

GIVEN
BUT NO TEASING
THE EDUCATIVE
VALUE OF TEASING
YOUTHFUL TENDENCY
DISORDER
THINK BEFORE
YOU SPEAK

THE OSCAR NETWORK
IN CHRISTCHURCH INC.

WE ARE AN ORGANISATION
DEDICATED TO PROVIDING
INFORMATION TO O.S.C.A.R.
(OUT OF SCHOOL CARE AND
RECREATION) PROGRAMMES.

Our aim is to support, promote and network safe quality, accessible OSCAR services which are professional and centre around the needs of the child and their whanau.

The OSCAR Network provides information on training, development, mentoring, funding & finances, research, advocacy, management and staff support, resources and the general running of an Out of School programme. The OSCAR Network in Christchurch encourages OSCAR providers to operate quality services, however it is not a function of the OSCAR Network to accredit or assess OSCAR services.

The OSCAR Network in Christchurch has a well-earned reputation for working co-operatively alongside other groups and agencies. We work as a team in an environment based on mutual respect and trust. It is the combination of skills, ideas and energy, which achieves results from the consensus decision-making process. We enjoy our work by 'thinking differently'.

THANK YOU

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LETTER TO OSCAR
PARENTS.
THIS IS HOW WE
HELP TO GROW
YOUR CHILDREN...

As staff members we often wonder what ~~parent's~~ perceptions of OSCAR are when arriving to pick up their children. Does it look like chaos, or do you see the value of the activities that your child is doing? To give you a better view of what we aim to incorporate into the programme, I would like to include you in why we do what we do.

Our programme believes that "For children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood". While school offers a wide variety of learning, so does OSCAR – just in a more relaxed atmosphere. The children have a structured day in the classroom, ~~as~~ by the time they arrive at OSCAR are ready to unwind, share their day and relax. Obviously this means different catering to the various tastes and without having to be involved unless it interests them. From 4.45pm we have team games that everyone is required to participate in, and this is

where they learn to work in group situations and develop social skills.

A few instances of what we are aiming to achieve by play might include the card game UNO – sequencing and strategy – maths games that improve times tables, compliment game – teaching children empathy, Maori bingo – fast paced and fun but teaching another language etc. etc. All the activities are based around building your child's confidence and skill base. We value that they all have talents, not in the same areas, but all equally of value. This is what makes them all so precious not just to you as parents but also us as OSCAR caregivers.

We feel privileged to be part of your child's development.

Fay Shimasaki, Supervisor,
St Patricks After School Care



CONTENTS

- 4 WAYS OF SEEING
- 6 THE NEW SCIENCE OF SIBLINGS
- 10 STORIES OF RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION
- 11 IMAGINATION AND 'MAKE BELIEVE' IS AS POPULAR AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN!
- 12 GIVING FEELS BETTER THAN RECEIVING - EVEN WHEN YOU ARE POOR
- 12 RESPOND TO THE NEED AS WELL AS THE BEHAVIOUR
- 13 IF I COULD TELL YOU ONLY ONE THING ABOUT DISCIPLINE
- 14 MOST PARENTS 'LIE TO THEIR CHILDREN'
- 14 OSCAR STAFF - WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD...
- 15 THOUGHT-PROVOKING PHOTOS OF CHILDREN FROM AROUND THE WORLD WITH THEIR MOST VALUED POSSESSIONS

SEE THE CALENDAR ON THE BACK COVER FOR TIME AND PLACE DETAILS OF OSCAR NETWORK TRAINING AND EVENTS.

How Play Promotes Reasoning

Play improves problem solving by heightening our imagination.

Twenty years ago, a pair of researchers in England reported on a series of experiments in which they showed that very young children could, in the context of play, solve logic problems that they seemed unable to solve in a serious context.

The problems they used were syllogisms, the classic type of logic problem described originally by Aristotle. A syllogism requires a person to combine the information in two premises to decide if a particular conclusion is true, false, or indeterminate (cannot be determined from the premises). Syllogisms are generally easy when the premises coincide with concrete reality, but are more difficult when the premises are counterfactual (contradictions to reality). The prevailing belief at the time that the British researchers conducted these experiments was that the ability to solve counterfactual syllogisms depends on a type of reasoning that is completely lacking in young children.

Here is an example of the kind of counterfactual syllogism that the researchers used:

- All cats bark (major premise).
- Muffins is a cat (minor premise).
- Does muffins bark?

Previous research - including research by the famous Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget - had shown that children under about 10 or 11 years old regularly fail to solve such syllogisms correctly (that is, they fail to

give answers that logicians take as the correct answers). When the British researchers put syllogisms like this to young children in a serious tone of voice, the children answered as Piaget and others would expect. They said things like, “No, cats go meow, they don’t bark.” They acted as if they were unable to think about a premise that did not fit with their real-world experiences. But, when the researchers presented the same problems in a playful tone of voice, using words that made it clear that they were talking about a pretend world, children as young as 4 years old solved the problems easily, and even many 2-year-olds solved them! They said, “Yes, Muffins barks.”

Think of it: Four-year-olds in play easily solved logic problems that they were not supposed to be able to solve until they were about 10 or 11 years old!

How the playful state led young children to the “correct” answers to syllogisms

Piaget and other philosophers and psychologists of his time generally drew a sharp distinction between two kinds of reasoning - concrete reasoning and abstract reasoning (which Piaget called hypothetico-deductive reasoning). They argued that the first kind of reasoning depends on direct, concrete, previous experience with the conditions that are being thought about and the second kind depends on formal logic that has a mathematical foundation and can be applied to problems regardless of the



person’s experience, or lack of experience, with the concrete substance of the problems. Some philosophers and psychologists argued, further, that concrete reasoning develops naturally in nearly all people while abstract reasoning requires special training of the type found in Western schools. Others, including Piaget, contended that abstract reasoning does develop naturally, but typically does not emerge in children until they are about 11 years old. According to Piaget, young children could not solve counterfactual syllogisms, because they lacked the capacity for abstract reasoning. But Piaget was wrong.



