, we believe children implement. Of course, converting hostile feelings into constructive efforts is a well known phenomenon in everyday life; it is used by young children, adolescents and adults.

The hostility 2 1/2 year old Jane is beginning to generate, which led her mother to want to lend her out for a year, is predictably going to lead to her feeling much guilt given that she has quite a good relationship with her mother. 4 year old Jennifer's battles with her mother over going to bed and 4 1/4 year old Diane's infuriating her mother with her powder and perfume dumping parties show 2 girls at the height of their feeling hostile toward their mothers. They have not yet come to the point where the guilt they feel will coerce them into stopping their provocative behavior and doing something constructive about their mounting hostility. Doug's hostility toward his Dad is already causing him to feel anxious about the safety of his body, of his penis, making him afraid that trying to learn to swim is sure to end in disaster. He is about at the point where he is going to have to modify some of his wishes regarding his mother in order to tame his guilt and fear of retribution. While 5 1/2 year old Bernie still is afraid of significant bodily injury (fear of getting hurt riding a bike), he has already significantly revised some of his wishes about his mother and fallen in love with another female, their downstairs neighbor. All these children still face much they need do to lessen the hostility they feel toward the parents they love.

Another often very constructive mechanism of defense is frequently used in conjunction with the mitigation of hostile destructiveness, that of reaction formation. Reaction formation is an unconscious psychic strategy whereby what is experienced by the self as undesirable is turned into its opposite. As we already suggested, instead of feeling hostility one converts this into feeling love. One does not just pretend or lie to oneself, one changes the undesirable feeling; it is a complex defense mechanism. This mechanism differs from denial, which is evident for instance in the reaction of a raging father who says with furor: "I am not angry!". Reaction formation is a more complex maneuver in which the feeling of hostility is in fact replaced by feelings of affection. A wish to attack someone is changed into the wish to be helpful to that person. Combining with other defense mechanisms and with increasing altruism and empathy (see below), Suzy and Tom's reactions to 5 1/2 year old Bernie when his mother scolded him might have been the product of a successful reaction formation. Rather than adding to Bernie's pain, they showed sympathy and tried to make him feel better.

Reaction formation then is a maneuver in which an attempt is made to transform the existing feelings and thoughts into their opposites. The boy who at 4 now fears, hates and wishes to undo his father will assert that, quite the contrary he does not fear his father at all, and furthermore, he absolutely adores and admires him, and only wishes him well. Obviously this is really facilitated when genuine underlying feelings and thoughts (wishes) of this kind do exist side by side with the jealousy and hurt feelings. These genuine underlying positive feelings and thoughts now, during this 3 to 6 years periods, are reinforced by the conversion of some of the hate feelings and wishes to destroy the father into benevolent love feelings for and good wishes toward him. Jennifer and Diane

will feel compelled by anxiety to convert their feelings and thoughts of rivalry and hate toward their mothers into benevolent feelings of loving her and wishing only the best for her. These will supplement their genuine underlying feelings and thoughts of love for mother which have developed during the first 3 years of life and now stand her in good stead as the girls will try to undo the substantial hate generated in each by her fantasized family romance.

Another all-important, personality forming defense mechanism brought into play now to cope with these same large hostile feelings is the mechanism of identification with the parent of the same sex. This mechanism which the child has already used before the age of 3, confirms the child's valuing of the parent of the same sex, confirms the child's admiration for the parent's attributes, functions and behaviors. It is an affirmation of the large existing love feelings for this parent. When he was 3 1/2, as he also had done before, Johnny pretended he was his Dad going to work, kissing his mother goodbye and go into another room. It was amazing how he did exactly those little things Dad did and how much his behavior looked like his Dad's. To be sure this defense process would help him during the 5th and 6th years, when it will also bring with it a critical step in the resolution of the wishes and fantasies which started this conflict-producing family romance fantasy in the first place. Namely, it will replace Johnny's wish to be his Dad; in the girl it will replace her wish to be Mom. 2 1/2 year old Jane wanted Dad to take her camping alone, nearly 4 year old Diane wanted Dad to take her, not Mom, dancing and to the movies. Each wanted to take her mother's place with her father. This identification is the girl's compromise: she changes the wish to be in the place of her mother into the wish to be like her mother; for the boy, it becomes to be like father. It is to accept the compromise to someday in the future have privileges like the ones mother has, like the ones father has. For the boy it is not to marry his actual mother but like the song says: "I want a girl just like the girl that married dear old Dad." It is to be like Dad; and for the girl it is to be like Mom. These identifications with the parent of the same sex as themselves make a major contribution toward a consolidation of the gender-self of the child. And, one of its major functions is the reduction and resolution of feelings of rivalry with the parent of the same sex whereby it also brings with it a reduction in the feelings of hate for that parent.

But the child being young, even during the enormous amount of growth which come during the 3 to 6 years period, the wishes of the child are so strong that in most children even these very helpful mechanisms of defense are insufficient to resolve and tame completely the child's powerful feelings and wishes. Bear in mind that the child's wishes are brought into being by the very powerful sexual drive, a remarkable psychobiological force within the child which has the large responsibility of preserving the species. "Mother Nature" is serious in her demand that the child become an organism who will insure the preservation of the species. One of the major governing forces in every organism is just that. This responsibility will not be represented in the organism (animal or plant) by some minor force that can easily be suppressed. It is just not likely that nature would make this force of such dimension that a 5 year old child would be able to totally deal with it with no need to resort to dramatic intrapsychic (mental) maneuvers. The fact is that the direct observation of children 3 to 6 years of age amply documents

that whatever defenses a child uses, they are insufficient to fully resolve, do away with the wishes and fantasies generated by their fantasized family romance. As a result still other major mechanisms are activated as well. One of these mechanisms is regression and the other is repression.

