

Stop Scaring Parents, Says Dr. Ben. Spock

Douglas Larsen
NEA Staff Correspondent

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WASHINGTON (NEA) The time has come, the doctor says, to stop scaring American parent about how they are raising their children and to let up dissecting youth in the laboratory.

For practical purposes, the scientists now know enough about children's diseases, proper diets, the most advanced types of recreation, proper school lighting, and the behavior patterns of youngsters. Obviously basic research should continue in these fields.

The big need right now is to start putting together these hitherto isolated chunks of information in some usable form so that parents and their youngsters can take advantage of it, relax, and start enjoying life together.

The doctor who says these things is Benjamin Spock, recognized as one of the nations outstanding experts on children. His books on common sense methods of child-rearing are the best sellers in the field. He has served on the staffs of the biggest children's hospitals in the country and is presently associated with the Rochester Child Health Institute. He pioneered the effort to disprove the rigid-time-schedule, stop clock, rule-book fad in raising children of a few years ago.

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Dr. Spock speaks as a vice chairman of the Midcetury White Home Conference on Children and Youth, to be held Dec. 3-7. It is Dr. Spock's hope that the conference will focus attention on the ultimate goal of all child research the development of healthy, good personalities. He fears that American parents may have lost sight of this in the confusion of the war and postwar years.

Dr. Spock puts his finger on two basic problems of child-rearing in America, the lack of tradition, and a fault in education of U.S. women. He explains the first this way:

"In earlier, simple civilization, nobody worried much about how to raise children. Mothers learned how from their mothers and had plenty of practice helping raise brothers and sisters. They did it automatically and efficiently. In spite of some things they may have been doing wrong the net result was a lot of normal adults.

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Today, he claims, American parents have been made so self-conscious about raising their children it has almost become a choir, rather than a pleasure. He thinks it's better to make a few mistakes and have some fun with your children than get all excited about trying to do the perfect job. About the only ones really enjoying today's crop of youngsters, he says, are the country's grandparents.

He cites the current theory being spread around by some experts that bottle-fed babies will all turn out to be neurotics of maladjusted. Mothers who don't have the urge to breast-feed their infants, as a result, feel ashamed or guilty.



EYES ON NATION'S YOUTH: Melvin A. Glasser (left), executive director of the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, and Dr. Benjamin Spock, famous paediatrician who is a vice president of the conference, look over a tiny part of the voluminous material gathered in probing U.S. youngsters.

This feeling of guilt, Dr. Spock says, is much worse than bottle-feeding. He says the chances are that breast-feeding is somewhat better for kids, but there are absolutely no positive- scientific facts to prove it. It's nothing for any prospective mother to get over-wrought about.

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Discussing the increasingly serious problem of working mothers. Dr. Spock lay part of the blame on America's education system.

"Our education tells girls that they've got to be career women, making their great contribution outside of the home, to really count today," he explains. "Love, marriage and motherhood is a sort of second-best. This is a dangerously false philosophy."

For the mothers of young children who are forced to work outside, the only permanent answer is an economic system which doesn't push them to this expedient, he says.

Dr. Spock is not quiet as upset about the seriousness of the effect of the war and postwar conditions in the U.S., which are making today's growing-up process pretty difficult, as a lot of the country's social workers seem to think. On the matter of today's children being forced to adjust to a revolution in race relations, he thinks the schools and other organizations can help youth if they don't get help — or hindrance — at home.

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"Between the ages of six and adolescence, children are most likely to look for rules on such things as race relations outside the home. This is when the schools or Boy Scouts can help most in adjusting today's youngsters to any new conditions they face in this respect," he says.

Dr. Spock agrees that not much good can come from the new mobility of the American family which is revealed in a series of reports just prepared for the White House conference.

Unless a move is going to produce a better place to live and a better life for the children, he advises families to think twice before pulling up stakes on some whim and hauling the kids across the country.

In the last analysis of all of today's grave problems facing parents and youth, he says there is one basic rule to remember:

"Two good people who have each other and their kid can't help but produce good adults."

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The Daily Inter Lake (Kalispell, MT), 03 Jan 1951. <<https://mthspublic.newspapers.com/article/the-daily-inter-lake-dr-spock/208720849/>>

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