Today, many if not most developmental and cognitive psychologists, reject the distinction between concrete and abstract reasoning. They argue that so-called abstract reasoning occurs through mental transformations that turn what at first appears to be an abstract problem into a concrete problem—that is, into a problem that is very similar to a problem that the person has previously encountered and solved in the real world. Those mental transformations involve imagination, and even young children are capable of them. From this point of view, all human reasoning is concrete; it is just that some problems involve a greater use of imagination than do others in order to put them into concrete form.

Human play, by definition, involves imagination. Play naturally leads us to think of things as they might be rather than just as they currently are. In the playful state of mind it is easy for anyone to imagine and think about a world in which people can fly, in which time machines can transport us to the past, or in which all cats bark. Young children are masters of play, so it is no surprise that they can solve counterfactual syllogisms in the context of play.

Why can 11-year-olds solve counterfactual syllogisms in a serious context while 4-year-olds require a playful context? I think the answer has little to do with age differences in reasoning ability and much to do

with differences in understanding of the researchers’ purpose in asking the questions. Four-year-olds misinterpret the researchers’ purpose. They believe that when adults ask them questions in a serious tone of voice, they want serious answers, answers that have to do with truth about the real world. So, they respond accordingly--“Cats don’t bark.” On the other hand, 11-year-olds, recognize that the question is not about reality but is a test of logic, so they accept the counterfactual premise and give the answer that the researcher wants. They realize that this is a game that the researcher is playing, which has to do with a pretend world and not with the real world. Four-year-olds recognize the game-like quality only when the researcher makes it clear, through tone of voice and wording, that it is a game.

My overriding point here is that play automatically induces hypothetical reasoning. It leads us to think about pretend worlds, where anything is possible, and to reason about those possibilities, rather than to limit our thoughts just to things that are true in the immediate here and now. In this way play promotes the kind of thought that is crucial not just to all of theoretical science but to all planning about the future, in which we must imagine possible events and think about how we might deal with those events.

Please do not draw the wrong conclusion from this little discussion. I am not arguing

that it is a good idea, educationally, to induce playful states deliberately in children in order to improve their reasoning, as the researchers did in their experiment. Children play naturally, and it is through natural play that children practice reasoning. Children who are manipulated into play by teachers who think that this will improve their reasoning will soon learn to resist the manipulations. Play, in the long run, is only play if it is self-chosen and self-directed. Children practice reasoning in their own ways, through their own self-chosen play; we can’t do it for them and shouldn’t try. All we need to do is to provide places where children can play and explore safely and naturally, with others in age-mixed groups. They will take care of the rest.

Peter Gray



GIVEN TABLETS BUT NO TEACHERS, ETHIOPIAN KIDS TEACH THEMSELVES

With 100 million first-grade-aged children worldwide having no access to schooling, the One Laptop Per Child organization is trying something new in two remote Ethiopian villages—simply dropping off tablet computers with preloaded programs and seeing what happens.

The goal: to see if illiterate kids with no previous exposure to written words can learn how to read all by themselves, by experimenting with the tablet and its preloaded alphabet-training games, e-books, movies, cartoons, paintings, and other programs.

Early observations are encouraging, said Nicholas Negroponte, OLPC's founder, at MIT Technology Review's EmTech conference last week.

The devices involved are Motorola Xoom tablets - used together with a solar charging system, which OLPC workers had taught adults in the village to use. Once a week, an OLPC worker visits the villages and swaps

out memory cards so that researchers can study how the machines were actually used.

After several months, the kids in both villages were still heavily engaged in using and recharging the machines, and had been observed reciting the “alphabet song,” and even spelling words. One boy, exposed to literacy games with animal pictures, opened up a paint program and wrote the word “Lion.”

The experiment is being done in two isolated rural villages with about 20 first-grade-aged children each, about 50 miles from Addis Ababa. One village is called Wonchi, on the rim of a volcanic crater at 11,000 feet; the other is called Wolonchete, in the Rift Valley. Children there had never previously seen printed materials, road signs, or even packaging that had words on them, Negroponte said.

Earlier this year, OLPC workers dropped off closed boxes containing the tablets, taped shut, with no instruction. “I thought

the kids would play with the boxes. Within four minutes, one kid not only opened the box, found the on-off switch ... powered it up. Within five days, they were using 47 apps per child, per day. Within two weeks, they were singing ABC songs in the village, and within five months, they had hacked Android,” Negroponte said. “Some idiot in our organization or in the Media Lab had disabled the camera, and they figured out the camera, and had hacked Android.”

Elaborating later on Negroponte's hacking comment, Ed McNierney, OLPC's chief technology officer, said that the kids had gotten around OLPC's effort to freeze desktop settings. “The kids had completely customized the desktop—so every kids' tablet looked different. We had installed software to prevent them from doing that,” McNierney said. “And the fact they worked around it was clearly the kind of creativity, the kind of inquiry, the kind of discovery that we think is essential to learning.” “If they can learn to read, then they can read to learn.”

In an interview after his talk, Negroponte said that while the early results are promising, reaching conclusions about whether children could learn to read this way would require more time. “If it gets funded, it would need to continue for another a year and a half to two years to come to a conclusion that the scientific community would accept,” Negroponte said. “We'd have to start with a new village and make a clean start.”