Regression which is commonly visible in young children from their first year of life, is a maneuver which makes the child return to an earlier level of functioning that is better established, more stable, and safe. Regressions are commonly sources of concern for parents because they often bring with them a return to a more infantile way of behaving. Sometimes, these regressions are unpleasant for parents, especially for instance a child who seems to be clinging more than the child has been in the recent past. The return to clinging is a return to a safe harbor as the child experiences it. Of course the mother does not experience it as a return to a safe harbor, rather, she experiences it as a greater burden. For instance, 2 1/2 year old Jane's regression was experienced by her mother Gloria as a mixed blessing. Jane was at time feeling threatened by her own meanness toward her mother; she does love her. At times, helped by her envy of her baby sister Sara's being held by her mom, she wanted Mom to hold her like that. When mother complied with Jane's wish to be held, Jane was very sweet to her. With the way things have been of late, mother felt this behavior as a relief. In fact, so did Jane. But then, it also worried Gloria a bit, that her spunky daughter was acting like a baby, and furthermore, it was quite burdensome to have 2 infants who needed to be held at the same time. Normal children do regress in this way, and do need to cling often longer than parents wish. While regressions have occurred all along, the newer reason for regression in the child 3 to 6 years is powerful. The feelings of hate toward the mother she loves made her anxious; Jane needed to push them aside (by earlier described defenses of denial and avoidance²¹, including then her intense romantic interest in her father, assert to herself that she has no romantic inclinations toward him, and will turn to her mother, often with tenderness, with some clinging and with appeals of reassurance that her mother loves her. She will also at times declare that she loves her mother beyond any one in the world. The boy will do the same with his father. In the instance of the boy, it is less a regression than it is a reaction formation, that is to say, it is less a return to an earlier state of experiencing (regression) than it is a conversion of hate feelings toward father into love feelings toward father (reaction formation). But it is a regression in the boy's disavowing any sexual interests, any romantic inclinations toward his mother, disavowing the influence of the sexual drive on his psyche.

The combination of regression and reaction formation in both the boy and the girl may lead to the normal child experiencing sexual feelings toward the parent of the same sex. It is unavoidable that in the course of regression during years 3 to 6, the child will tend to carry into the turning to the parent of the same sex those existing sexual feelings which the child can now no longer totally rid himself/herself of. Usually, the child's internally organizing and increasingly stabilizing gender-self protects the child against the sexual attachment to the parent of the same sex acquiring stability and governance in the self.

The defense of repression is enormously important for coping. By repression

²¹ See Unit 2, Section 2.2521.

psychoanalysts mean "to push out of awareness", to make a thought, wish, or conflict, unconscious. This defense is called into operation because, being incapable of successfully enough giving up his or her wishes for sole romantic possession of mother or father, the 4 to 6 year old child must put these wishes out of mind to protect himself or herself against the inordinate hate, anxiety, and guilt these wishes and fantasies produce. What results is that while some anxiety remains at a level of awareness (conscious level), the wishes and the thoughts which produce this anxiety are put out of awareness, they are pushed into the child's unconscious mind.

Two more notes on the defense mechanism of repression. First, because the 3 to 6 year old child cannot sufficiently resolve feelings, wishes and fantasies arising from the family romance, the repression to which it leads is quite pervasive. In fact, this repression may well be the principle cause for the commonly found inability of most adults and adolescents to remember experiences from before about 5 or 6 years of age. Some theorists propose that the reason for this massive inability to recall memories may result from the kind of thought and memory storage processes which occur prior to about six years; that the storage is processed differently and later thinking does not make access to that storage easy. Other theorists, however, especially psychoanalysts, ascribe this poverty of recollecting the thousands of experiences we all have in early childhood to this massive self-protective repression.

Second, psychoanalysts particularly propose that this repression brings with it a putting out of awareness the intrapsychic conflict produced by the child's fantasized family romance. This putting out of awareness of wishes, fantasies, and major conflict, makes for its being retained in one's unconscious part of the mind as a source of continuing vulnerability to the development of neurotic symptoms. This is so because by repressing this major intrapsychic (within the mind) conflict into one's unconscious, it is to a large degree, out of the child's ability to change it. Repression has a tendency to put whatever is being repressed into "cold storage". That which is repressed remains then in large part un-resolvable. By virtue of this fact the conflict remains intrapsychically alive and continues to produce anxiety, inhibitions, symptoms, when current life circumstances resonate with that which is repressed. Furthermore, what is repressed continues to secondarily influences the way a current event is experienced. That is to say, for example, an adolescent whose repressed intrapsychic family romance-conflict is still substantially unresolved, may experience the feelings she/he develops toward a peer with an overlay of anxiety, guilt, and inhibitions which do not belong to the present situation but to the past. This is how the past casts its shadow on the present and may create a distortion of the present experience that may then, in turn, lead to mal-adaptive reactions to this present experience.

3.2522 CHILD REARING: What To Do About Psychic Defense Mechanisms

This is a major domain of the child's experiencing where parents regrettably, essentially have little to offer the child. Defense mechanisms are totally set up by the

cooperation of inborn tendencies and intrapsychic (mental) processes. Even the child cannot control these, and they do not lend themselves to influence by the parents. There are, however, some ways in which parents can be helpful to their children in this crucial area of adaptation and development.

