

# “JUNIOR JURY”

- by John Cumming, M.D. -

On the program last Tuesday we talked about aggressive conduct on the part of children and spoke of the two meanings which this conduct can have in the normal child.

The first of these is the desire to grow up, to be more independent and to be more like his mature models the parents. The child in the growth process has to use new experiences as the material for what is essentially an experimentation in, or practicing of, what he considers to be the proper conduct for a slightly older age group than he is in at this time. If he is allowed to experiment he will rather quickly lose interest in those actions which are useless or detrimental and take into his personality what he finds useful in making him more like his parental model.

The second is a device which is used much less often. It results from the fact that our children feel upset and anxious when they are unsure of whether their conduct will bring approval or disapproval. Sometimes they will “see how far they can go” in order to test out what rules their parents or society has to govern that particular segment of their conduct. At that time they need clear and confident guidance even though the situation may seem slightly remote or ridiculous to the parent. Only by being a strong parent at this time can the anxiety of the child be lessened.

Thus we have two desirable sorts of parent action, one a slow giving in to the child, the other presenting a strong figure. This may seem contradictory and the parent may well wonder how he is to know which course to follow. Probably the best rule is, when in doubt be indulgent. If the child wants guidance he will demand it again and again and will probably get it in the end.

Most of us would like to be indulgent parents but are a little afraid of what might happen if we loosen our hold on our children. Just try it for a little. Nothing will happen and probably both you and your child will enjoy it and be a little better and happier people because of the experience.