The idea of dropping off tablets outside of the context of schools is a new paradigm for OLPC. Through the late 2000s, the company was focused on delivering a custom miniaturized and ruggedized laptop, the XO, of which about 3 million have been distributed to kids in 40 countries. Deployments went to schools including ones in Peru.

Giving computers directly to poor kids without any instruction is even more ambitious than OLPC's earlier pushes. “What can we do for these 100 million kids around the world who don't go to school?” McNierney said. “Can we give them tools to read and learn—without having to provide schools and teachers and textbooks and all that?”



Kiwi kids destined for shorter lives than parents

Kiwi children need to start learning healthier lifestyles if they are not to be the first generation in a century to have a worse life expectancy than their parents.

A British public health expert is warning that modern lifestyles could prompt a reversal of medical improvements that have steadily increased life expectancy during the past 100 years. “...there's evidence now that things are stalling,” The Times in London reported Professor John Ashton saying. “The golden generation, now in their 90s, have really benefited from traditional lifestyles - walking to school and work... not having junk food - but that has been coupled with the benefits of modern medicine. “What we've now got is generations coming through where there has been a deterioration of lifestyles.”

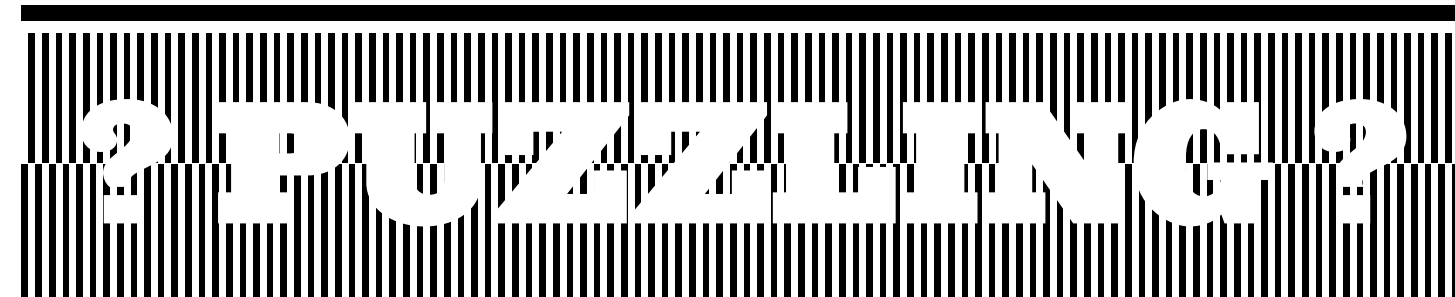
Otago University Associate Professor Esko Wiltshire, a paediatric endocrinologist, said yesterday that Kiwi families were among those facing a decline in life expectancy and healthiness. The problem was prevalent in First World countries, but New Zealand already had higher rates of obesity, which was a further concern, he said. However, there was still time to stop the trend. “I don't think it's inevitable, but it is possible.”

Health improvements of the past century were related mainly to sanitation and medical advances, he said. But improvements in the availability of food, and of high-energy food, had not matched lifestyle changes, which had become more sedentary. Food used to be a scarce resource, and people would easily expend energy

through active lifestyles, but now food was easy to come by and higher in energy, but people's metabolisms had not yet adjusted, he said. That was playing itself out in higher rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease, Dr Wiltshire said. “There are significant long-term risks at the population level from the change in the lifestyle that we are living.”

To try to stop it having a lasting impact on life expectancy, healthier lifestyles had to be introduced at a young age. That included healthy eating habits and activity levels, he said. “It's much easier to get those in place from the beginning than to try and change them later.”

Katie Chapman
© Fairfax NZ News



BY BERNARD DE KOVEN

In her paper Explorers, Detectives, Matchmakers, and Lion Tamers: Understanding Jigsaw Puzzlers' Techniques and Motivations Angela Cora Garcia investigates the different ways people solve jigsaw puzzles. She describes four different approaches.

People who like to assemble jigsaw puzzles prefer different ways of working on them and get different kinds of enjoyment from doing so. The techniques and procedures people use to find pieces to place in the puzzle, manage the loose pieces, and sort the pieces intersect with these different preferences and enjoyments. Some prefer to focus on characteristics of the picture depicted in the puzzle, while others have more interest in problem solving. Some prefer working on relatively simple puzzles, while others crave a greater degree of challenge and choose more complex puzzles and more intricate techniques for working

on them. Some puzzlers are more flexible, some more rigid in the processes they use to complete puzzles. Finally, puzzlers find their rewards and motivations for assembling jigsaws in different aspects of the puzzling experience. Some gain the most satisfaction from the process of working on the puzzle, while others find rewards in solving the puzzle—that is, in the finished product.

These differences in approaches to puzzles fall into four categories of puzzlers: Explorer, Detective, Matchmaker, and Lion Tamer. The Explorer emphasizes flexibility, creativity, and discovery; the Detective emphasizes problem solving; the Matchmaker emphasizes the aesthetics of the picture and the process of matching pieces to the picture; and the Lion Tamer emphasizes making the process of puzzle completion as challenging as possible.

It's fun to think about how you go about

solving a puzzle. It gives you another puzzle to solve while you're trying to fit else everything together. It makes an already meditative process even deeper.

It's fun to think about your puzzle-solving strategies. Even more fun to think about new strategies to try:

- If you're an Explorer, would you actually want to try solving a puzzle like a Detective, Matchmaker or Lion Tamer?
- Do you put the outside frame together first (if there is such a thing), or work from the inside out?
- Have you tried it the other way around?
- Do you sort pieces first? By colour, design, shape?
- Have you ever tried to solve the puzzle with all the pieces face down?
- Do you like to solve puzzles alone more than with someone else?

THE EDUCATIVE VALUE OF TEASING

WHAT EXACTLY IS TEASING, AND WHAT ARE ITS PURPOSES?

