

Half Way Up The Stairs



EXTENSION DIVISION
Oklahoma A. & M. College
Shawnee Brown, Director
Stillwater, Oklahoma

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Half-Way Up The Stairs

LETA MOORE

Extension Specialist—Family Life

Thoughtful parents are always interested in doing the best that is possible for their children. The youngster half-way up the stairs is quite different to the pre-schooler. He thus presents different problems.

Almost overnight, your youngster has grown from an unsure little fellow into a rather self-sufficient small person. Bathing, dressing, keeping track of his belongings (to a certain extent), once important tasks are now routines to be polished off quickly as possible to leave time for the bigger things of life. It has all happened so fast that you have to blink twice to believe it is true. As a rule, we are a little less observant of school-age children because their development is less spectacular in many ways than that of the young child. He is not growing so fast physically and the mental growth goes on so quietly that we take it for granted.

We do need to remember that this is an important period of development. Boys and girls are trying out their own abilities and interests and are gaining in self-confidence and self-reliance.

We need to remember that during this period the world reveals itself to the youngster's curious gaze. He learns in six years what mankind has learned in sixty thousand. He learns: to read and write; tell time, multiply and divide; use fractions and decimals; to understand cause and effect; something of law, government, size and shape of the world; and to adopt simple health habits. He learns to influence people, to lead and to follow and to accept the role of boy and girl.

We also need to remember that while the youngster's attention span is not as short as it was earlier, it is not as long as it will become later. This should help us to realize why he often jumps from one thing to another.

We should realize that he needs to live and enjoy each day; childhood is a part of life and not just preparation for living. We need to remember that it is the youngster's job to learn to live with others, to be accepted by his age group, to take care of himself and an education.

*"Education today is looked upon, not as a matter of 'lessons' alone, but as of development of the 'whole child'. It is a matter in which home and school should unite their efforts in order to achieve their common goals."

A statement of some of the aims of education may be helpful in understanding its broader meanings and the possibilities for home and school cooperation.

The aims of education as stated by the National Educational Association are:

* From "Home and School Partners in Education" by Alma H. Jones. Iowa Extension Service.

1. Health—Includes physical and mental health and accident prevention.
2. Character—Includes honesty, service, love of fellowman, virtue and religiousness.
3. Citizenship—Implies being a good neighbor as well as being loyal to one's country.
4. Worthy Home Membership—Means that children and parents have an obligation to make the home a wholesome, happy place in which to live.
5. Worthy Use of Leisure—Use of leisure time on constructive instead of in destructive ways.
6. Vocation—Includes guidance in one's life work and training for it.
7. Mastery of Fundamental Processes—Commonly spoken of as the 3 R's. For example, ability to read rapidly and gather information accurately from the printed page is fundamental.

If we desire, as a finished product, a responsible adult, we need to remember that the youngster at this age is more developed physically and intellectually than he is emotionally and socially. These two fields are the areas where great growth should occur for the youngster half-way up the stairs.

Do we as parents always recognize children as independent human beings, not merely as our children?

An important factor in dealing with the school-age child is the re-also, that of the child. Neglecting the child's dignity is suppression; neglecting one's own is indulgence; both are bad for the total growth of the child.

To best understand a child, one needs to understand something of the natural plan of his development and his needs.

***WAYS IN WHICH FAMILY LIFE CAN ASSIST IN MEETING NEEDS**

Contributions Which the Family Can Make to the Individual	Contributions Which the Individual Can Make to His Family Life
<p>At this level a child needs from his family all he has needed in earlier periods plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A home life which gives him every possible opportunity to practice problem solving. This means: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Help in learning to recognize significant problems. b. Opportunities to consider and choose among a variety of possible solutions. c. Help in learning how to decide upon and carry out courses of 	<p>The child, at these ages, makes his contribution to his family by giving:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooperation with the main objectives in his own education as he comes to understand these. 2. Appropriate, willing help with the work and play of the household. 3. Increasing appreciation of and consideration for other members of the family. 4. Increasing responsibility for understanding and helping to meet family social obligations.

