

# *Emotional Needs Affect Relationships*

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This article investigates the extent to which democratic human relationships are influenced by the degree to which home and school satisfactorily meet the social-emotional needs of children.

LIVING in our complex society certainly creates a host of problems for most of us. We are all subject to the pressures in a world that has apparently gone berserk. Children, too, are not free from this pressurized living. All have been affected by living during wartime; all have had to struggle with constant readjustment of economy—strikes, slowdowns and, in some sections, unemployment. World War III with its threat of atom and hydrogen warfare is an ever-present menace. Adults and children alike live with these threats to security and well-being. There is no escape whether one lives "on the hill" or in "Hell's Kitchen"!

Communication skills are so well developed and so comparatively inexpensive that the area of world events is at our feet. Many specific happenings are brought to us within minutes after occurring and indeed, with television, as they occur.

This is a world where airships travel over 1500 miles an hour; where bombs with a potential for destroying whole cities at one dropping are stored for conflict. Here in this world of adult and child are at least two ideologies aligned against each other with a small, almost inexplicable balance keeping the two from colliding. Perhaps even

more important, we are *aware* of the complexity of our living and this awareness itself creates problems which are not indigenous to one or another part of the country, or of the world.

Children are made to come to their teachers, carrying within themselves their own particular reactions to these impacts of contemporary society. They come to our classes, and because they have different feelings about the world, and different abilities to cope with these feelings, problems arise which are, in a strong sense, common to all children in all communities. The total effect of these external and internal pressures is immeasurable but the reflection of them can be found in the behavior of individuals and the behavior of groups.

The extent to which teaching has unified purpose is dependent upon the identification teachers make with these common problems of living. The teacher who is concerned only with the amount of subject matter a given number of children can absorb in a given period, or the teacher who is primarily aiming to promote his own "middle class values"<sup>1</sup> is missing an opportunity

<sup>1</sup> See W. L. Warner and others, *Who Shall Be Educated?* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944. pp. xii and 190.

to make the single greatest contribution within his power for a better world.

On the other hand, the teacher who is concerned with *children* and their problems; who helps them grow internally in an understanding of themselves in relation to the world about them; who can clarify values rather than indoctrinate for a single standard of values has a truly broad purpose which bodes well for the future. With such a purpose teachers everywhere can have relatively the same broad tasks, working toward the same ends.

With such a common purpose in teaching we then look to the way children relate one to another. We explore the dynamics of living: bigger to smaller, older to younger, brighter to duller, aggressive to submissive, leader to follower, and other manifestations of individuals' interactions.

Understanding for all teachers is to be found in the interactions of individual to groups and in group to group, social class to social class, clique to clique, religion to religion, race to race. It is in the nuances of living that we must look to find problems common to all, and, having identified problems, seek to have more and better solutions. This we must do!

### What Are the Basic Needs?

For better than twenty-five years more than a score of leaders in education and psychology have conducted research and written about human emotional needs. There has been a great deal written of needs being culturally induced as a result of the child-rearing process. There are, it has been said, emotional needs which are basic

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to all humans. True, there is seldom agreement as to exactly what these needs are and often terminology differs, but through the thread of all the classifications and lists of needs many seem to crop up over and over again. Basic emotional needs we all seem to have.

Further, when our emotional needs are not being met adequately we seem to manifest behavior patterns which often run contrary to acceptable group mores. There is conflict within ourselves and often a breakdown in good human relationships. The nearly twenty-five years of study previously mentioned bears witness to the stated theory.

To bring the results of this research before classroom teachers and parents; to help teachers and others know about emotional needs; to help identify problems that seem to be associated with needs which are not fulfilled; to develop techniques whereby those other than highly trained professionals can learn better to meet needs, Louis E. Raths and his associates over a period of years have conducted investigations<sup>2</sup> which were based on a classification of emotional needs and four behavior patterns which seem to be manifestations of emotional needs unmet.

#### • The Needs:

1. *The need for belonging*
2. *The need for achievement and recognition*
3. *The need for economic security*
4. *The need to be relatively free from fear*

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<sup>2</sup> A bibliography of this research is included at the end of the article.

5. *The need for love and affection*
6. *The need to be relatively free from intense feelings of guilt*
7. *The need for self-respect and sharing in the values that direct one's life*
8. *The need for guiding purposes in understanding of the world in which one lives.*

• The Behavior:

1. *Aggression*
2. *Submission*
3. *Withdrawing*
4. *Psychosomatic illnesses.*

Nowhere in this accumulated research has it been claimed that the above list is inviolate, that these needs are all. The eight needs listed do seem to appear frequently and seem to be related to the behavior patterns suggested.

Over and over throughout the research carried on by this group of people it has been demonstrated that as teachers tried to work with children who had problems, the problems seemed to be alleviated. This was true in the area of learning problems, in those connected with psychosomatic illnesses, in learning relations, and in furthering good human relationships. It would seem that techniques for better meeting needs have the potential for making many positive changes in children which affect the ways we get along together.