First, understanding that such defense mechanisms operate within the child as a means of helping the child cope with overly troublesome fantasies, conflicts, hate, anxiety, depression, guilt, can facilitate the parent's understanding of some of their child's behaviors. For instance, appreciating the need for the defense mechanism of regression will no doubt make a parent more sympathetic to a child's reverting to more infantile behavior than was evident in the recent past. Jane's mother was helpful when she would allow Jane's clinging and would then comfort her and reassure Jane that she really loves her. There were times when she could not do it and Jane would complain and even cry. Then things got unpleasant and tense. For the most part, this need to cling ought to be reasonably gratified. Parents should adopt the view that children never cling, or for that matter, never regress, unless they need to. Then, a 4 or 5 year old's clinging can be experienced by the parent not as an actual return by the child to an infantile stage, but rather, as a temporary self protective maneuver. This will provide the child a degree of protection that will then make it possible for the child to recover a better internal equilibrium and return to the level of current experiencing even as the child makes further efforts to resolve these difficult intrapsychic (mental) experiences. Sometimes a parent's encouragement that the child try not to cling, not to act more regressed can be very helpful. But this is best done by encouragement than by shaming the child like Johnny's preschool teacher Mrs. Nell did. While encouragement makes the child feel capable, shaming makes the child feel bad about himself and feel hostility or hate toward the one who shamed him.

Similarly, the parent who understands the mechanism of displacement will not be shocked by a 4 or 5 year old's attacks on a sibling that seem to be totally unwarranted in the present. Recognizing that this attack may be the displacement of hate feelings that come from elsewhere, such as toward the rival parent, helps the parent know what to do. This parent will step in, set limits with the hostile child, and, if then possible, invite the child to discuss the source of his or her hostility (without intrusiveness). This parent will feel she has been helpful because she understood why her five year old is being such a nasty child and how to deal with her in a growth-promoting way.

Similarly as well, the parent who understands the role of reaction formations will keep a vigilant eye out for a child who is just too sweet, too nice, never gets angry, never displeases the parent, and if by chance does so then suddenly experiences intense anxiety. Helping the child to understand that sometimes being angry with one's beloved mother or father, sometimes even hating the parent, is not a terrible thing to feel. The parent may then be able to help free her or his child from oppressive self-imposed prohibitions against feeling hostility and hate and then coping with these feelings in acceptable ways. Thus, the parent facilitates the prevention of the child's hostility accumulating excessively within herself, enhancing also the child's lessening of it by his or her use of reaction formation and other growth facilitating defenses.

Also, troublesome for parents, is the anxiety produced in them by the child's

exhibiting sexual feelings toward the parent of the same sex. Current thinking is that the child's choice of gender, that is of what the child feels himself or herself to be with regard to one's sexual-self, is in part determined by inborn tendencies and in part by experience. The experience part mostly results from defenses against the anxieties the fantasized family romance produces. Many child psychiatrists and psychologists have found that problems in gender-self development become evident during the 3 to 5 years period. The parent's task here is to weigh how much the child exhibits interests in the parent of the other sex as compared to the parent of the same sex. Two major factors in the child's behavior are helpful to know and look for: (1) If over a period of 5 to 6 months the 3 to 4 year old child exhibits no special love interest whatsoever in her father (verbally or in behavior), or the boy exhibits no romantic feeling whatsoever toward his mother, it is a source of concern. (2) The boy who persistently over a period of 3 to 6 months directly expresses the wish to be a girl, or the girl who rejects being a girl and painfully wishes she were a boy warrants professional consultation. A large word of caution is due here. Parents must distinguish between a girl's wish to have a penis as compared to her wish to be a boy. Little girls, to a greater or lesser degree, wish to have a penis in addition to what they have, for a variety of reasons, and this of itself does not mean that the girl wishes to be a boy. Many a girl wishes to be a girl who also has a penis. Similarly, a boy who wishes to have a baby in his tummy may not necessarily be saying that he wishes he were a girl. He, like the converse in the girl, may wish to be a boy who can also bear a child like his mother can. Here again, as we stated in Section 3.2312, parents seem right to be less worried about girls wanting to be or act like boys than they are about boys wanting to be or act like girls. Mental health professionals too believe that the masculinization of the boy is more likely in jeopardy when a boy expresses persistent wishes to be a girl than is the girl's feminization when she expresses the wish to be a boy. Why this is so is not yet clear enough to mental health professionals.

3.2531 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Other Important Adaptive Capabilities

Several other remarkable adaptive functions emerge or further evolve at this time which warrant our attention. They are especially important due to their value to society and our relationships to others. These are: empathy, altruism, and sublimation. A few thoughts on each.

Empathy is the ability to perceive and feel what another person is feeling without being subject to the same intensity of feeling, be it of pleasure or of pain. Empathy is one of our most valuable orienting capabilities in the conduct of human relationships. It is critical in the parent-child relationship as a means of the parent's emotionally understanding the child and the child's emotionally understanding the parent, it is critical in love relationships, in peer relationships, in work relationships, indeed in all human relationships. Knowing what another person is experiencing makes us not only more responsive in an appropriate way to that person, but it also helps us understand that person more correctly, helps us to recognize whether we are loved or hated, respected or devalued, and all in all makes us not only better able to relate but also to protect ourselves when so needed. In parenting, the capability for empathy ranks only behind the ability to love another. A parent who is capable empathy is capable of coming very close to emotionally understanding what his or her child is experiencing (feeling) from the first days of life on. The parent can then be subjectively attuned to her or his child, which is essential for growth-promoting parenting.