* Taken from page 426 of *Family Living and Our Schools* by Bess Goodykoontz and Beulah I. Coon. Copyright date 1941—Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.

- action.
- d. Help in learning how to accept consequences and evaluate results.
 2. Increasing opportunity to take responsibility for his own behavior, especially for his health habits.
 3. Increasing opportunity for rich cultural experiences: books to read, music to hear, pictures and sculpture to see, people of many kinds to meet, trips to take and tools to work with.
 4. Increasing opportunity to play freely with children of his own age and both sexes.
 5. Increasing opportunity to share group experiences with others of his own age and sex.
5. Increasing responsibility for helping with family planning.

Physical Growth and Skills

It is important to use all means to protect the health of the child half way up the stairs.

Children cannot be expected to succeed in school unless they are physically well. Often children have eye or ear difficulties which are not known to parents or teachers, because they have not been carefully tested and examined by a doctor. If a child has defective eyesight he is unable to see the blackboard as other children do or to read as well; if he has defective hearing, he may not hear the teacher's explanations; if he has infected tonsils or adenoids or if his nutritional condition is not the best, he will lack energy and interest; and may begin by failing and grow discouraged. If he suffers often from toothache, earache, or other irritations which often come to the child who is not perfectly made, he cannot pay attention or study as he might otherwise do.

Diseases that are most frequent to young children which may be remedied or minimized before they handicap a child in school:

1. Poor eyesight—Checked by a competent physician. Only those children who *really* need glasses should be given them.
2. Poor hearing—Comes on gradually.
3. Diseased tonsils—Consult a competent physician before removing.
4. Defective heart—Common among young children, especially those who have had scarlet fever, diphtheria or other throat infections.
5. Kidney trouble—Every physical examination should include a urine test.

All children should be immunized against smallpox and diphtheria before they start to school.

BUILDING MATERIALS FOR THE BODY

All the flesh and bone and sinew that this child of yours is to put on during his school years must come from the food he eats. Nowhere else can he get the building materials. So it is important that he eat just the right foods, those that will furnish the material from which flesh and bones are made. The over-active child usually has a good appetite—but not always for the right kind of food. It is your job to see that your child eats the body building foods. The basic seven in foods is our best guide.

It is better, too, that your child has time enough to eat a good breakfast. Gulping a few mouthfuls of food and rushing off to school is a bad habit. Waken him early enough to eat without hurry a substantial breakfast, and still have time to go to the toilet afterward, for this is when the bowels tend to move—a habit to be encouraged.

NECESSITY OF SLEEP

*“As important as is sleep, surveys show that many children come to school regularly with insufficient sleep and are definitely handicapped in health and school work by its lack.”

As an example, a sleep survey conducted for 370 school children showed a lack of sleep in a majority of cases.

Eighty-four children, or 22.7 percent, had as much or more sleep than recommended.

Two hundred twenty-six children, or 77.3 percent, had less than the amount of sleep recommended.

A lack of sleep tends to produce a nervous, irritable and under-nourished child.

Regarding the amount of sleep, the following is suggestive (Indicated by studies from various sources).

MINIMUM SLEEP OF CHILDREN

Ages: 6 to 9 years	Approximate hours of sleep:	11	hours
9 to 10		10½	
11 to 12		10	to 11

SOCIAL GROWTH

Nowadays, one of the most important things children have to learn, unless they are to be hermits, is how to get along with others and how to work with others.

The art of getting along with folks is an important one for each of us to learn. It means success in the family, success in school and success in the world. Adjusting to others is one of life's important jobs and is continuous through life.

Children need association with other children. They should not

* From "Home and School-Partners in Education," by Alma H. Jones, Extension Service, Iowa State College.

always be with their own parents or with older or younger brothers and sisters, either. In most families there is likely to be one child who dominates the others. Each youngster needs contact with other groups where he can be a leader as well as a follower. They need the chance to work and play with those of their own age.