Teasing gets a bad rap, especially in educational circles, because of its association with bullying. But not all teasing is bullying. In fact, in most settings (maybe not in our typical schools), teasing serves positive ends far more often than negative ones. This essay is mostly about the positive uses of teasing.

DEFINITION OF TEASING

What is teasing? I like the definition given by Dacher Keltner, a psychologist at UC Berkeley who is perhaps the world’s leading researcher on the topic. According to Keltner, a tease is “an intentional provocation accompanied by playful off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target.” Let me break that down.

A tease, as the term is used by Keltner and his colleagues, has these three characteristics: (1) It is a verbal statement or nonverbal action that is designed deliberately to provoke another person (the target of the tease). (2) The statement or action is accompanied by or followed by one or more markers indicating that it is playful or at least is not fully serious. For example, it might be marked by laughter or smiling, a singsong voice, unusual phrasing, obvious exaggeration, or irony (saying the opposite of what is meant). (3) It draws attention to, or comments on, something relevant to the target. For example, it may comment on some aspect of the target’s personality, or physical being, or current emotional or motivational state.

A tease can be purely nonverbal. For example, a parent might tease a young child by pretending to offer him a piece of candy and then laughing and taking it away; the

comment here is on the child’s strong desire for candy. (To most of us, this example seems mean; but in some cultures teasing of this sort is used to deliberately train children in self-control.) But the teases I’m concerned with here are primarily verbal.

TEASING AS AN EXPRESSION OF ACCEPTANCE

My family members and closest friends, especially my wife, are well aware of my many flaws and don’t hesitate to tease me about them. They know, for example, that I can’t carry a tune, am often absent-minded, am uncomfortable at parties, am ignorant of much of popular culture, get too serious when playing games that should be just for fun (an obvious flaw in someone who writes about the non-competitive nature of play), and am far more frugal than necessity demands. By teasing me about these things they show me that these elements of my character are out in the open; I don’t have to try to hide them. The people I care most about already know these things about me, find them amusing, and accept me despite the flaws. To know someone well is to know their weaknesses as well as strengths, and teasing can be a playful way of expressing that knowledge and thereby reinforcing the friendship. The flaws, to the real friend, can even be endearing, as long as they’re not too egregious.

TEASING AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING HUMILITY

But teasing also serves purposes beyond acceptance. One of its primary functions is that of deflating egos.

It’s human nature to be repelled by arrogance. Arrogant people are threats to all

of us because they think they are better than us, think they have a right to impose their will on us, and may even think that our purpose on earth is to serve them. Arrogance is a flaw that is not endearing, and if we want to be true friends with a person who tends even slightly toward arrogance, we must do what we can to punch holes in that person’s ego. We all, at times, have the potential of becoming a bit too arrogant, and teasing by others can help us overcome that tendency. When my friends and loved ones tease me about my flaws, they are not only expressing acceptance of those flaws, but are also reminding me of them. In doing so, they are keeping me humble. When either my wife or I concede that the other was right, on something about which we had disagreed, we often do so with a playful, “Oh, you’re such a smarty-pants.” It’s a tease, common to children, which means, “OK, you’re right; but don’t get all arrogant just because you knew something that I didn’t know.”

The world’s superstars at the use of teasing to promote humility are hunter-gatherers. The hunting-and-gathering way of life requires continuous cooperation, sharing, and an egalitarian spirit. Hunter-gatherers do not have “big men” or chiefs, but make all group decisions democratically, through discussions aimed at achieving consensus. They recognize that the human tendency toward arrogance is a threat to their means of existence, and they are constantly on guard to nip it in the bud. They are particularly vigilant about arrogance in young men.

For example, hunter-gatherers everywhere engage in a practice that anthropologists refer to as “insulting the meat.” When a hunter brings a fat antelope or other prize kill back to the band, for everyone to share, he

must act humbly about it. He must say that the animal is skinny, hardly worth bothering with. He must say that he killed it through sheer luck, or because of the fine arrow that someone else had made and lent him, or because it was sickly and an easy mark, or all of these things. If he acts even the slightest bit arrogant about his hunting, others will mock both him and the meat he has brought them. The men and women alike, especially the grandmothers, will complain that the antelope is nothing but a bag of bones and hardly worth cooking. They might make up a song about the man’s flaws and about how he thinks he is such a “great hunter” but is really a puny weakling. They might mockingly call him “chief” or “big man.” In a culture that doesn’t have chiefs or big men and values equality, this is one of the greatest insults that can be hurled.

The man who is insulted in this way knows what is happening, but the insults nevertheless work. He knows that he has crossed a line that hunter-gatherers must not cross, and he must immediately make amends by expressing great humility about the meat and himself. He must join the others now in taunting himself. If he doesn’t, he knows that the taunting will escalate and might even lead to ostracism or banishment from the band. Such taunting is a form of teasing. It has all the elements of teasing, including humour. But it is teasing with a very serious purpose.

When anthropologist Richard Lee asked a wise healer in the hunter-gatherer group he was studying to explain this practice of insulting the meat, the healer replied: “When a young man kills much meat, he comes to think of himself as a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his inferiors. We can’t accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. In this way we cool his heart and make him gentle.”

Research in our culture shows that over the past two or three decades in North America there has been a continuous rise in narcissism, which might be defined as a pathological form of arrogance. I can’t help but wonder: Might the rise of narcissism be partly caused by a decline in teasing, especially teasing of children by parents and other adults? The self-esteem movement of the past two or three decades has been

accompanied by the view that all sorts of put-downs of children are harmful, because they damage self-esteem. Well, maybe that’s what the put-downs were designed to do—damage the sort of “self-esteem” that manifests itself as arrogance or narcissism. Pacific Islanders and Asians generally value humility more than do Westerners, and they are also more likely than Westerners to tease their children, often in ways that strike Westerners as mean or insensitive.