During the 3 to 6 years period, the child's emerging and further developing capability for empathy is given a new thrust by the experience of the family romance. The four or five year old girl who, loving her mother, recognizes that hating her beloved mother is very hurtful to mother will enlarge that child's feeling of awareness of what another feels. There is a very good chance that, when at 3 Jennifer became mortified when asked to say again who she is going to marry, in addition to whatever she felt (fear of mother's reaction of anger, etc.), she also recognized that were she to marry her father it would hurt her mother terribly. She could then feel what her mother might feel were her wish to come true. The same applies to boys in relation to their fathers. So too, because he loves his father, at any time now we can expect 4 year old Johnny to feel guilty for not wanting his father to come home for dinner. This guilt would be based on his wanting to be rid of the father he loves. It is knowing that his father would feel hurt, that would make a very nice boy like Johnny feel guilt. This recognition and ability to perceive what the other feels or might feel, because the child would be inflicting pain on someone the child loves, enhances and enlarges the child's capability to empathize with an other person, mother or father, and eventually then siblings and peers. 5 1/2 year old Suzy showed the result of her ability to empathize when, seeing her friend Bernie upset by his mother's scolding, she put her arm around his shoulders. Feeling that he was hurt, she wanted to comfort him. She did so quite sympathetically. And 5 3/4 year old Tom did as well, when he told Bernie's mother (and Bernie too) that he too sometimes did not want to share his toys. Feeling what his friend felt, not only what he did, is probably what made Tom act so sympathetically.

Altruism, wanting to be generous to someone at the expense of some moderate self deprivation, is again, a capability which serves human beings well, if it is not excessive and too self sacrificing. This is so in all types of relationships. We emphasize again, that when altruism becomes excessive it can cause harm to oneself; this, because it can rob the self of the self-concern required for healthy development and may then rob the self of a good enough achievement of one's hopes and goals.

A healthy amount of altruism, in fact, is needed in all relationships. Whether in a parent-child relationship, in relationships with peers, mates, one's co-workers and colleagues, in relation to humanity at large. Nowhere, however, is it more critical than in the parent-child relationship and in mate-hood. Altruism, in its most primitive form, is found in some children under 3 years of age, in moments of the child's yielding need gratification for the benefit of another, a sibling or a tired mother, for instance. In the 3 to 6 year old, the development of the capability to give to someone else even at a substantial expense to the self is given a large push by the child's efforts to come to terms with the conflict created within the self by his or her fantasized family romance. By virtue of loving the rival parent, the child's giving up his or her own family romance wishes, yielding to that parent the pleasure of gratifying the love that exists between mother and father, is part of the child's efforts to come to terms with the fact that he or she cannot marry the parent he or she loves so specially. He or she now begins to accept his or her fate; to find someone like mother, someone like father -- in the future. In beginning to give up her or his wishes to marry her father or his mother, the child's altruism blossoms. "Let her have the husband she loves; I will find someone else", and the equivalent statement by the boy, even if not yet fully believed and accepted by the child, brings with it a feeling of altruism. Thus, the partial, age-appropriate resolution of the child's fantasized family romance brings with it the further development of the capacity for altruism. This makes a major contribution to the child's growing capability to be altruistic. In their sympathetic comforting of Bernie, both Suzy and Tom gave up something they had wanted, namely, to play with Bernie's toys. To be sure, some skeptics might say that Suzy and Tom did what they did to win Bernie over so that he would let them play with his toys. This may be so. But it may well be that it was their capabilities to empathize and to be altruistic that we saw. We think it is advantageous to give children the benefit of the doubt. There are many instances when parents cannot be certain that what they think is right.

The other of these remarkable adaptive capabilities which develops in a new way in reaction to the child's experience of the family romance is sublimation.

Sublimation is viewed especially by psychoanalysts to be the product of the child's inhibiting of sexual and hostile feelings and to convert the emotional energies contained in these wishes and fantasies into creative energies and productions. Here is an example of sublimation in the making. Four year old Jennifer and Diane were busily at play with Diane's 6 1/2 year old brother Jack. The excitement the three children were experiencing was amply evident; the noise was mounting. The children's behaviors strongly suggested that they were playing "boy chases girl". Further observation suggested that the two girls were competing for Jack's pursuit and attention. Aware of the quality of the mounting excitement Jennifer's mother's told that the children to stop running around so much and

quiet down a bit. Jennifer, responsive to the admonition, dropped to the floor, sweating, and, seemingly unaware, lay on the floor, her legs bent up and apart like a woman about to have a medical gynecological examination. After several thrusts with her pelvis, sweaty, Jennifer got up, with some dash of energy grabbed a large piece of cardboard, a pencil and began to stab pencil holes into the cardboard piece. As she did so her activity calmed down some, her stabbing the cardboard organized better as she pursued this activity for several minutes. She then brought the cardboard to her mother, held it in front of her like a piece of art and said "Isn't this beautiful?" Jennifer's mother looked at Jennifer looking at the piece of cardboard and said nicely enough "Huh, yea it's very nice. What is it?"

This true vignette, illustrates dramatically the transition from sexual play between two normal girls and a boy being converted, with the help of the adult's admonition to cool their play down, into a work of art, as Jennifer perceived quite unselfconsciously. Conversion of the sexual excitement into the work of art, psychoanalysts would say, was the product of the sublimation of the child's sexual and aggressive feelings. There is an element of this as well in the well known notion of putting one's anger into a creative sublimational piece of work one is doing. For instance, the athlete who can put into the swing of a bat, or into the stroke of a good tennis backhand the anger the individual feels at having in one way or another been hurt, may enhance the success of that act. We often suggest "put your anger into your work", knowing, indeed, that if one can do so one will work at a more energetic level. This is sublimation.

