

The good family daycare

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The good family daycare

- **The good family day-care deinstitutionalizes itself**
- **In the good family day-care the children are assisted more than they are raised**
- **In the good family day-care the children help the childminder.**
- **In the good family day-care children are supported in saying no, when they are unwilling**
- **In the good family day-care shouting normally doesn't take place**
- **The good family day-care doesn't teach children how to act, but supports them in learning**

It is alright to be angry

The childminder Else's husband, Ole, is sitting at the table eating his breakfast. At the table are also Amanda, who is busy sticking cloves into an orange, and Anton, who is eating rye bread and tangerine. Else is sitting between the children and talking with them.

Else: "And you know, Anton, you hit mummy yesterday."

Ole: "He hit his mummy?"

Else: "Yes, I think she had been away for too long. She had had a very long shift at work."

Ole: "So you think it was a punishment?"

Else: "I certainly do, and mummy was very sad."

Else looks at Anton and strokes his hair. "There, there, little mummy. There, there, little Anton."

Anton and Else smile at each other.

Nice girl

A mother once told us about an incident where an adult had said that her daughter was always so nice, and she had thought: “I hope they do not make her too nice!”

The more the child focuses on pleasing the adults, the less pleased the child is with herself.

Institutionalization - concepts

Institutionalization - level: number of hours spent in daycare, school and leisure time institution

Institutionalization of the mind: way of thinking, developing from Institutionalized life

institutionalized practice: practice, dominated by the logics of institutionalized life: control, sanctions, marks, external time- and space regulation, corporative organization

social practice: Learning by doing, lifeworld, regulation in and by the cooperative group

Deinstitutionalization of institutions: decreasing level of institutionalized activities while increasing level of social practice in institutions

Intensive institutionalization: prison, inmates in chains, punishment

Extensive institutionalization: daycare center with no planning of the childrens whereabouts, only of the staffmembers' activities, no fences around the center

The institutionalized childhood

In a research project about the quality of life of 6-year-olds, I coincidentally found some astonishing data: When asked "What is the worst? Nearly all children answered: The worst thing is, when I'm scolded by the adults. The common view was also that there was more scolding in children's institutions (daycare and schools) than in children's homes. And the children attended warm and friendly institutions of high quality.

The following might contribute to understand such surprising datas:

! The institutionalized childhood: The level of institutionalization in Denmark in daycare, school and leisure timesettings is appr. 25.000 hours during childhood, from age 1 to age 16. Some 40 years ago it was appr. 8.000 hours. For that reason, one can assume that the level of institutionalized scolding, other things being equal, must have risen.

! The increasement of the level of institutionalization in terms of time has been accompanied by an intensification of the mental institutionalization - in the minds of the teachers, i.e. children are regarded more as students, pupils - or "inmates" - and less as children.

In this view, they are in need of what the institutions can provide: schedules, borders, fixed limits, rigid frameworks, plans, professionalism, external order, appraisal, judging and marking by authorized and higher ranking persons. Parents are encouraged to treat children in a similar manner. The mental institutionalization provokes children's resistance.

! Children's resistance can not be understood as resistance and therefore legitimate.

On the contrary: Because the process of mental institutionalization is not normally recognized as such, the resistance is interpreted as symptoms of lack of social competence, inobedience caused by lack of parental guidance and discipline, lack of personal moral caused by a postmodern society without societal values .. and so on.

Every problem, bad reading-performance or bad behaviour, are being met with more institutionalization: more classes, more discipline, more formal teaching. Instead of dignity, respect and degrees of freedom and right to selfdetermination children are treated with moralizing and even condemnation and exclusion, which in its turn provokes more inobedience and more scolding.

Two scenarios:

Must-culture invades can-culture

Or

Can-culture drives back must-culture

School is mainly a MUST-culture.

The Day Care Center more of a CAN-culture

The Family Day Care even more so

Parents' life-experiences and their educational values

Most of today's adults had secret forts and hideouts as kids, smoked cigarettes and kissed on the sly, played with older and younger children without adult supervision and battled with the children from neighboring streets.

25-30 years from now, few will have had such experiences. Will this make pedagogues and parents demand more latitude for the children in institutions, or will the fact that they themselves never experienced such "wild" things instead make them expand the scope of adult supervision in institutions?

Hush – hush – don't mention it!

In 2002, I concluded a project about scolding as a means of sanctioning in the upbringing of children. The results were published in the book *Scolding*. The book focused on scolding in day-care centres and in schools – a subject which had not previously been touched; in fact, the word scolding was not even mentioned in the professional dictionaries.

Today, young teachers make inquiries about the amount of scolding in the day-care centre prior to accepting a job there, and parents pay close attention to the general tone of the kindergarten or school as they know that this is more important than the noblest objectives

Some results from the surveyproject

How much do teachers , pedagogues and parents scold?