The center of the school-child's world shifts to those of his age—playmates. He is deeply concerned with what the "other kids" do and what the older children say and do. One of his jobs is to make a place for himself within his age group. This is the age of gangs, clubs or secret societies. They get a thrill from organizing something of their own without adult supervision. The child's security and happiness lies in really "belonging."

At this age, the boy and girl wants the style of hair-cut or hairdo and the same clothes that the other "kids" have. He feels that he has to be like others. One of the basic needs of this period is the likeness to others and this must be achieved to a greater or lesser degree before the individual can accept differences.

Children learn important lessons from each other. They learn to find their places in relation to others and thus learn to live as a member of their group of equals.

The class in school, the Sunday school class, 4-H clubs, neighborhood clubs, all help to meet the child's deep-seated need and desire for companionship with his equals.

Beware of making too much effort in connection with a child's social success. The too anxious parent, fussing over the child's hair or what color most becomes her, just possibly has a big hand in making her daughter stiff and awkward with self-consciousness.

MENTAL GROWTH

There is a time in a child's development when he is ready (mentally) to undertake certain tasks. For example, there is a time when he is able to understand long division or percentage. If we attempt to teach him anything before he is ready, it is not only wasteful, but it may cause him to become discouraged and lose confidence in himself.

Another important thing to remember is that *children don't all get ready at the same time. All children differ.* Children don't all cut their teeth at the same age, they don't learn to talk at the same age, yet we send them to school when they're six and think they should learn to read children mature or ripen mentally at all sorts of different rates. A child is not stupid because he matures more slowly than the average. Neither is he to be especially commended because his rate of maturing is fast.

Children differ also in the kind of minds they possess. Some have more ability in handwork, such as manual training, and others may have very little skill at such work, but have a special ability in mathematics or language.

Each child has his own natural development; physical, mental and emotional. Every child is apt to be a little behind in one aspect of

growth while he is forging ahead in another. We might say his growth is a zig-zag process. The mental growth and other phases will sometimes disregard parental ambition. The parent should remember this and NEVER SHOVE. Sometimes parents are too ambitious for the welfare of the child. It is not wise to compare one child to another nor expect him to be the same as an older brother or sister.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

It is impossible to disregard outside influences in the rearing of children. That is another reason why all parents need to be community homemakers. In so doing, they can make their community a better home for their children. We need also to remember that we can not shield our child from life; he must face problems and so it is with influences that affect the school-age child.

Sometimes we wonder why "Sonny" doesn't play with Johnny—he is such a nice little boy and "Sonny" trots off every chance he gets to play with Jimmy, whose bad language, manners and habits are not what we like. There are two questions to which we need to give thought: what do we want in our children's friends and, what do your children want, need and get? The two are not always the same. We would say we want them to play with children they will be safe with, who won't teach them bad habits and who come from good families. A child's friends tell us a lot about that child. If he seems drawn to children who are bold, daring and destructive, we should ask ourselves if we have provided ways for freedom of action. It may be we have placed too many curbs on his natural behavior. We would be encouraged if we remember that if we set up wholesome surroundings in which the child will feel basically secure, the home influence is so good that harmful outside things are easily withstood. Children who are given some leeway in choosing their friends have more opportunity for the development of a well rounded personality than those who are more restricted.

PARENTS AND FAMILY ARE MOST IMPORTANT

The greatest need of the child is to feel secure in his home. Regardless of how interesting school work is made or how ready a child is physically and mentally, he will not succeed as well in school if he is really worried about something. He must have confidence in himself, he must feel loved and respected in his own family. Someone has said that the home should provide good growing weather or growing climate and the greatest need is that mentioned above—love and security.

The boy or girl needs to feel free to discuss his problems and explain his side of a situation with his parents. Fortunate is the child when *both* parents recognize "These are *our* problems" where children are concerned. Sometimes Dad is so busy he is inclined to leave problems to Mom and that is not good for those concerned. The child needs to feel that Mom and Dad will consider his side and love him even though he has made a mistake. Children need love and affection as much as they need food and shelter and sunshine. Let them know that

you love them and approve of them even though you disapprove of mistakes that they make. Give each of them the feeling that he is an important part of the family and all share in the ups and downs of life together.