This writer shared in this needs research and attempted to investigate relationships between changes in the emotional needs of children and changes in prejudice held by these children toward certain minority groups represented in the study.

An assumption of the study was that prejudice held toward whole groups of

people was in the nature of a personality disorder. The study capitalized on the techniques, developed in the other studies, which had to do with carrying on an intensive in-service program with classroom teachers and with trying to identify and better meet needs.<sup>3</sup>

### Prejudices Are Related to Needs

Simply stated, the study consisted of an attempt to identify prejudices held by the children, to identify unmet emotional needs according to the classification previously mentioned, and to work with teachers to develop programs of action designed to better fulfill emotional needs indicated. The final stages consisted of "post testing" to record changes and relating changes in needs to changes in prejudices held toward individual members of minority groups and toward the groups themselves.

The results of this study, like those of each needs study previously conducted, were very gratifying. Particularly is this true because the methods used for trying to meet needs are those within the grasp of every teacher and parent. There is no magic formula; no universal panacea. The ideas used seem simply to be a *concentration* of good things teachers and parents probably have always done. They include being kindly and considerate, friendly and helpful, sensitive and observant, as well as consistent in relationships with children. Once a child was considered, on the basis of much thought and

<sup>3</sup> These understandings and techniques are now largely included in two published pamphlets: *An Application to Education of the Needs Theory*, and *Dos and Don'ts of the Needs Theory*, Modern Education Service, Box 26, Bronxville, N. Y.

study, to have an unfulfilled need for *belonging*, for example, a planned program was developed for that child which attempted to try better to meet that need. So it was with all the children with unmet needs who were singled out for classroom therapy.

The following is an example of part of a program planned for a boy manifesting, to the best of our knowledge, a need to be "*free from guilt*" and to "*belong*."

"1. Create and take advantage of opportunities for group and teacher approval such as:

1.1 Note specific achievements and have him tell of these.

1.2 Inquire of his interests and try to give opportunities during the school day for him to expand and practice those interests. Take an active part in at least one of his interests so as to have something real to talk about.

1.3 Give increasingly responsible tasks outside the area of school work.

1.4 Compliment him regularly in front of other children and other teachers, as well as individually.

"2. Develop within the class a variety of clubs or activities so that all can feel a part.

2.1 Hobby clubs with displays of work at frequent intervals. Be sure there is a place for 'B' in one of these.

2.2 Try to encourage, through the physical education teacher, interclass activities.

"3. Play down any incidents that might be a source of trouble or anxiety for the individual.

3.1 'Look the other way' as frequently as possible.

3.2 Treat some things as 'accidents.' Be forgiving. When a disturbance occurs, walk quietly by and say something softly to 'B' or just place your hand on his shoulder. Let him know in many ways that you see what happens, but are not particularly annoyed.

3.3 Divert his attention from undesirable behavior by occasionally giving him a job to do. Perhaps deliver a message to the office, just to clear the air.

"4. Let him know that occasionally everyone gets into difficulties. Develop the idea that you are a person who is ready to help him in time of trouble.

4.1 When others speak of 'B' in a derogatory manner, be quick to come to his aid by pointing out his good side.

4.2 Share with him some mild anecdote of how someone you once knew was in difficulty and how he finally overcame his troubles.

4.3 See that he has opportunity to read biographical material about some of the world's great people portrayed in a 'human' light.

"5. Try to keep the 'moralistic' or 'wounded pride' tone out of reprimands. If behavior is such that it calls for a reprimand, use an approach that is straightforward and deals with the specific behavior and not the implications of the behavior.

"6. Make use of sociogram results to give him an opportunity to sit next to people he likes and admires. Have seating and working arrangements flexible."

From this suggested list of activities grew many specific activities. The *Dos and Don'ts of the Needs Theory* was a

source of many ideas. As the study progressed through the school year, many positive changes in the boy's behavior patterns were discernible. He became, in the words of the teacher, "fit to live with."

The changes in the needs of all the children in the study were compared to the changes evidenced in prejudices and conclusions were drawn. Briefly summarized, these points were:

1. Children whose needs seemed to be better met during the interim of the study made significant gains in their attitudes of prejudice. This was true in varying degrees toward the three minority groups with which the study was concerned.

2. Children whose needs were apparently less well met increased their prejudices in a statistically significant manner.

3. Those children whose emotional needs did not change also did not change in their attitudes toward these groups.

It was felt that the study and its findings had some broad implications for in-service and pre-service teacher education as well as for intercultural education. If indeed better meeting emotional needs of children brings about releases in intergroup tensions, a possibility which the study seemed to indicate, then perhaps we need to initiate all teachers in techniques for understanding, identifying and better meeting children's unfulfilled emotional needs. Imparting of such technique may well serve as a contribution to better human relationships.

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