Obviously in order to become capable of sublimation the child's adaptive capability to do so has to be sufficient. During the period from 3 to 6 years of age, the family romance feelings which cause the child enormous internal distress, provoke within the child the development of this capability for sublimation. Sublimation, like empathy and altruism, is an enormously productive new development which grows directly out of new cognitive (intellectual) abilities within the child and the child's troublesome but normal fantasized family romance.

3.2532 CHILD REARING: How to Optimize the Development of Empathy, Altruism, and Sublimation

One of the principle ways in which parents can help their children develop empathy, altruism and sublimation is by their own modeling of these. The parent who is capable of empathy, 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. The same can be said for altruism and for sublimation.

Another way in which parents can enhance the development of these capacities in

their children is to be supportive of them when they occur. For instance, Jennifer heard her mother tell her 7 year old brother Mike how much she appreciated his picking Jennifer up at Gloria's. She heard her say she is proud of him that she can trust him to help her with his sister. A mother telling her 5 year old (or her 3 year old, or 7 year old) how generous she is in helping her younger sibling, how proud mother is of the child's sensitive understanding of her younger sibling, will give her daughter a feeling of pride about having behaved so, which will then in turn bring pleasure to the child. By the way, complementing the acknowledgment of a 3 to 6-year-old's having been generous or thoughtful or reliable toward a sibling, younger or older, disapproving of unacceptable behavior toward a sibling also can contribute to enlarging a child's ability to be empathic and altruistic. For instance, Jennifer's mother was very clear when she told Jennifer she cannot play with Mike's things without asking his permission and that she does not let him play with her things without Jennifer's permission. Her child probably recognizes the idea "How do you feel when he does this to you?" Diane's mother too was helpful in essentially telling Diane she was very upset that she threw out her powder and perfumes and how does it make her feel to not be able to the to the movies with her parents the next time they go. This applies to both the child's developing empathy and altruism.

With regard to sublimation, Jennifer's mother did very well by saying that she thought Jennifer's piece of art was really nice. One does have to be thoughtful and careful with a child when, presented with a drawing, crayoning, cut out, etc., one asks, "What is it?" Of course, it is a reasonable question when the work of art is not clear. However, the tone and way in which one asks, "What is it?" is important. That is to say, an inquiry asking for further explanation, said in a benevolent tone will probably cause no problems. An inquiry that suggests that what the child has done is meaningless, can be very hurtful. One 6 year old boy who had just drawn what to his mind was a dog brought it to his mother who said "What is it?". The boy seemed a bit upset and said "It's a dog." His mother said "It doesn't look like a dog." And the boy was crestfallen. It is a bit too much to expect of a 6 year old boy that he might be able to draw a picture of dog which would convincingly look like a dog. It was injurious to the boy for this mother to say "It doesn't look like a dog." It probably would have been better if mother had said something more likely to be helpful such as "Heh, I see that you are learning to draw". After all, the child's effort at sublimation is what is critical in the child's effort. It is well for parents to bear in mind that sublimation underlies the process of learning, whether it is learning the alphabet, to draw, swing a bat, do gymnastics, play an instrument, etc. Supporting a child's efforts at sublimation, without exaggerating the child's achievement, is enormously helpful and will enhance the child's efforts at sublimation and at learning.

3.2 EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.26 CONSCIENCE FORMATION

As we do throughout this curriculum, the theories we use most are psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, and psychosocial theories. These are the major models we use for explanations of development and of understanding the meaning of behavior. Our expertise lies in these theories. We recognize that there are other theories of development, for instance learning theories of psychology, behavior modification theories, etc. We do not implement these because our knowledge of them is too limited. It is well for the teacher and student to understand that no one has the final word to date on a complete theory of development or behavior; the most comprehensive theories developed to date are the ones we employ. Furthermore these theories have stood up well in testing and against criticism. And we have seen the merits of their application to both the clinical (mental health) situation as well as to our own efforts in education for parenting. The concepts of conscience development we use also arise from these theories.

Conscience formation develops over time as do all other aspects of human personality. Overall, the conscience as an organized structure of the mind that strongly determines the conduct and behavior of the child does not emerge until about the middle of the 3 to 6 years period. There are early signs of conscience formation which become evident in a child's behavior from near the end of the first year of life on, and which do already impact on and to a degree control the child's behavior. These, however, result straightforwardly from the child's taking into his or her own mind the dictates, the prohibitions, the "do's and don'ts" the parents voice again and again with them. It seems to be not until the 3 to 6 year period that the child begins to develop a conscience that has an authority that arises from within the self. Now, the conscience becomes constructed from the child's own evaluations of what is right and what is wrong, a factor powerfully determining of the internal stability of that conscience. In brief then, we distinguish the period from the end of the first year of life into the third year as a period during which conscience formation consists primarily of the internalization of the parents prohibitions and admonitions. Then a newer and much more morality-determining conscience develops from about 4 1/2 or so years of age that is determined by a child's own evaluation and judgment of what is right and wrong.

The conscience has been meaningfully stated to consist of two major components. (1) What we consider the conscience proper, at first the determiner of "do's" and "don'ts", then becoming the determiner of right and wrong, an agency within the self which is capable of approving or disapproving of what the self does. This is the morality component of conscience; by its disapproval it produces feelings of guilt in the child. A major example of the workings of this component of conscience is that wishing to destroy someone we value and/or love leads to feelings of guilt. (2) The second component of conscience holds up the standards the child comes to value by which the child wishes to

live, holding the features of the person the child wishes to be. This component of conscience holds the image of the ideal self. Its contribution to conscience lies especially in the fact that when the child does something he/she views as not in line with the standards the child constructs for the ideal self, the child experiences feelings of shame. In other words then the degree to which the child behaves according to the standards the child put into his or her ideal self, to that degree will the child (person) feel pride and have a high sense of self esteem; the more the individual behaves in ways that are removed from the standards that make up one's ideal self, the more the individual feels shame, low self esteem, and feelings of inferiority.

