

From the sum of the total experience, along with the physical and mental reactions to such experiences, the player begins to develop certain attitudes. These attitudes then manifest themselves in patterns of behavior, behavior that could prove to be acceptable or unacceptable.

Thus, it is extremely important that the experiences arising out of Little League activity be healthy and stimulating. Furthermore, it is equally important that volunteer personnel recognize this fact and strive to help the youngster meet the challenges. It is within the province of responsibility of the volunteer to help the player to develop desirable attitudes.

- I. Is an attempt made to point out the desirability of:
  - a. Fair play.
  - b. Playing without finding fault or making excuses about mistakes.
  - c. Listening to directions.
  - d. Winning without bragging.
  - e. Recognizing certain standards of achievement.
  - f. Subscribing to the spirit of give and take.
  
- II. Have you observed any progress on the part of the youngsters in your league concerning the following:
  - a. They participate in practice and drills as you have planned them.
  - b. They accept the fact that there are some youngsters who have more or less skills than they do.
  - c. They have respect for other people's property.
  - d. They take care of equipment properly.
  
- III. In working with the players, do you sense that:
  - a. They are beginning to develop self-confidence.
  - b. They are showing signs of courage.
  - c. They are beginning to develop leadership qualities.
  - d. They are beginning to set standards for themselves.
  
- IV. In your observations, can you say that you have noticed improvement in the following areas:
  - a. Learning to accept reversals without undue emotional upset.
  - b. Accepting and playing by the rules of the game.
  - c. Learning to develop self-control over personal feelings.
  - d. Widening their circle of friends.
  
- V. Do you feel that the youngsters under your supervision recognize that:
  - a. Working to improve skills leads to self-satisfaction and achievement.
  - b. Being a good follower in certain situations is as important as being a good leader.
  - c. Self-sacrifice for the good of the team is necessary.
  - d. There are occasions when one must accept certain responsibilities for others.

## EMOTIONAL SECURITY AND ATTITUDES IN CHILDREN



[www.littleleague.org](http://www.littleleague.org)

by  
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An understanding of children is the most important component of the Little League program. Adults working with youth should be constantly aware of emotional security and attitudes of children under their direction. Dr. LaPorta, of Liverpool, New York, is widely recognized as an authority in this field and was a recipient of the Athletic Director of the Year Award sponsored by the National Council of Secondary School Athletic Directors. He has been active in Little League for more than 40 years and served as the Chairman of the Board of Little League Baseball.

Little League Baseball does not limit participation in its activities on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, national origin, gender, sexual preference or religious preference.

## **Emotional Security**

In order to grow, children must have food, fresh air, light and exercise. This food, fresh air, light and exercise provide children with nourishment and activity required to satisfy the needs of physical growth and development. Along with this physical development, children must also develop emotionally. As children reach maturity, they will also reach certain levels of emotional maturity. It is hoped that the emotional maturity attained will be at a desirable level so that the individuals may function normally within their own sphere of relationships, whether it be with their peers, their immediate family or other adults.

The nutrients or ingredients necessary for emotional growth are not the same as they are for physical growth. However, they are very bit as important as food and drink are to physical growth and development. These nutrients satisfy the needs for emotional security just as food and drink satisfy a physical hunger pain. If children are to attain a level of emotional maturity, they must first have certain securities.

For example, children need to know that they are loved. It is possible that children who are deprived of love will suffer in a number of ways. One of these ways would be the inability of children to relate to other children and adults. Usually, children who feel they are not loved will be withdrawn, will find it difficult to make friends and, many times, will react to social situations in a manner that is unacceptable as normal behavior. Very often unloved children will react in a way that is harmful to themselves and also to the community in which they live. Some quarters contend that juvenile delinquency, in part, is a result of the deprivation of love.

In addition to being loved, there are other ways that children are able to satisfy the need for emotional security. Children have to feel that they are accepted, whether it is acceptance as part of a family, a school group, church group, gang or club. The need for acceptance is not limited to children, of course. Young teenagers want to be accepted in sororities, fraternities, social cliques or athletic teams. Even adults sometimes feel the need for acceptance in local associations, clubs, school groups and neighborhood circles.

In its healthiest form, acceptance is based on what the child actually is and not what the child has done or what family history reflects. Many times, however, acceptance is not based on the human qualities of the child and is, in effect, denied for a variety of reasons. Some of these being: color, physical handicaps, speech handicaps, or even a mischievous childhood prank that just can't seem to be forgiven.

Children must be made to feel that they are liked and accepted for what they are. This kind of acceptance fosters an independence and confidence, which the child needs in order to grow emotionally. This does not mean that children have Carte Blanche to do anything that they desire without disapproval of their acts. Much to the contrary, unacceptable behavior should be dealt with firmly and with decisive action. For example, a manager in Little League could encounter a problem with a youngster, which, if not handled firmly, might cause further trouble, i.e., talking back to an umpire or rough play. The player could be told that this is not the behavior expected of a Little Leaguer and disapproval could be voiced quite strongly. However, it could be followed with, "remember I like you, but I sure didn't like what you did out on that field."

When working with children it is important to remember that at this particular age they are sensitive to the subtle pressures of acceptance and rejection.

In choosing activities in which they will take part, children make their choices for a variety of reasons. Some will choose an activity where they can be with someone they like, others will choose an activity that they enjoy, but, for the most part, children will choose the game or activity in which they have the greatest success. Children like to do the things that they can do best. The real fast runner wants to run races, the good basketball player wants to shoot baskets, and the heavy hitter wants to play baseball. For the most part, children enjoy most games they play, but they enjoy them that much more when they have a certain degree of success in that game.

Success feelings are necessary for the emotional growth and emotional security in children. These feelings help immeasurably in establishing and developing confidence, independence, poise and positive attitudes in youngsters. Frequently when faced with something new, youngsters will balk somewhat. However, in facing the challenge they suddenly find that they achieve some degree of success. At this point, the balkiness changes to aggressiveness and the newness is met with vigor and confidence.

Furthermore, children seem to respond readily to solicitous encouragement and to recognition of small successes they achieve. Success experiences for children are important to emotional security and to eventual emotional maturity.

Love, acceptance and success are strong emotional needs. They are necessary for establishing emotional security in the child and, in turn, emotional security, if necessary, in the attainment of emotional maturity. Children will satisfy these emotional needs in one way or another. Their first choice, of course, is to do so in a socially acceptable manner. However, if they have no opportunity to do so, they will use other methods, usually in a socially unacceptable manner and from this derive satisfaction from the notoriety of unacceptable behavior.

Little League Baseball seems to be a well-established, acceptable way to provide degrees of satisfaction for the emotional needs of the child. Little League is an entirely new experience and, with its unique appeal to youngsters, plays a vital role in helping to fulfill these emotional needs. This is especially true if these needs are not met at home, or if there is a loss of a father or mother or if other complications deprive the child of an opportunity to satisfy these needs. In addition, Little League offers adult companionship which, for a variety of reasons, may be lacking at this age.

In an organization such as Little League Baseball, volunteer leaders will run into many problems with youngsters. They will be working with youngsters deprived of love and affection; they will work with highly over-protected children and come in contact with the out and out rejected child. Leaders must do their utmost to help these children, and, if they are unable to help them, the least that can be done is to attempt to understand them.

## **Attitudes**

In Little League Baseball there are many new and varied experiences facing the youngsters participating in the program. The children, probably for the first time, find themselves in situations that they alone must cope with. They alone must meet the challenge of each new experience.