TEASING AS A MEANS OF CORRECTION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Teasing can be a gentle, not so gentle, or even harsh way of encouraging others to change their behaviour. Teasing to counteract arrogance is an example of this, but there are many other examples. Children, especially teenagers, tease one another regularly in their play as a means of social control. For example, in a friendly pick-up game of baseball, a pitcher who throws the ball too hard for a little kid to hit it might be told by a teammate, “Hey, way to go; it’s always good to strike out the little ones,” in a teasing voice that lets the pitcher know that the real meaning is the opposite. This is a way of offering criticism that does not destroy the spirit of play, does not have to be acknowledged as criticism, but yet is criticism and lets the target know that he has crossed a line he shouldn’t have crossed. It gives the criticized person a way of saving face. For example, he might respond by saying something like, “Yeah, you’re right, I’m really going to be tough on the little ones,” thereby pretending that his hard pitching was itself a teasing form of play; but then he can change his ways and start pitching more softly.

According to anthropologists’ reports, hunter-gatherers use such teasing regularly as a means of maintaining peace and harmony in the band. Hunter-gatherers refrain from criticizing others directly, because they believe that people should make their own decisions and not be told what to do or not do. Instead, they criticize indirectly, often through teasing.

Teasing of this sort is not only more acceptable than direct criticism, given hunter-gatherer mores, but may also be more effective, even for us Westerners. Direct criticism tends to provoke argument and defensiveness. In contrast, teasing acts at

an emotional level that bypasses our verbal defensiveness and it gives us a choice of how to respond. We can laugh along with the teasers, thereby acknowledging that the implied criticism is justified. We can feel and express shame, likewise indicating our intent to change. We can stew for a while in resentment, but then eventually come around. Or we can leave, quietly or noisily, and henceforth avoid, when possible, this group of people who don’t like the way we behave.

As Keltner and his colleagues point out, the “comment” in teasing is most often about some non-normative characteristic or behaviour of the target. When that non-normative thing is something that the person can’t change or shouldn’t feel compelled to change and the teasing is harsh, then it is proper to think of the teasing as bullying. But if the teasing is about something that the person can change and should change—for his own good or for the good of others—then it may serve a very useful purpose. Teasing a young man about the odour of his cigarette breath or about how he thinks he looks so cool when he’s smoking may be harsh, but it may be more effective than either direct command or reasoned argument in changing his behaviour and prolonging his life. This is especially true if the teaser happens to be a potential girlfriend.

TEASING AS A TEST OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Teasing can be a sign of affection, a constructive form of criticism, or a cruel put-down. It can also be a semi-competitive verbal game, in which the players are testing one another’s abilities to keep cool in response to provocation and provide clever responses.

Sometimes the intent of a tease is ambiguous even in the mind of the teaser, but is shaped by the way the target and/or audience respond.

What do you think? Would the world be a better place or a worse one if we could somehow ban all teasing?

P Gray Free to Learn – Available in OSCAR Network Library

MORE U.S. CHILDREN BEING DIAGNOSED WITH YOUTHFUL TENDENCY DISORDER

Redlands, CA – Nicholas and Beverly Serna’s daughter Caitlin was only four years old, but they already knew there was a problem.

Day after day, upon arriving home from preschool, Caitlin would retreat into a bizarre fantasy world. Sometimes, she would pretend to be people and things she was not. Other times, without warning, she would burst into nonsensical song. Some days she would run directionless through the backyard of the Sernas’ comfortable Redlands home, laughing and shrieking as she chased imaginary objects.

When months of sessions with a local psychologist failed to yield an answer, Nicholas and Beverly took Caitlin to a prominent Los Angeles pediatric neurologist for more exhaustive testing. Finally the Sernas received the heartbreaking news: Caitlin was among a growing legion of U.S. children suffering from Youthful Tendency Disorder.

“As horrible as the diagnosis was, it was a relief to finally know,” said Beverly. “At least we knew we weren’t bad parents. We simply had a child who was born with a medical disorder.”

Youthful Tendency Disorder (YTD), a poorly understood neurological condition that afflicts an estimated 20 million U.S. children, is characterized by a variety of senseless, unproductive physical and mental exercises, often lasting hours at a time. In the thrall of YTD, sufferers run, jump, climb, twirl, shout, dance, do cartwheels, and enter unreal, unexplainable states of “make-believe.”

“The Youthful child has a kind of love/hate relationship with reality,” said Johns Hopkins University YTD expert Dr. Avi Gwertzman. “Unfit to join the adult world, they struggle to learn its mores and rules in a process that can take the entirety of their childhood. In the meantime, their emotional and perceptive problems cause them to act out in unpredictable and extremely juvenile ways. It’s as though they can only take so much reality; they have to ‘check out,’ to go Youthful for a while.”

On a beautiful autumn day in Asheville, NC, six-year-old Cameron Boudreaux is swinging on a park swing set—a monotonous, back-and-forth action that apparently gives him solace. Spotting his mother on a nearby bench, Cameron rushes eagerly to her and asks, “Guess what?” His mother responds with a friendly, “What?”

With unbridled glee, Cameron shouts, “Chicken butt!”—cryptic words understood only by him—before laughing and dashing off again, leaving his mother distraught over yet another baffling non-conversation.

“I must admit, it’s been a struggle,” Mary Boudreaux said. “What can I say to him when he says something like that, something that makes no sense? Or when he runs through the house yelling while I’m trying to balance the check book? You can’t just say, ‘Please, Cameron, don’t have a disorder for just a few minutes so I can concentrate.’”

