

The Children's Clinic for the
Observation and Treatment of Nervous and Delicate Children

Hon. Medical Director: Dr Margaret Lowenfeld

What it is and what it does?

A Child's Fears:

There was Frances, aged three and a half, a terror stricken child. Could not be left alone in a room, because of frantic fear. Parents had to sit with her for hours at night before she could sleep. Frightened of shadows on the wall and startled by any sound. She attended the Clinic for six weeks. Her mother writes: "She is perfectly fearless now. She sleeps alone without needing anyone at hand."

An Unmanageable Boy:

Take the case of Alec, an attractive boy from a superior middle-class home. He was disobedient, defiant, and utterly unmanageable for no obvious reason. His parents were at a loss. Play at the Clinic revealed a passion for burying and mutilating certain toys which ultimately became identified with two relatives with whom he was thought to be on the best of terms. Unknown to the parents, the two had been subjecting the lad to brutal and systematic bullying, accompanied by threats to prevent him from informing anyone. Alec became his polite, well-behaved, happy self, the anxiety of his parents was removed, and it may be that the country was relieved of a potential delinquent.

The Screaming Girl:

Susie made life unbearable for her parents, teachers, and the neighbours by outbursts of screaming. She had been known to scream for three hours on end. The Clinic discovered that she had been adored by inexperienced parents and given her own way in everything until the arrival of a baby brother to whom all the love and worship was transferred. Susie, finding it impossible to secure the same attention and affection, experimented in revenge and found it worked. In terror of ejection from their home, the parents gave her all she wanted if she screamed persistently enough. After treatment at the Clinic, Susie became a reasonable being, is now prefect at her school, and a reliable, helpful child. Her parents and teachers are immensely relieved, and the neighbours enjoy peace.

How is this done?

The conditions of modern life produce an increasing volume of neurosis, and city conditions press hardest of all upon children. Lack of the normal outlets for the sense of adventure, and the narrowing of opportunities for play tend directly towards delinquency and maladjustment in children.

Our Aim:

The Clinic exists to restore nervous, delicate, and delinquent children to mental harmony and physical health. Its methods represent a new approach to the psychopathology of childhood and their success confirms the conviction that here is a new, hopeful, and practical mode of attacking at its root the problem of the criminal, vagrant, and unemployable population.

Children of all classes, from two to fifteen years of age, who have baffled parents, teachers, and doctors, are referred to the Clinic by the L.C.C., welfare societies, and medical men. Their most common difficulties are unmanageableness, terrors, and the varying forms of neurosis which the layman labels "nerves".

The Play Method:

The happy results so far achieved and the enthusiastic co-operation of children, parents, and teachers which helps to bring them about are largely due to the Clinic's attitude to the child, and to the fact that play is the keynote of the Clinic's work. It is while enjoying new and fascinating forms of play in a cheerful room with other children that the child is psychologically observed and his difficulties come to light; and it is by re-educative play, in which music, rhythm, and free dancing have their part, that the child is helped to regain his natural harmony with life.

Individual medical examinations are made, and metabolic factors, as well as diet and hygiene, are taken into account, and a careful review made in each case of the family and environmental conditions. The Clinic is staffed by expert physicians and psychologists, reinforced by a band of psychologically-trained helpers.

Present Situation:

Of the children referred to the Clinic in the past eighteen months, already one-third have been discharged cured. Others show various degrees of improvement—no complete failure has yet been recorded, although in some cases parents have found themselves unable to co-operate.

Is it surprising that the Clinic—now quartered in cramped, rented rooms is besieged with application far beyond the scope of its present equipment and that a waiting list has had to be established?

The need?

The Clinic at present receives no grant and is dependent for its support upon the liberality of those who are interested in its work. Patients' fees vary from 6d. to 58. a visit and can be relied upon to cover current expenses for renewals of apparatus, etc. For all other funds, the Clinic must look to the contributions of the public.

CLINIC SESSIONS

MONDAYS ... 2-5.30.

TUESDAYS.... 3—6.

THURSDAYS.... 3—6.

Each child attends for the whole session. Application for treatment must be by letter to the Secretary.

Nearest Tube Station: Holland Park.