- **Nearly all teachers are scolding, 2/3 are scolding often (Johnstone & Munn, 1992).**
- **Most teachers are spending 'less than 25%' of their time in classes on direct disciplin/control.**
- **It's hardly possible to find schools without scolding. In one school discipline-problems are brought for the schoolcouncil to decide (in the council the majority of members are students).**

Some results from the surveyproject

- We have found childcare-settings - very few - with no scolding.
- Several projects estimate that some 80-85% of parents scold their children often or very often (Kato e.a. 1998, Jeppesen & Nielsen, 2001)
- It is likely that parents from the 'third world' scold less than parents from western countries (Jeppesen & Nielsen 2001).
- Less than 5% of adults report that their father never scolded, less than 2% report that their mother never scolded (Sigsgaard, 2005).

Some results from the surveyproject

- About 75% of Danish school-children report that they have been scolded violently at school, while 17% have experienced or witnessed physical punishment from teachers.
- Some 96% out of 800 British teachers had been scolding during the past few weeks when they were asked.
- Some projects indicate that younger children are scolded more than older children.

Which children are being more scolded than others?

- 1. The 'reactant' (or fighting) children**
- 2. Whimpering and whining children**
- 3. Children, clinging to adults**

Those symptoms are typical for children suffering from bad parental care. So, one might say that such children with high probability will be met with a similar lack of sufficient care at school or daycare.

MEMORIES OF PARENTAL REARING PRACTICES AND PERSONALITY FEATURES.

S. Benjaminsen e.a. Acta psychiatrica 1984:69:426-434

The score on the psychoticism scale was positively related to the experience of neglecting fathers and mothers, taking their daughters severely to task

So, conclusively:

The degree of psychopathology in the woman's personality was associated with the extent to which she had perceived negative childrearing factors such as guilt engendering, shaming, punitive and over involved parents

Reduction of scolding – some advice

So, during the Roskilde-project, a model for reducing and civilizing the scolding was developed. In short:

- **always count to 10 before scolding**
- **always ask the child, what is going on, before scolding**
- **never scold a child with whom you are not well acquainted**
- **never scold a child in public**
- **always tell the child explicitly afterwards that you are not angry anymore**

Helping or teaching?

“I love to learn

But

I hate to be taught”

Carl Rogers

I Never Let School Interfere with My Education ...

Mark Twain

Are you helping or teaching?

I was at a leisure-time-home, connected with the neighbouring school, to assess it. A girl asked me: Who are you *helping*?

HELPING

The children are tidying up the toys.

Helen: Would you please put the bowl on the kitchen table?

Mark: Yes

Mark does it and continues tidying up.

When they have finished Helen says: Very good – thank you for helping!

Mark: Thak or hep!

Helen: Yes. Thank you for helping.

Mark: Bow, bow!!

Helen: What , Mark?

Mark – while pointing at the table: Bow!!

Helen: Did you put the bowl on the table?

Mark: Yes – see?

Mark stretches his hand towards Helen and points to the kitchen with the other hand.

Helen: Yes, I would really like to see it.

They enter the kitchen, hand in hand, and Mark shows Helen the bowl on the table.

Helen: Very nice, Mark!

Mark smiles: Yes!

Learning – language and concepts

Will and Dan, sitting at the table.

Will is fingering a stem from a bunch of grapes. He puts it upright upon his saucer and says: Look, X-mas tree!

Mary: Yes, is it a X-mas-tree?

Dan: Dance

Mary: Yes, we danced around the X-mas-tree in the garden. Where is the X-mas-tree now, Dan?

Dan: race

Mary: Yes, on the terrace.

Dan: Fall over

Mary: Yes, the X-mas-tree fell over in the garden.

Dan: Hep ge up.

Mary: Yes, you helped getting it up again.

In order to compare two types of learning I have developed this description of “ideal- types”:

Integrated learning	Traditional school-teaching
L. through social practice- learning <i>from</i> life	L. isolated from social practice - learning <i>about</i> life
L. with the teacher	L. from the teacher
L. as mutual, auto-regulated processes. The teacher is helping acting	Hierarchical learning with outer control

Integrated learning	Traditional school-teaching
Starting point in the will, the desire and the curiosity of the child	Starting point in curriculum and "needs" of the children
L. Is ecological (about the plants in their environment)	L. Is segregational (about plants removed from environment)
L. Is practical – about real plants	L. Is about representations of plants
L. Is relational – me and the plant	L. Is split up by subjects or activities
Learning while playing and working	Learning while sitting and being silent
Learning through talking and asking – dialogical learning	L. Through passive listening to teachers talk
L. Is sensuous and juicy	L. Is senseless and arid
The learning child is experimenting, practically and theoretically	The learning child is following instructions and being controlled

The attitudes of grown-ups towards the eating habits of children

Many people think that parents ought to be more consistent towards their children and draw the line more often, also with regard to meals. A questionnaire indicated the following typical attitudes:

- Children should at least try the food**
- Children must come at once when dinner is served**
- There must be no playing during the meal**
- Children should not play with their food**
- Healthy food must be eaten prior to sweet food.**

One for each of you!!