Cameron’s psychological problems run even deeper. He can name every one of his beloved, imaginary Pokémon characters, but the plain realities of the actual world he inhabits are an enigma: Ask Cameron the name of the real-life city councilman sponsoring the referendum to renovate the park just across the street from his house—a park he plays in daily—and he draws a blank. According to Dr. Dinesh Agarwal, director of child psychiatry at NYU Medical Centre, such disconnectedness from reality is a coping mechanism for YTD sufferers. “The Youthful child is born into a world he or she does not fully understand,” Agarwal said. “Their brain pathways are still forming, and they need to repetitively relearn how to assimilate into society. These dissociative play-fantasies apparently help them accomplish that.”

But such fantasies come at a price, producing in Youthful children a disinterest in the everyday responsibilities of life bordering on contempt.

“Jesse knows when it’s his turn to take out the trash. We’ve gone over the house rules

a dozen times,” said Richard Torres, a Davenport, IA, father of three whose nine-year-old son Jesse was recently diagnosed with YTD. “And still he neglects the job time and again.”

Slowly, methodically, through an elaborate system of rewards and punishments, Jesse has shown improvement. But the road ahead is long.

“We get a lot of platitudes from the so-called experts,” Torres said. “We hear a lot of, ‘Oh, he’ll grow out of it, just give it time.’ That’s easy for them to say—their kid’s not running around the neighbourhood claiming to be Superman.”

Help for families struggling with YTD may soon be on the way. At last month’s annual AMA Convention, Smithkline-Beecham unveiled Juvenol, a promising YTD drug which, pending FDA approval, could reach the U.S. market as early as next spring. Already available in France and Sweden, Juvenol, the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet reported, resulted in a 60 percent decrease in running and jumping among users.

But until such help arrives, the parents of YTD sufferers can do little more than try to get through each day.

“I love my child with all my heart,” said Alexandra Torres, Jesse’s mother. “But when he’s in the throes of one of his skipping fits, it’s hard not to feel a little envious of parents with normal, healthy children.”

COMMON YTD WARNING SIGNS

- Near-constant running, jumping, skipping
- Sudden episodes of shouting and singing
- Preferring playtime and flights of fancy to schoolwork
- Confusing self with animals and objects, including tigers, dinosaurs, and airplanes
- Conversations with “imaginary friends”
- Poor impulse-control with regard to sugared snacks



Think before you speak

(A STATEMENT BY AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR)

I am a person first and I have a disability. When you deal with me treat me just as you would any other person with respect and courtesy. Please look me in the eye, and speak directly to me, not to my companion. I am used to living with my disability but I appreciate your help when I need it. If I have trouble seeing or hearing or moving easily please remember that it is my eyes or ears or muscles that do not work as well as yours. Beyond that, I have the same needs and wants, hopes and desires as you do. I have problems and fears, just like you but I also have strengths that sometimes even I don’t recognize. I need to talk to you about those abilities and I need you to listen. But most of all, I need you to remember - I am a person first!

Think Before You Speak

People with disabilities are people first, people who happen to have disabilities. Just as a person may be short or tall, or have dark or light skin, a disability is just one part of what makes up an individual. Whenever possible, avoid labelling a person with a disability, and instead simply use the person’s name. This way, you acknowledge that they are, indeed, people first. People with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else—the right to fall in love, marry, hold down a job, acquire an education, etc. Above all, they have a right to self-esteem. To ensure these rights, people with disabilities should be referred to in terms that acknowledge the ability, merit, and dignity of the individual, rather than focusing on a disability. By making an effort to become sensitive to, and aware of, the language we use, we create an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Learn the language

- Speak of the person first, then the disability.
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations. He uses a wheelchair,” instead of “He is wheelchair bound.”
- Understand that although a disability



may have been caused by a disease, the disability itself is not a disease and is not contagious.

- Don’t label people as part of a disability group—say “people with disabilities” not “the disabled.”
- Don’t patronize or give excessive praise or attention.
- Don’t say, “Isn’t it wonderful how he has overcome his disability?” “People live with a disability—they have to overcome attitudinal, social, architectural, education, transportation, and employment barriers—not the disability.
- Be aware that choice and independence are important. Ask a person with a disability if s/he wants assistance before you help. Your help may not be wanted or needed.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person to get things said or done.
- People with disabilities are people first, people who happen to have disabilities. Just as a person may be short or tall, or have dark or light skin, a disability is just one part of what makes up an individual.

Interacting & Etiquette

People who use wheelchairs

- Always ask the person using the wheelchair if he or she would like assistance before you help.
- Don’t lean on a person’s wheelchair. It is part of their personal space.

- Don’t discourage children from asking questions about the person or why they use a wheelchair.
- If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get to eye level.

People who have speech difficulties

- Give whole, unhurried attention to the person.
- Keep your manner encouraging, rather than correcting.
- Rather than speak for the person, allow extra time and give help when needed.
- When necessary, ask questions that require short answers or a nod or shake of the head.
- Don’t pretend to understand when you don’t. Repeat what you do understand; the person’s reaction will clue you in and guide you.
- Look for communication aids like pictures or symbols.

People who are visually impaired

- Ask the person if he or she wants help in getting about. When providing assistance, don’t grab and start steering—allow the person to take your arm, bent at the elbow.
- Always identify yourself and any others who may be with you. For example, say “On my right is...”
- Use the person’s name when starting a conversation to let him or her know where the conversation is directed. Let the person know when you need to leave.
- When offering a handshake, say, “Shall we shake hands?” If the person extends a hand first, take it or explain why you can’t.
- When offering seating, place the person’s hand on the back or arm of the seat.
- In handling money or other papers, identify each piece as you place it in the person’s hand.

