

Based on the works of L. Ron Hubbard

Childhood & Children

OBSERVATIONS AND ADVICE

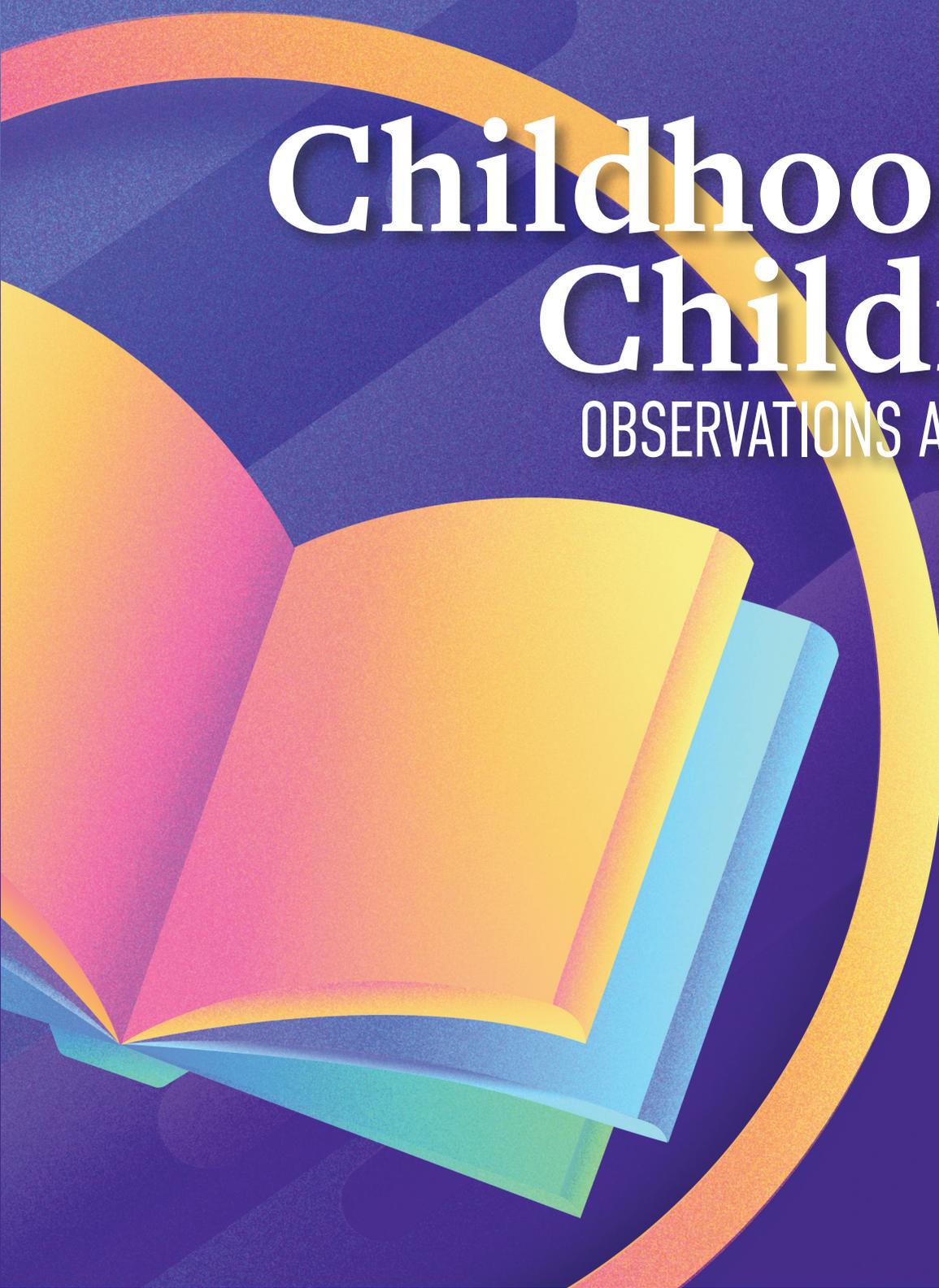


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On Raising Children

Editors' note: We all want children to have the best possible start on life. Every child and family is unique, and situations can arise in the course of raising or teaching children that require thoughtful address. This final section contains observations and advices that might be useful when a school and a child's parents need to be aligned more fully in order to secure the child's educational progress.

CONTRIBUTION

People feel able and competent only so long as they are permitted to contribute as much or more than they have contributed to them.

People can over-contribute and feel secure in an environment. They feel insecure the moment they under-contribute, which is to say, give less than they receive. If you don't believe this, recall a time when everyone else brought something to the party but you didn't. How did you feel?

People will tend to revolt against and distrust any source which contributes to them more than they contribute to it.

