



THE CONCEPT OF THE NORMAL CHILD AND ITS MANY VARIATIONS

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The Concept of the Normal Child and its Many Variations

Children and Adults

- The concept of normality both for children and adults is somewhat elusive
- Freud considered the line between normality and pathology to be very indistinct
- For adults, widely accepted criteria concerns the ability to work, a good sexual adjustment and the capacity to enjoy leisure
- Adult criteria does not fit children

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Children and Adults

- The adult is a “finished” product
- The child is in a constant process of very active development
- As a result normality is different at different ages and much more complex to assess

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External Stimulation

The issue of what kinds of external stimulation it takes for the brain to develop normally is important here. They increase:

- a) The degree of vascularization of certain areas of the brain
- b) Increase in dendritization
- c) Increased mielinization

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Normalcy vs. Pathology

- With kids it may be more difficult to assess “normalcy” than pathology
- Children, particularly very young children are part of a very complex system
- Let us consider as an example a case of developmental retardation in a 9 months old

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Infantile Neurosis

- Normality has a wide frame of reference and variations
- The question of assessing developmental conflicts
- Best example of the above is the Infantile Neurosis

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Developmental Interferences

- The differences between the manifestations of a developmental conflict and other forms of psychopathology
- The issue of “developmental interferences”
- Factors that influence the impact of developmental interferences

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Symptoms from Developmental Interferences and Neurosis

- Differences between symptoms due to developmental interferences and those of neurosis
- Other factors complicating the assessment
- Some special situations, subcultures etc (being raised in a ghetto for example)

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Various Points of View

- The various points of view defining normalcy
- The role of physical handicaps
- The role of experience
- Anna Freud's view

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