These two constituent parts of conscience tend to operate hand in hand and with some degree of reciprocity. That is to say, disregarding or violating a parental dictate brings with it not only a reaction of disapproval and some degree of guilt, it can also lead to a sense of behaving below one's standards which brings with it a feeling of shame. Most commonly, feeling guilt tends to also be associated with feeling shame. However, there are differences between these two components of conscience; the most prominent, in addition to the different systems that govern each, are differences in their developments. Psychodynamic infant researchers and child developmentalists say that the first reactions of conscience of which the child seems capable is the reaction of shame. From near the end of the first year of life when the child begins to internalize parental dictates, until into the 4th year, the predominant conscience reaction seems to be one of shame. It is the result, then, of not living up to the standards the child is beginning to internalize which are, of course, laid down by the parents dictates: "Do this", "Do that." From about 4 years of age on, guilt makes its appearance. A central proposition of the psychoanalytic theory of conscience formation is that the conflict due to ambivalence (the wish to destroy the parent the child also loves) created by the child's fantasized family romance seems to be the central factor which leads the child to develop an internal agency which determines what is right and what is wrong. Wishing to destroy or harm someone one loves sets up within the child a reaction not only of being bad but of doing something that is unspeakably wrong. There is no more powerful motive to the child's developing a conscience than to wish to destroy the mother or the father one loves. This is what led Sigmund Freud to propose that the conscience is an internal agency of the mind which determines the development of morality; and, he said, it is the heir of the child's family romance (the Oedipus complex).

It remains an open question, whether the child younger than 4 is capable of feeling guilt. If we assume that the child experiences ambivalence prior to the age of 4 years, then it is possible that the child experiences guilt (as well as shame) prior to 4 years of age. That is to say, since a conflict of ambivalence means that the child hates someone the child loves, and the child is known to be capable of hating and of loving from the middle of the second year of life on, then it is possible that a child is capable of feeling guilt from the latter part of the second year of life on. One more note regarding the development of conscience.

The development of conscience is mostly determined by the child's relationships to his/her parents (whether there is one parent or there are two). Conscience formation begins in the context of the parent child relationship. Conscience formation is strongly

determined by a child's experiences in limit setting, in parents' approval and disapproval of the child's behavior and in conflictual interaction (whether in actuality or in fantasy) with those the child loves. Prohibitions and punishments by authorities whom the child (or adult) individual does not hold in high regard, whom the child does not "love", does not lead to the internalization of judgment that thoughts (wishes) and behaviors may be right or wrong, and does not increase a sense of morality. School authorities, law enforcement agencies know only too well how frequently punishment fails even when it is quite harsh. The principal factor responsible for its failure, although there are other contributors, is that the person punished does not value, respect, "love" the authority administering the punishment.

Next to the parents, valued secondary relationships can also enhance the development of morality in the child. Valued teachers, and especially the peer group when that peer group begins to be crucial to the child, have a substantial impact on conscience formation as well. Peers will begin to have a substantial impact on conscience formation from the early elementary school years on. But it is especially during adolescence, when the child's internalized representation of the parents in their conscience is tested and revised against the morality -- rules of conduct and values -- of the peer group, that the impact of the peer group will be the largest. Individuals vary in the extent to which the morality internalized from the peer group will vary or dislodge the morality earlier internalized from the parent-child relationship. In psychotherapeutic work, we find that where the relationships between child and parents has been good over time, the influence of the peer group in changing the existing internalized morality will be least. On the other hand, the more hostile the relationships between child and parents from early childhood on, the more likely the eagerness on the part of the adolescent to acquire new relationships which will be experienced less painfully, and the greater the impact of these peers on the new modifications of conscience.

Conscience formation continues to evolve and develop into adulthood tending to stabilize during the third decade of life.

3.2611 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Conscience Formation

The Development of Morality:

The 3 to 6 years period is a critical one for the development of conscience. As just noted in the lines above, the development of the child's conscience proper, of the sense of right and wrong which is the backbone of morality, is given a major thrust by the core conflict of the child's fantasized family romance. The wish to destroy the rival parent who is also loved in both boys and girls, creates a reaction of self disapproval, associated with anxiety and then guilt. 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 an internal governor of his or her behavior, a conscience. It is no longer an issue of simply being good or bad, it becomes a judgment that what the child wishes to do is wrong, cannot be condoned, and must be punished with severity and thoroughness. The normal, well-cared for child's reaction to these wishes is intense, can be harsh, and even ruthless. The result commonly is a substantially harsh conscience. This is in fact the norm.

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 has been generated within the child toward needed caregivers is a large determiner of how harsh the child's conscience will become. We 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 3 to 6 years period is dependent on feeling love for those one 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. It is crucial for all of us to understand on the basis of this line of thought, that loving a parent (or other caregiver) by whom the child feels loved is essential to healthy conscience formation. 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 will not feel guilt. The child will not feel from within: "This is wrong!" And, furthermore children who form little or no attachments, who do not value those who try to care for them, will tend to have insufficiently developed consciences, suffer from insufficient guilt in reaction to their hate and wishes to destroy, and will have the predisposition to becoming antisocial, delinquent individuals.

In the balance, well cared for children have formed stable emotional attachments and feel loved and respected are likely to develop a substantially healthy conscience which during the 3 to 6 years period will get a powerful developmental push in reaction to their family romance conflict. A conscience can be too weak and it can be too harsh. The prime determiners of this are the degree to which the child loves and is loved in balance with the degree to which the child feels hated and hates.

