

# Give Them Love

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## The Author:

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Most people are particular about physical hygiene. Educators and teachers are well aware of this and a great majority of students are conscious of their health. But how many people—students and teachers—are conscious of their mental health? As a general rule people pay more attention to the food they eat, the clothes they wear, exercise and rest, cleanliness of their bodies, than they do in keeping their psyche well adjusted. Since mental processes are concealed processes and are not obvious to most people, this aspect of their lives receives little or no attention. The making of conscious thought is the general extent of one's consciousness of mind and its workings.

Assuming that my physical health is well taken care of, let me now concentrate on the subject of keeping mentally healthy. When I realized that each individual should be concerned—and actually is—about his mental health, the most important aspect then is the question of the individual and his needs. My function as a teacher necessarily encompasses my duty

to aid my students in understanding and satisfying properly their needs.

To bring about this end through my efforts, the principles of mental hygiene will be of the utmost importance. Naturally, my personality should be a wholesome one and as free from abnormality as is possible for a normal human being—if such there be. It is essential that I have emotional security and not allow fear, worry and vague anxieties eat at my mind like a cancer. Thus, it is evident that **self-confidence** is essential to attain this end. Economic and love problems are great determining factors in bringing about emotional insecurity and, realizing this, it should be my determination to keep these within their proper perspective in my day-to-day existence. Petty worries must be regarded as such and not allowed to grow into more frightening shapes. I will try to **relax mentally** and accept minor setbacks with equanimity. Frustrations and repressions must not be a part of my spirit.

I should see that students are given **emotional security, self-confidence** and **independence** in their school and home life. I must help parents to understand the necessity of offering enough **care, affection** and **security** to their children to supplement my work in the school room, as well as to keep home problems from coming to school with the children. Parents must keep home life **stable**,

secure, happy, and peaceful. They must understand that this is as much a part of their obligation to their children as provision for their health, clothing and economic security. Children need **constant reassurances of love and understanding; stability and security** in the home, and if these are not forthcoming from the home no other place can give these to them. The home is the natural source for all these, since home and parents are the most vital things in the world for children. If they do not feel this love and security, they feel rejected and unloved and their natural emotions are wasted or frozen. They are unable to express these frustrations and rejections or if they do, adults too often do not recognize them. This failure at understanding them then develops in the children abnormal behaviorisms which express their internal feelings of rejection and inadequacy.

It should be my duty to advise parents of children in whom I recognize manifestations of this insecurity and maladjustment in order that the reasons for apparently bewildering behavior (to the parents) is understood. Once understood, it is easy to find remedies. The remedies, too, must be explained to meet each specific case for one therapy will not be a sure remedy for all abnormal children in the same way as one pill will not cure all diseases. The cooperation of the parents is essential to prevent children from developing abnormal personalities later in their lives. I should begin at the point at which I discover the unusually different children

then delve deeper from there into their emotions and home life. As soon as possible after the beginning of classes I must study closely my students—watch their behavior so that I will know where to begin, if it becomes necessary. Excessive timidity and shyness, and its corollary, bullying and mischievousness, will be guides for my observation. Children exhibiting those characteristics will more than likely be in need of my help as will be those who are constantly weak and deficient in class work—those who are unable to solve their own needs. If their personalities are inadequate or insecure I will find the cause and attempt to make up in some small way for the affection and attention they lack.

On the whole I will attempt to help develop my students' inner self or individuality—they must know themselves. They should be given freedom to assert and establish their own personality. They must be trained to be **self-confident** for that is the cornerstone of building a personality that is adequate and effective. They must understand this necessity, and self-assurance will make them happy as they grow in understanding. I will never nag, for nagging destroys the self-confidence of a child and merely increases the doubts which inhabit even well-adjusted children. I will never contradict myself, for in contradiction lies confusion in the children and confusion will increase whatever natural hesitancy they may possess. I will not repress nor frustrate

them by taunting them or raising impossible standards for which they are to strive hopelessly to be recognized. That might even encourage the use of unfair methods to attain a goal much high for them. Instead I will encourage them **to do—to attempt, to imagine.** I will only guide them through doing what they want to do toward the accomplishment of the proper and worthwhile goals.

I will try to make education a cause for happiness and joy, with learning as a natural complement to high spirits and good fun. **Democracy** in its best sense, must be the key-word in my teachings; they must learn to participate as equal members in society, with equal opportunities and respect for the individuality of others through a respect for their own personalities. Adequate personality may be achieved through permitting them to express themselves as best as they may, as well as permitting them to help in guiding others. I will be a tool for the enchantment of their personality and not cramping nor restricting factor in their developing individuality. I must restrain my own desires to aid too much. I must not do their work, but must show them possible ways of doing it and then allowing them latitude to choose and select those which fit their abilities and personalities. Within the bounds of the right of the rest of the class, as well as reason and propriety, they will be allowed free expression and choice of action. In this way democracy will help my students to satisfy their individual needs. If a true democracy exists in school, a student will find satis-

faction in doing things that may be required of them for the benefit of the whole. The mere fact that a child is given the right to make a choice of two tasks—each of which may be required at some time—will reduce the chance for inhibitions that may arise in his personality. For instance, if a child must cut and paste and must draw and color, I will never say, "Cut and paste, now," nor "Draw and color, now." Rather, I shall say, "Would you like to cut and paste, or would you rather draw and color?" The mere presentation of a choice will present the opportunity for self-determination and selection. Then when he is cutting and pasting, or drawing and coloring, it is something he has chosen and not something that was forced upon him. He will know what he wants and he will know himself. Plato's advice in consonance with Apollo's advice, while most difficult is still the best: "Know Thyself!"

Above all, I must not be an authoritative teacher to my pupils; rather I must be a real friend who will understand and help them. My way of handling them is more important than my mastery of any subject matter. The formation and development of their personalities in the right direction is more important than facts and figures they learn during this formative age. This is illustrated in the instance of a father who said to his son, "It matters not what course you take but who your teacher is." Are you the teacher the father is referring to? And are you the parents the teacher is referring to, on the other hand?