People who are hearing impaired

- If necessary, get the person’s attention with a wave of the hand or light tap on the shoulder.
- Don’t be embarrassed about communication via paper and pencil.
- Speak clearly and slowly but without exaggerating. Don’t shout! Use body language or facial expression to help.
- Try to maintain eye contact. Allow for a clear view of your face—the person may be lip reading. Don’t speak directly into the ear.

WHY BOREDOM MAY NOT BE SO BAD

Responding (or not!) to summer’s siren call Like most parents on the planet, Kathy W. has heard the complaint, “I’m bored. I want to watch TV.” Unlike many mums and dads, this mum tells her three sons, ages ten, seven and four, “That’s good! Now you have a chance to explore new possibilities.” Kathy thinks kids have to get bored to get creative. Summer is a season ripe for boredom. For many children, the transition from a rigorously scheduled day of school and homework to a lazy, hazy day at home can be very unsettling. Parents, who mourn the loss of free time for themselves, may have difficulty understanding a child’s frustration. Some may look back at their own childhoods and recall idyllic days spent barefoot catching frogs. But the scene in the rear view mirror is likely to have grown somewhat blurry with the passage of time. Chances are that those frog-catching days were few and far between.

Still, many of our parents did what Kathy W. does today: tell kids to go off and find something to do on their own. That’s what researchers who study boredom say more of us should do: refuse to step into the role of cruise ship director, offering myriad activity choices to satisfy a child’s every whim.

“Finding things to do when bored is the way kids learn to be on their own, to find out what interests them and what isn’t boring,” says Jonathan Plucker, associate professor of educational psychology at Indiana University. “That’s the problem we see with college students. The ones who have a hard time adjusting are those whose parents never transitioned into giving them more responsibility. In the end, we want kids who can entertain themselves, pick up a book or find something they want to volunteer for.” Plucker, who has conducted studies of boredom among schoolchildren, advises parents to use a “scaffolding” approach, to “slowly build up” a child’s own sense of resourcefulness, rather than suddenly

announce “you’re on your own” when a lull hits. One approach is to help kids write a list of “boredom buster” activities. Eventually, Plucker says, they’ll write the list on their own or not even need one.

THE “BORED” GAME

Elaine M. Gibson, a parent educator who coaches parents raising kids with learning disabilities and behavioral challenges, agrees with Plucker that “children need to practice being creative,” that creativity is not only a trait from birth but a skill each child can develop. She also urges parents to follow Kathy W.’s example and refuse to play “The Bored Game.”

“If a child is really looking for suggestions, he or she will take the first ideas and run off to play,” says Gibson. But if the child wants to play ‘The Bored Game’, the child will find a reason not to like ANY and EVERY suggestion.”

If the parent has offered a few suggestions in good faith and they are rejected, Gibson advises, the best thing to do is disengage with a comment such as, “I’m sure you’ll think of something. You are a clever child.” Some kids will even accuse a parent of not caring, but Gibson has observed that most will eventually tire of trying to manipulate a response from a parent who won’t play along.

On the other hand, some children who are simply told to “find something to do” will choose to play video games from dawn to dusk, rising from the couch only for bathroom breaks and snack attacks. House rules on “screen time” are essential, experts agree. Most paediatricians and child development gurus suggest a maximum of one to two hours a day of total screen time, including TV, computers, video games and hand-held electronics.

“Such pre-packaged, non-interactive

activity does not keep people intellectually active over the long term,” says Plucker. “Recent research strongly suggests that more involved intellectual activity may fight or delay various forms of dementia such as Alzheimer’s disease.”

OTHER WAYS TO WIN THE BORED GAME

Accept the fact that creative activity is messier than watching TV. Be proud of a kid who wants to test the chemical interactions of dirt, dead flies and chocolate pudding, but set some boundaries so that you don’t go crazy (“You can do your experiments in the backyard and the kitchen, but the living room is out of bounds because I just cleaned up in there.”)

Don’t beat yourself up if you’re a working parent and you need to have your child in an OSCAR programme for much of the holidays. Instead of feeling guilty, look for a programme that recognize the importance of choice and unstructured time. Ask the supervisor lots of questions: can kids choose their own activities? Do they have free time to goof around?

Remember that children, like adults, need time alone. When Kathy W.’s oldest son Jonathan complained of boredom, she allowed him to take refuge from his younger brothers in her study. He used the time to write a short story.

Understand and respect children’s need for structure. Kids who live highly regimented lives will likely struggle with the open-ended ness of a summer day. Rather than judge feelings of anxiousness about the absence of a schedule (“You’re bright enough, you should be able to think of something to do, especially with all those toys!”) encourage them to feel resourceful and join you in planning at least some of the day’s activities.

Katy Abel

MOVING ON: HELPING CHILDREN WITH THE TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

Children know transition from primary to Intermediate/secondary school is an enormous event in their lives, but don’t presume they understand what is happening.

It’s always the same at this time of year. All of our Year 6 kids start getting twitchy – they are either hyper or irritable, or just plain sulky. They just get too big for their boots, we are glad to see them go in a way, “sighed an after school programme leader as she watched a quarrel develop in a group at the corner of the room. Certainly the large group of eleven year olds seemed to be working hard to make their presence felt throughout the session.

Of course, Year 6/7 children have always known they would move up to Intermediate/secondary school, but as their final summer term in primary school begins, this transition may become both an exciting and a worrying reality. Consciously or unconsciously, they will be thinking about how they will cope in this relatively much larger and more independent world.

After school programmes symbioses a step into the world outside home and school, so it is not surprising that many eleven year olds act out their excitement and anxiety in the programme. Children will choose a variety of ways of showing they may be worried.