Children should be permitted to contribute to those around them. But you can't order them to do so. You can't command a child to mow the grass and then think that that's contribution. The child has to figure out what the contribution is and then give it. If the child hasn't selected it, it isn't the child's, but only more control.

A baby contributes by trying to make you smile. The baby will show off. A bit older, little Suzy will dance for you, bring you sticks, try to repeat your work motions to help you. If you don't accept those smiles, those dances, those sticks, those work motions in the spirit they are given, you have begun to interrupt the child's contribution. She will start to get anxious. She will do unthinking and strange things to your possessions in an effort to make them "better" for you. You scold her. That finishes her.

It is needless to add that the child should not be threatened angrily. The way to make children apathetic is to tear them up when they begin to have tantrums, or to block all roads which, if they followed them, would give them pride in themselves.

UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY

Another important factor enters in here and that is the role of *information*. How can children possibly know what to contribute to you or their family or home if they haven't any idea of the working principles on which it runs?

A family is a group with the common goal of survival and advancement. Children not allowed to contribute or failing to understand the goals and working principles of family life are cast adrift from the family. They are shown they are not part of the family because they can't contribute. So they become "anti-family." They spill milk, annoy your guests and yell outside your window in "play." They'll even get sick just to make you work.

By being shown that they aren't powerful enough to contribute, a child is shown to be nothing.

You can do nothing more than accept the smiles, the dances, the sticks of the very young. But as soon as children can understand, they should be given the whole story of the family operation: What is the source of their allowance? How come there is food? Clothes? A clean house? A car?

A parent works and for this gets money. The money, handed over at a store, buys food. A car is cared for because of money scarcity. A calm house and care of the parent means the parent works better and that means food and clothes and cars. Education is necessary because one earns better after one has learned. Play is necessary in order to give a reason for hard work.

Give them the whole picture. If the child has been revolting, he or she may keep right on revolting. But they'll eventually come around.

First of all, a child needs *security*. Part of that security is understanding. Part of it is a code of conduct which is invariable. What is against the law today can't be ignored tomorrow.

Children have a duty toward their parents. They have to be able to take care of them; not an illusion that they are, but actually. And parents have to have the patience to allow themselves to be cared for sloppily until by sheer experience itself—not by the parents’ directions—the child learns to do it well.

GIVING A CHILD “WINS”

Parents often try to lead their child too far. Nothing the child does anywhere is all right—it has always got to be better! Children are thus bred into an apathy, a recognition that they cannot do *anything* to please their parents.

This could be described as never giving or allowing the child a win—a *win* being simply *an instance of winning, a victory, a success*.

The parent says, “Talk better,” “Get better educated,” “Grow better,” “Do this better,” “Do that better.” Parents often handle children beautifully on the whole except this one little fault, which if not spotted and isolated can actually make a child very unhappy. The fault is they lead, lead, lead the child.

Now, the idea of “letting a child be a child once in a while” is not the point here. Parents can let a child be as adult as the child wants to be, demand children be as much adult or as much children as they can be—that isn’t the point. The point is simply this:

Give a child a win once in a while.

Here is this little boy growing up and all the time the parent is saying, “Well, yes, he’s taken four steps but I want him taking five steps. He needs to be better, better, better.” Well, once in a while, the parent could acknowledge the child’s work in taking four steps.

The key is, in living with children, every now and then one should tell them to do something they *can* do, not something one *hopes* they can do.

One aspect of this concerns the parents’ patience in letting the child work to the best of his or her ability. A small child will actually try to work well but will mess things up. If the parent is impatient and critical of these efforts all the time,

the child, by the age of five or six, will have become somewhat disabused of the idea of working.

When adults forget that children are people too, things become unworkable.

A little girl comes in, maybe three or four years old, and mother is mopping the floor. The little girl takes a rag and bangs it into the wallpaper and so forth. The impatient mother says, “Get out of here now! You’re messing things up.” The patient mother shows her how to wring it out and guides her hand a bit on the floor, and lets her mop the floor a bit also. The girl comes up smiling. She thinks, “What do you know! I could really maybe be of some use some day!”

CONTROL AND COMMUNICATION

When it comes to providing control with a child, one doesn’t have to use force.

Of course, a child might say something like “I want to stay up with you” and insist on doing so. But just letting children do what they are doing and not interfering with them and not controlling them in any way is not good for them.

However, children respond very readily to good control and communication—not persuasion but good communication. People often think that persuasion works with children. It’s actually communication that does the trick.

You say to this little boy, “Well, it’s time for you to go to bed now,” and he says, “No.” Don’t stay on the subject. Leave it alone and just talk about something else. “What did you do today?” “Where?” “How?” “Oh, did you? Is that a fact?” “Well, how about going to bed?” and the answer will be “Okay.”

Again, one doesn’t have to use force or persuasion.