In a video sequence – watched by a group of employees at a day-care centre – two two-year-olds each have a small pile of raisins in front of them. They eat from one pile together for a long time.

The teachers watching the film could hardly stand it. They are itching to say: "That's *your* raisins, the other pile is *hers*."

"He got more than I got!" "It isn't fair! We must have the same!" Children are strange in that way, the grown ups say. They have such strict a sense of justice!

We want to teach children to be social beings and to share, one for me and one for you. But are in fact the two-year-olds not the social ones? They are eating together. Are we the ones splitting them up?

Demanding that they eat separately. Eating from the same plate was done by the common people 200 years ago. Now, we each have our own "plate". "You have to carry out your own plate and put it in the dishwasher!" What about the other people's plates? Well, that's their own business.

Everyone must clean up after himself, the Minister for the Environment says (as we are apparently unable to clean up after *ourselves*).

The two two-year-olds have not yet become "child units" as I think is the municipal term. They are a "we", not entering into "contracts" to regulate their mutual relationship, but simply eating away from the same pile. But they must be individuated.

Is it an exaggeration to say that the individuation comes from the teachers who cannot bear to watch the two-year-olds eat from the same pile?

Then imagine if the film showed two children eating each their own pile of raisins. Would anyone say: "But why don't they just eat one pile at a time?"

Service without notice

Sebastian (11 months) is placed in his chair with a bib around his neck. He looks around a bit confused, doesn't understand. He cries, and cries more. *Then* the food comes. But he refuses to open his mouth and shakes his head. Dad is annoyed. He insists. Sebastian cries even more.

Imagine you were ill and at the hospital. One day, you are reading in a magazine. Suddenly, the door opens, and a hospital orderly wheels you away, a nurse dresses you in a sort of apron and white gloves, and you are placed on a stretcher. You have not received any prior information, and no one tells you what is about to happen.

How would you react? Would you not be surprised, scared, and maybe angry?

Sebastian was 11 months old, sitting on a blanket playing with his fingers, completely engrossed. Suddenly, someone puts a bib around his neck. He cried a little. Then, he was lifted up and carried to the table and placed in his chair. He cried a bit more, startled and angry. After a while, the food was served, but he was still sniffing and would not eat, despite his father's attempt to persuade him.

Dad does not quite understand. Sebastian is usually very fond of eating. When dinner is on the table, he smells it immediately and raises his arms, insisting that they lift him up. They cannot do it fast enough, dad has to come, he wants his bib and to be lifted up into the chair! His mouth is watering, and when the first spoonful finally enters his mouth, the bliss is sublime.

And then today. Snivelling and wailing and shaking of his head. Dad is annoyed. Sebastian cries. Dad scolds him a bit. They are on their way to day-care. Sebastian cries even more.

The morning turned out bad, and this merely because the food was not put on the table before the bib was placed around Sebastian's neck and he was lifted into his chair. Instead of someone helping him to still his hunger, he experienced that he was interrupted in what he was doing, he was whisked away without warning and forced to eat. This, he did not want.

To dad, however, this is just breakfast as usual, and in his opinion, Sebastian is being unreasonable.

But – just like the patients in a hospital – Sebastian simply wants to know what is going to happen so that he can prepare himself for it, maybe look forward to it, maybe get ready for it.

Some advice on meals

Which lesson should be learned from all this?

- That we should remember what it was like when we ourselves were children
- That it is important to accompany the meal with peace and beauty, colours, candles, tablecloth
- That we should not assist the children too much – they can do much more themselves than we might think
- That healthiness is of course about vitamins and vegetables, but it is not least about pleasure, happiness, and human care

Some advice on meals

- That children may sometimes seem one-sided in their eating habits, but over time, they eat what their bodies need – this capacity for self-regulation does, however, not apply when it comes to sugar!
- That eating should not to be associated with force and pressure as this might affect the child's capability to sense for itself what it needs
- That small children smack their lips and spill their food, but do not despair – eventually, they will stop, all by themselves
- That food should be put on the table before the bib is tied around the neck of the child
- That older children and adolescents rarely find family meals attractive if they associate these meals with a great deal of “must” do this and that

“Let the children make mistakes and happily strive to mend their ways.

Children will laugh, run about and have fun. You, who are bringing up children: If life is like a graveyard to you, let life be a meadow for the children ... Here must reign an atmosphere of generous indulgence towards pranks, playfulness, spite, trickery, falsehood – towards naive sin. Here is not the place for rigid duty, stony seriousness, brute force, and ruthless persuasion.”

Janusz Korczak