The children we know in this Unit have the good fortune of having made good

attachments and developed quite good relationships with their primary caregivers. 5 1/2 year old Bernie's relationship with his father is weakened by the separation between his parents, especially due to the hostility his parents continue to experience toward one another. Bernie's father makes the mistake of saying hostile things to Bernie about his mother which about Bernie feels very upset and angry. Luckily, 5 1/2 year old Suzy's parents who divorced 2 years ago seem to not be so hateful with each other and, wisely, when one is angry with other they don't unload this anger on Suzy. The other kids are quite lucky to have a mother and father who seem to love each other pretty well, especially Johnny and Diane. In all these children except 3 1/2 year old Victor, we have seen ample evidence of their fantasized family romance. In 2 1/2 year old Jane, we have seen a good deal of evidence of her wanting her mother out of the way, not constantly, but often enough to make Gloria pretty mad at her. Although she occasionally feels anxiety and regresses, we don't see much evidence of guilt in her behavior. We do see evidence of anxiety, probably due to guilt in 4 year old Johnny (bad dreams, separation anxiety), in 4 1/4 year old Doug (fear of learning to swim, fear of damage to his body), in 4 year old Jennifer (mortified when asked to say who she would marry with her mother there), and in 5 1/2 year old Bernie (fear of learning to ride bike, fear of bodily damage). Although we saw much evidence of 4 1/4 year old Diane's rivalry conflict with her mother, we have not seen signs of much anxiety in her; she and her parents seemed to be pretty open about dealing with her behavior, mother set limits pretty well, and the love feelings between Mom and Diane were really solid. We infer that in each of these children (except perhaps Jane) conscience building was ongoing. Their expressions of hostility and rivalry had clear limits, were easily enough handled by their parents, and we did see evidence of feeling bad (guilty) about provoking mother or dad, as well as effort by the children to make up, say they were sorry and making a point of reassuring the parent (and themselves) that they love them. Jennifer was particularly insistent that mother tell her she loves her.

It is especially in 5 1/2 year old Suzy and 5 3/4 Tom in whom we saw a more advanced level of conscience formation in their efforts to make Bernie feel better when he was upset. Empathy and altruism played their part. It is also likely though that they wanted to make things right, that they wanted to undo getting their friend Bernie scolded by his mother, by atoning with comforting him. These 5 year-olds were clearly a few steps ahead of the 4 year olds in being more quickly aware of causing trouble and more skilled in trying to repair whatever trouble they thought they caused. Bernie especially was quick, perhaps a bit too quick, in saying he was sorry. He said he was sorry at times even when he had not done anything wrong. He seemed then a bit too guilty.

The Development of Standards for the Self:

Although the principle component of conscience that develops at this time is that which governs the sense of morality, it is unavoidable that the component which holds up the standards for the self will be influenced by the wishes and fantasies stirred up in the family romance with all the consequences to which these fantasies may lead. To be sure, the fear of loss of love, the fear of being abandoned, in the boy especially the fear of

being bodily mutilated in punishment for these wishes, 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 become. From this aspect of experiencing, standards for the self are further elaborated in a significant way during the 3 to 6 years period.

This component of conscience gets a contribution especially from the child's identifications with the loved and idealized parent that the child experiences as a rival, wishes to replace. By means of identification, these wishes are converted into wanting to be like the idealized person the child wishes to replace. Although Johnny was not at this point yet, identification with his father was evident.

The child idealizes the parent which makes this parent more grand than he or she actually is. Now, the degree to which the loved rival is idealized will influence the degree to which the idealized self will be constructed. If the idealization of the rival parent is exaggerated (often so 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 low, so too the idealized image of the self can be too great and can be too little. Clearly, an optimal degree of both morality and standards for the self is most desirable.

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. Namely, 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 has accumulated over the first three years of life), the closer the child will feel herself/himself to the idealized self, the more positive will the child's current self esteem be.

Although it is too early to know what the character of our 3 to 6 year old children's idealized self are, it is clear that none of the 4 and 5 year old children described in this Unit felt consistently that they did not deserve to be loved. From all appearances, their feeling pretty good about themselves seemed to predominate. But there have been periods of time when they did not feel so good about themselves. Bernie did not when his mother scolded him and he felt he hated her. Jennifer did not when she and mother would get into it about going to bed, and especially after she had told her mother she hated her; most especially the one time she yelled it and then was afraid the neighbor had heard her. Diane at first felt good when she dumped her mother's powder and especially her perfumes. But then she started not only feeling guilty because she saw how much it upset her mother, but also feeling ashamed because she did not like feeling she is not a nice girl for doing that to her wonderful mother. We noticed that the second and third (and last) time she had a dumping party, she only dumped the powder. We wondered if it was that she had come to learn that her mother's perfumes cost a lot more than the powder. And to be sure, Johnny, Doug, Suzy and Tom has their moments of feeling bad about themselves and their self-esteem was low. In addition, Johnny, Doug and Bernie felt bad about themselves because they felt afraid, of their bad dreams, of swimming, and of riding a bike respectively.

3.2612 CHILD REARING: How to Secure Healthy Conscience Formation

The Development of Morality:

By their behavior in approving or disapproving of the child's conduct, especially whether the disapproval is heavy with hostile feelings or is said with caring feelings, parents will contribute to what the child internalizes as part of his or her own approving and disapproving attitudes (toward the self and others). The challenge to parents of setting limits in growth-promoting ways, especially in a firm but loving rather than in a hostile manner, comes from the fact that it influences how the child feels about himself or herself in a most difficult setting: how to deal with being angry with someone you value and love. This makes a large contribution to the child's feelings of guilt and the degree to which the child's conscience become harsh or benevolent.

