

# Health Notes for the Farm

*Contributed by the Department of Health*

## Mental Health Counts As Much As Physical Health

**M**ENTAL disorders are almost as common as physical disorders, and are due, not to "fate," but to definite causes, many of which are preventable. The foundation of much mental ill-health is laid in childhood by indifferent training, bad example, or wrong environment. Moreover, to ensure a healthy outlook in children, a prime necessity is that the body should be healthy. There is an intimate association between the body, brain, and mental health. It is important, therefore, that the earliest signs of disease should be discouraged and dealt with, and that those simple laws of healthy living so often outlined in these articles should be strictly observed. For the formation of a healthy mental outlook, and therefore a happy, courageous, and useful personality, the following advice is offered, particularly to the young people.

Habits are formed partly by making errors and correcting them. The home chiefly, but also the school, should be a place where we can make mistakes and have them corrected without harmful results.

The mind requires:—

- (1) Mental work and mental rest.
- (2) Proper control of feelings and behaviour.

**Mental Work.**—Just as your body requires exercise or work, so does your mind. You want to think hard about all sorts of things. A child should work hard (but not absurdly hard) at his lessons, but he should think hard about all sorts of other things as well.

**Mental Rest.**—Mental rest is of two kinds. The mind as well as the body is rested when we sleep. But the mind is also rested when it is amused, as by a little fun with friends, a party or a game, or by quietly watching something beautiful. The condition of the body affects the mind and the mind affects the body. Be cheerful. Laughter is a great tonic; it drives away gloom and sorrow.

A child should be taught to:

**Cultivate common-sense and learn to control himself.**—Habits of right thinking are most important, and the first thing a child has to do is to get the **right attitude towards life.** Troubles, disappointments, worries, are the common lot of mankind. When this is realised the big ones can be faced with courage and patience. Small upsets and little annoyances of life should be accepted as a matter of course, for to give them excessive attention spoils all the joy in life, and causes many a nervous breakdown.

**Control his Temper.**—The next thing a child has to learn is to **keep his temper.** He should be taught not to fly into a rage over every annoyance or disappointment or contradiction. He should be taught to forget it and turn his attention to something else.

**Waste no time over spilt milk.**—Somebody once asked the Duke of Wellington, "How is it that your plans are always so much better than the enemy's?" He replied, "They aren't better really, but when one plan goes wrong, I am quicker at making a new one." He didn't cry over spilt milk; he promptly went on to something else.

**Do unpleasant jobs promptly and thoroughly.**—If a child has any job or duty which he doesn't like doing but which has got to be done, he should be taught to set to and do it at once and as well as possible. There are always unpleasant jobs to be done, cleaning up garbage, for instance; but how tidy the garden is afterwards and how proud of it the child feels.

**Behave nicely, whether he feels like it or not.**—Conduct or behaviour is supposed to show our true feelings, but this is not altogether true. We can be polite when we feel cross, and by behaving pleasantly or cheerfully we soon actually feel more amiable or happier. Doing something interesting with the hands will often help to

work off ill-temper or unhappiness—girls can knit or sew, boys can do carpentering or woodwork.

**Never to cultivate a grudge or a grievance against fate, or against any person.**—This is an important rule. A child should be taught not to brood over misunderstandings or wrongs suffered, however unjust they may be. He should be taught not to cultivate jealousy or envy. He should try and forget them by turning his interests to some other object. Friends get very tired of hearing of grievances.

**Be calm and placid.**—A child should be taught that if something has gone wrong and he can do anything about it, he should do it. If he cannot help in the least, then he should quietly and bravely endure it. If he is frightened, say, of the dark, he should be told to think how many nights he has already lived, and in how few of them anything harmful has happened.

**Not to think and talk about what he feels.**—A child should be taught to think and talk about what he and his friends are doing, about what is happening around him, and especially to cultivate a **sense of humour.** He should develop a hobby—stamp-collecting, birds' eggs, bees. He should not think and talk about unpleasant things; there are plenty of nice things for him to think about.

**Make a standard for himself and hold to it.**—He must be taught to decide for himself, without being told, what is right and what is wrong. What is wrong for one may not be wrong for someone else. The important thing is to have a standard and to quietly hold to it.

**Be affectionate and friendly.**—A child should not be afraid to love his relatives and friends, not jealously or selfishly, but generously. We cannot get love without giving it, but giving it is even better than getting it.

These rules for mental health are to serve as guides in our behaviour towards others. Their observance means self-control. To have self-control is to possess the highest quality of man, and the one that makes for most happiness.