Communicate with a child, and control tends to follow as an inevitability.

On the other hand, if you omit control from the beginning when bringing up children, those who look to you for a lot of their direction and control are cheated. They think you don’t care about them.

SELF-DETERMINISM

A child has a right to his or her self-determinism. You say that if the child is not restrained from pulling things down on him or herself, running into the road, etc., he or she will be hurt. Well, consider it like this: What are you as an adult doing to make that child live in rooms or an environment where he or she *can* be hurt? The fault is yours, not theirs, if the child gets hurt or things get broken. The sweetness and love of a child is preserved only so long as the child can exert his or her own self-determinism. You interrupt that, to a degree you interrupt the child's life.

Also, when a child is given something by an adult, it's the *child's*, not still the adult's. Clothes, toys, books, what they've been given should remain under their exclusive control. So the little boy tears up his shirt, wrecks his bed, breaks his fire engine. It's *none of the adult's business*.

Children wreck *on purpose* the possession about which they are so often cautioned. Why? Because they are fighting for their own self-determinism, their own right to own and make their weight felt on their environment.

How would you like to have somebody give you a Christmas present and then tell you, day after day thereafter, what you are to do with it and even punish you if you failed to care for it the way the donor thinks?

A CHILD'S INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION

A child can be robbed of independence of action in different ways.

The first way is "for the child's own good." This is a method of preventing the child from making decisions by inflicting punishment when the child's decisions lead to trouble. In other words, there's no real thought about the value of the child having made his or her own decision about something, just punishment for the result.

Another way is continually informing children how nice everybody is to them, and how the world is all run for them, and how ungrateful they are and so forth—yet still giving them everything and telling them that this is all being done for them. It's sort of buying them off so they don't dare act independently.

Lastly, there's giving them something and then depriving them of any pride of ownership and independence of action by telling them what to do with it. You say, "Here are your nice new shoes, Johnny." "I have bought you new shoes; they are now *your* new shoes." Johnny says, "Gee, that's fine. I think I'll go out and play with Rodger," and he puts on his new shoes. "No, Johnny, those are your best shoes! You are to wear those only on Sunday."

The way children are spoiled is to rob them of their independence of action. No child ever was spoiled by affection, by sympathy, by kindness, by understanding or even by indulgence. If the things mentioned above are avoided, you could give a child Cadillac roadsters or anything else that comes into your head, and this child wouldn't be spoiled by them.

A CHILD'S PRIDE

It's important to give a child a feeling of pride in self and independence about a certain thing. There must be at least one thing in a child's life about which he or she has the only say-so.

This isn't hard to do, but first let's look at how *not* to do it.

Take a little boy who's walking down the street and sees in a window of musical instruments a beautiful accordion. He suddenly decides, "I want to play the accordion." He pleads and begs and does anything he can do until finally his parents break down and say, "Well, all right! We'll see if we can't give you some accordion lessons." So he acquires a small accordion, plays the thing, sees a teacher and finally learns to play something on it.

His family gradually realizes he can play the accordion. Mother says, "Why, there's Johnny playing on the accordion. Well, I always thought it was a good idea to start him on the accordion, and I'm glad I decided on that and got him to start it up." Suddenly, she's controlling Johnny's accordion playing! She says, "Well now, you must practice an hour and seventeen minutes every day; it says so right here in the book. You're not going to go out and play because you're going to stay in here and practice." "Now don't treat your accordion like that." "You hit the wrong note there, try it again." This is no longer Johnny's accordion and it's no longer Johnny's music. Johnny will probably take that accordion and junk it,

to which Mother says, “Well, you know how flighty children are. They change their minds all the time.”

The child selected something he wanted to do, then he was being forced to do it or was being interfered with in his doing it, and found out this was not an independent sphere of action after all. So he abandoned it.

You want to make sure children have reserved to themselves, alone and exclusively, at least one sphere of action in which they are completely independent, and in which they can do some shining! Because as children shine, their own idea of their own importance will increase. Working with children this way you can gain diamonds as far as their progress goes.

FEED THEM AND PUT THEM TO BED

It is probably worth noting that some of the “play” you see children involved in is really just a kind of hysteria. A group of children are running around in the yard and all of a sudden they become very hysterical and their eyes start staring around and their voices go up to high C. Some people sit back and say, “Oh, look at the little children playing.” No, they’re going nuts!

These children are probably too tired and they’re probably hungry; they’re likely worn out. And the thing to do is to get them inside and calm them down—not just because you don’t like to hear them yell, but because they’re going to get worse and worse, and then somebody is going to get hurt.

If you take a child who is having a fight with some other child, you can fairly safely assume that they are either tired or hungry. Child is very cross, child is upset. Assume the child is tired or hungry or both.

Feed them and put them to bed.