The way parents express their feelings of love, of anger and even of hate toward their children, not only heavily influences the way the child will experience herself or himself, but also by virtue of the degree to which they stir love within the child for the self or hate within the child for the self, by these expressions of feelings they will determine the quality of the child's own conscience formation. It is important to bear in mind that due to how we all pick up on others' feelings, we speak of the contagion of feelings, or by the "vibes" we get, children at all ages pick up easily on such basic feelings as their mother or father loving, respecting, being angry with, or hating them. All of these are registered within the 3 to 6 year old's establishing conscience.

During the 3 to 6 years period, the child's experience of hostility and hate toward the loved parent, can be an extraordinarily difficult experience for the parent to withstand. Jennifer telling her mother "I hate you", was experienced by her good-enough mother as jarring, and it hurt her. How the parent reacts to such declarations of feeling is critical. The parent who is jarred and sharply hurt may react quite naturally with sharp hostility: "You are a nasty little girl", or "That's a terrible thing to say to me when I do so much for you"; this to be sure would create in the child an intensification of feelings of guilt. The parent who reacts with disbelief "I know you don't mean that" when this is exactly what the child means at the time, also creates intense feelings of self criticism in the child. "I'm not supposed to react like this; it's not what nice people feel", etc., none of which is true, and which intensifies self-criticism. In both cases this will add to the child's own substantial load of disapproval and self recrimination.

While the parent takes the child's "I hate you" seriously, and the parent feels hurt by this declaration of feelings, it is important that the mother, like Jennifer's mother could, be able to empathically tolerate these expressions of feeling. She needs to reassure the child that although she feels angry with her child at times too, the love they feel for each other will win out over their hate. Depreciating the child for expressing such feelings, inducing guilt beyond what the child will generate himself/herself, only intensify the harshness of the child's own conscience and will bring with it more pain for many years

to come. The ways of handling the child's experience of his/her family romance-derived wishes and feelings which we described in Section 3.2312 also apply to the question of the child's conscience formation. As we saw, Johnny's parents, like those of Jennifer, Diane, and Jane could, by how they reacted to their children's expressions of rivalry, jealousy, hostility and hate, not only help or make more difficult the child's dealing with these tough to handle feelings; they could also intensify or lessen the child's feelings of guilt. In this, then they could influence for better or for worse the degree to which their child's conscience would be healthy and guiding as compared to being harsh and crippling. For instance, if Gloria, Jane's mother reacted to her 2 1/2 year old daughter's hostile behavior by telling her that she is a hateful child and, if she continues to be so bad she will be taken away by the devil, this would lead Jane's conscience to develop this kind of threatening, frightening and disapproving tone. If 4 year old Johnny's mother had reacted with what a mean thing it is to say that Johnny doesn't want his Dad to come home for dinner, that he is selfish and bad, to be sure Johnny's guilt would have been intensified and his developing conscience would very likely adopt a voice of excessive and unreasonable criticism. And if Diane's mother had beaten her then less than 4 year old for dumping out her powders and perfumes, called her a nasty bitch, a terrible destructive child who doesn't deserve to be loved and then sent her to bed without dinner, we can be pretty sure that Diane would internalize into her developing conscience an attitude of calling herself unlovable, of accusing herself of being a nasty destructive bitch, and of requiring a series of self-hurting punishments for any or most transgressive wishes (thoughts) she might have as she grows. Understanding the child, knowing what the child's behavior means, what is causing it, empathy in both attempting to understand and determining how to handle the child's behaviors, respect for the child, the use of some warm (non-hostile) humor, being realistic, all can contribute positively to the child's developing a conscience that has reasonable view of what is right and wrong, of demanding responsible conduct in relationships, toward oneself, and toward society.

On Developing Standards for the Self:

The use of non-hostile humor in one's parenting can be a facilitator of the unavoidable difficult interactions that occur between child and parents. It applies to this period of development as well as it has in the past and will in the future. Humor of course can at times be hostile under which conditions it becomes ridiculing and teasing. It then loses the magnificent feature that is inherent in humor, namely a way of dealing with painful reality by a positive adaptive attitude toward it and a lightening of the painful experience. Of course, ridicule and teasing, especially when it goes too far, can cause enormous pain rather than alleviate pain. Ridiculing, sarcasm, hostile teasing, taunting a child all make a painful reality even more painful. It induces shame in the child and lowers the child's regard for himself or herself and self-esteem. Shaming the child when the child expresses a feeling of rivalry, or a feeling of hate actually reveals a feeling of weakness in the adult (authority) and additionally 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 fantasized

family romance, and given that the child is so to speak wearing his/her heart on his or her sleeve often wide open for the whole world to see, the child is in a vulnerable position for being embarrassed, being made to feel shame as well as guilt by inconsiderate handling of the child or of the child's expression of thoughts and feelings. Thoughtfulness, respect for the child superimposed on loving the child will protect the vulnerable 3 to 6 year old against undue injury at the hands of his or her parents. The consequences of enhancing (by love, respect and empathic understanding) or of damaging (by excessive hostility, abuse, hate, lack of respect and of consideration) the 3 to 6 year old child's feeling of self value, his or her self image, will be within the child for years to come. If future experiences do not modify these attitudes which the child internalizes into her or his conscience, the imprint of these early years will go on for life. As Sigmund Freud said, the child's conscience will carry the stamp "Made in the USA, Philadelphia, PA"