How can guidance promote emotional security in the extended crisis of the present time? John Hanson, College of Education, University of Illinois, Urbana, makes constructive proposals for meeting this need.

YOUTH are again in this decade facing a very confusing world. In many respects the extended crisis atmosphere is far more emotionally disrupting than were the recent war years.

Urgency of Crisis

In our present situation not only do varying groups within the country look toward somewhat different ends, but there is basic disagreement upon the means of achieving ends quite commonly accepted. Consequently we have the urgency of crisis without the cohesiveness of crisis. Until a more satisfactory equilibrium is built, it is likely we are going to fail in helping many students adjust satisfactorily to the world we have built for them.

This is not to say, however, that we cannot focus our attention on those points which give most promise of success in helping students meet these problems. In order of ascending difficulty, there are three such problems having first call upon our attention: (a) helping students plan for the military service which many face, (b) helping students master the insecurities arising from an uncertain immediate future, and (c) providing students with inner resources which will give them a basis for security in the entirely novel situations they will face in military service.

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schools. Many schools have inaugurated accelerated programs of parent conferences in helping answer these problems.

For the teacher and the counselor, moreover, the resources for providing accurate information are becoming increasingly abundant. Among the most familiar and useful of these have been such basic publications as the following:


Horchow, Reuben, Careers for Young Americans in the Army and After, Public Affairs Press, 2153 Florida Avenue, Washington 8, D. C., 1950. $3.25.


A wide variety of informational resources may be located through use of such selective bibliographies as High School Youth and Military Service (Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Illinois, Urbana, February 1951, free). Supplemented by careful counseling, the appropriate use of local resources, and such films as the U. S. Navy production Stay in School, intelligent and realistic guidance programs are being reoriented to answer these specific problems of high school youth.

In this concentration upon military service, however, it is easy to do violence to individual human personality. For various reasons some young men will not be accepted for military service. The emotional stresses which accrue to persons from an education which places its full emphasis on the expectation of society that its youth will render it military service can do permanent mental and emotional damage to the person who is not accepted for that type of service. In our concentrated attention upon the military future of some of our youth we are apt to overlook the other individuals whose contribution to preserving and expanding our way of life may be equally valuable, equally serviceable to society.

HELPING STUDENTS FACE CURRENT EMOTIONAL STRAINS

The second guidance task of the school in the crisis is that of providing emotional security for our youth. This task will be at best but partially solved when we deal adequately with the problems of military choice. In providing this emotional security we have as yet but the vaguest guide lines. Probably the basic guide line during this period is one of reexamining the forward range of our guidance efforts. As long as students continue to look forward only so far as to the immediate uncertain future of probable military service, their emotional security is certain to remain threatened. If, however, they can be helped to replace narrower perspectives with a larger framework, students will be better able to cope with present uncertainties.

If this is to be done the entire guidance-instructional program of the
school will have to be pointed toward helping students accept more and more remote goals. This requires a continuing emphasis extending throughout the high school career of the student.

As long as we expect youths as seniors to work for no more distant goals than they did as freshmen, we are failing to meet their emotional needs during this crisis. If our students are to continue to be nourished by hope and security in these times, it will be necessary for us to push to the very limits of maturational readiness in helping them structure long range plans. Only as we work with students in helping them develop the habit of relating current aspirations to quite distant goals will they acquire the necessary balance for emotionally accepting current uncertainties.

Such an emphasis throughout the guidance-instructional program will still need the reinforcement of better guidance procedures than are currently employed. In times when emotional problems are certain to be intensified, it will be increasingly important not that we prepare students for military service by a new emphasis on authority in the school but rather that we build increased emotional security by a sympathetic school environment. This can be achieved only by teachers and counselors who are themselves reasonably secure.

This basic orientation must be supplemented by administrative arrangements which provide for more time spent with individual students and counselees. If there is to be an increased load of adjustment problems it is little more than wishful thinking to believe they can be resolved within the customary time allotment. Such additional time can in part be provided through improved curricular arrangements which include adequate time for group guidance, but it must to a large extent provide further released time for individual conferences. Sympathetic listening and counseling, by persons who are themselves secure, in an atmosphere which is not supercharged by the urgency and immediacy which pervades our national life will be a crucial ingredient of any adequate guidance program.

HELPING STUDENTS PREPARE FOR ADJUSTMENT TO MILITARY LIFE

Probably the most difficult task which confronts the school in the face of the threat of an extended period of crisis is that of preparing students to cope with the problem of adjusting to military service.

Although the situations in which the recruit finds himself are new to him and although the situations of different soldiers may vary markedly, one basic factor is common in all of them. The types of behavior which the recruits learn and practice will still be learned and practiced in accordance with the laws of learning. Specifically this means that learned behaviors will be largely rewarded behaviors. The school will be able only indirectly to affect the social rewards which will lead its graduates to choose one type of behavior and reject another. But if school people stop at this generalization they probably are selling themselves short on the crucial job they can perform in promoting the future adjustment of their graduates. For in a very real sense a reward is never something that lies entirely out-
side of the person: one handle of the reward the person will carry into the situation with him. This is the handle which the school has on the future learnings of the student.

One way in which the school may use this handle is in helping students better analyze the society which surrounds them. This approach requires that we ourselves recognize that even highly social rewards assume their rewarding character only in accordance with the way the individual visualizes the situation. This visualization will depend largely upon the individual's social perception. Improvement of social perception will consequently be one crucial test for guidance during these times. The task will be primarily one of helping our students recognize that other persons, reared in different social patterns, have established different ways of acting which are to them rewarding in terms of their notions of right and wrong, but which need not be rewarding to everyone.

But if the school stops there in its preparation of students to meet their adjustment problems, its task is only half done. For if the student is to make appropriate responses and seek socially desirable satisfactions for his basic needs, some rewards must replace the rewards of social approval, family belonging and group mores which have formerly been provided. The school has within its resources the potentialities of furnishing just such rewards.

Fortunately, human behavior is not entirely the product of immediate or near-immediate stimulations and rewards, and this provides us with a second grasp on the future adjustment of our students. The individual responds not only to the rewards which accrue through the social situation but also to internal satisfaction which comes from acting in accordance with his own principles—in achieving, in other words, self-approval. (This is not dissimilar to the recognition in modern psycho-therapy of the importance of helping the individual accept himself). Consequently if the school can produce the type of self which will reward the individual as he makes more socially desirable and individually appropriate responses, it shall have projected its influence and guidance forward into the military situation.

The building of this kind of character can be done only through careful guidance-instruction. Because of the increased demands of the crisis situation, it will be necessary to devote more of our time to problems of ethical choice. Throughout the guidance-instructional program, choice situations must be truly such, with various alternative paths and consequences open to students. As students face discipline problems, school achievement problems, or family adjustment problems, it will be necessary for the counselor to help them see the problem in relation to other problems which they have encountered or are likely to encounter.

By becoming so well acquainted with our students that we can effectively help them relate one of their problems to another, we can enable them to build up the moral generalizations which will grind meal when they face new adjustment situations. We can, in other words, help students build a secure private world which will give them a foundation for action in a wider world of insecurity.

Educational Leadership