Some indeed do become “too big for their boots” using bravado as a way of hiding their fears about being small and not knowing. Others may become withdrawn

and uncooperative, almost as though they are trying to freeze themselves in a state of childhood. And of course, tensions will lead to quarrels and spats between the youngsters.

WHAT TRANSITIONS MEAN

From birth to weaning, to walking, to going to school, childhood is full of transitional stages. How a child reacts to a transition tells us a lot about how the child feels about their own development. Transitions reveal a lot about a child’s character.

Each transitional stage in growing up will remind a child of their early experiences and all transitions are prepared for with echoes of previous ones.

LEARNING ABOUT DIFFERENCES

Year 5 and 6 children are becoming acutely aware of differences. They are not only learning new facts, views and opinions; they are also discovering how social differences – such as family income – can affect them.

But, of course, one of the biggest differences Year 6 children are facing is the fact that they will have been seniors in their primary school. At the senior school they are going to be the most junior pupils and the older adolescents will seem much bigger and wiser. They may feel like a “nobody” but the exciting aspect is that they have a new set of people to emulate and hero-worship.

The other central difference to the life of children of this age is that their bodies are becoming different. They may be feeling more moody, clumsy and self-conscious.

All this, just at the time that they are going to have to negotiate making new friends and possibly, in a much wider social circle. Differences such as these all tap into the serious question a Year 6 child is beginning to ask themselves, “Where do I fit in?”

PARENTS ARE MOVING UP TOO

It is not uncommon for programme workers to notice a change at this stage, not only in children’s behaviour, but also in parents’ behaviour. Their child’s transition to secondary school is a huge step in a parent’s life. It symbolizes their child’s increasing need for a private life and independence.

Parents know that once a child goes to secondary school they are going to be exposed to a whole range of new experiences and opinions, not only those of new teachers and new classmates, but also of the state, and world politics.

Parents know that once a child goes to Intermediate /secondary school they are going to be exposed to a whole range of new experiences and opinions, not only those of new teachers and new classmates, but also of the state, and world politics. Parents may begin to feel panicky about their diminishing influence over their child. They may become overprotective and critical of the other adults caring for their offspring.

A Playworker’s Guide to Understanding Children’s Behaviour, Andrea Clifford-Poston, Page 208-213

This book is available to borrow from the OSCAR Network Library

From 1 November 2013 child restraint laws are changing to improve safety.



As a driver you must make
sure any child travelling in your
vehicle is correctly secured.

What's changing?

THE LAW SAYS YOU MUST:	UNTIL 31 OCTOBER 2013	FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2013
Correctly secure your child in an approved child restraint	Until their 5th birthday	Until their 7th birthday
THE LAW SAYS YOU MUST:	UNTIL 31 OCTOBER 2013	FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2013
Correctly secure your child in an approved child restraint if one is available in the vehicle (and if not, in any child restraint or safety belt that is available)	From their 5th birthday until their 8th birthday	From their 7th birthday until their 8th birthday

These changes will help reduce
preventable deaths and serious injuries
to children travelling in vehicles.

Your child restraint must be fitted
correctly. For expert advice contact a
certified Child Restraint Technician via
www.nzta.govt.nz/childrestraints



OSCAR NETWORK TRAINING AND EVENT CALENDAR TERM 4 2013

EVENT/TRAINING	BRIEF RUN-DOWN	DATE	TIME & PLACE	COST (GST INCLUDED)
First Aid Training	Suitable for all Staff	Saturday 19 October	8.30am – 4.30pm St Columbus Parish Centre Rear Training Room 452 Main South Rd, Hornby	Full: \$165 Refresher: \$95
Core Training	• Child Protection	Tuesday 22 October	10am – 12 noon Avebury House 9 Eveleyn Couzins Ave, Richmond	\$35 members \$90 non-members
Southland Training	Morning: • Bite size management training Afternoon: • Health & Safety	Saturday 2 November	9.00am – 12 noon 12.30pm – 2.30pm Kelvin Hotel The Board Room 16 Kelvin Street, Invercargill	\$35 each session \$60 for both Limited to 20 Lunch provided
Movie'nMunch	"Poor Kids" documentary looking at 3 children's lives	Tuesday 5 November	12pm – 1.30pm OSCAR Network, 25 Disraeli Street, Addington	Free Bring your own lunch
West Coast Training	Friday: • Bite size management training Saturday: • Programme Planning for Play	Friday 8 November Saturday 9 November	Fri Cluster: 5.30 – 6.00pm Fri Training: 6.00 – 8.00pm Sat Training 9.30am – 12pm Karoro Training Centre 180 Tainui Street, Greymouth	\$35 each session \$60 for both Tea provided Friday evening
Management Training	• Operations Manual	Tuesday 12 November	10am – 12.30pm OSCAR Network, 25 Disraeli Street, Addington	\$35 members \$90 non-members
Core Training	Child Development <i>Setting the framework for behaviour</i>	Tuesday 19 November	10am – 12.30pm OSCAR Network, 25 Disraeli Street, Addington	\$35 members \$90 non-members Limited to 15
Saturday Morning Training	Suitable for all Staff & Management • Art Activities Galore	Saturday 30 November	9.15am – 12.30pm Waltham School Hall, Cnr Vienna & Hastings St East, Waltham	\$35 members \$90 non-members
Combined Cluster	Suitable for all Staff & Management <i>Bring a craft item idea to share</i>	Wednesday 4 December	10am – 12 noon Avebury House 9 Eveleyn Couzins Ave, Richmond	Free

The OSCAR Network will close on Friday 20th December and reopen on Monday 13th January 2014

The Treasure Trove Trust will close on 20th December and reopen on Wednesday 22nd January 2014

Creative Junk will close 3pm Friday 20th December and reopen at 11am on Wednesday 22nd January 2014

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