

Getting Along



No Trust in M.D.'s

Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint

trician or whomever has

provided medical care to

your nephew. He or she

should know professional

psychotherapists in your

are who are competent

and can be fair and res-

pectful to people who are

[If you have any ques-

tions for the doctors, send

them to "Getting Along,"

care of this newspaper.

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Syndicate

CHARLES OSGOOD HIGHLIGHTS NEWS

EVENTS IN HIS OWN UNIQUE STYLE.

MON-FRI 9:30 AM

WTOB 1380

different.

But she may be hiding

behind this fear and hesi-

tation to avoid dealing

with what she feels it

means to have a child with

a problem. For her own

good and the good of the

child, she needs to get

him some professional

I suggest that your sis-

ter discuss the problems

you have described and

related problems with her

family physician, pedia-

[James P. Comer and Alvin F. Poussaint are psychiatrists and the authors of the book "Black Child Care." Dr. Comer is professor of child psychiatry and assoclate dean for student affairs at Yale University School of Medicine. Dr. Poussaint is associate professor of psychiatry and associate dean for student affairs at Harvard Medical School.

Dear Dr. Comer: My 10-year-old nephew is disturbed and needs help. He loses control at the drop of a hat, has no friends and recently set fire to a classmate's books. His parents are divorced and he is an only child living with his mother.

knows that he needs help. But she feels that a white doctor can't understand a black child. There are no black doctors in our area. What can be done?

. G.R.

Dear G.R.: It sounds like your nephew is in need of a psychological evaluation by a qualified person as soon as possiible. Your sister's feelings about white therapists are held by a number of black people.

I know therapistsmedical doctors, psychologists, social workers. nurses and others—who have been successful with people from all groups. There are some who can't work with people who are different because of their biases.

The most important ele-

They were there during the time of "the midnight sun," when the sun stays

out all day. "We didn't see any

darkness," said Nesby. "People were

"It's the cleanest place in the world,"

said Mrs. Hartley. "Guys were always

going around picking up little pieces of

The thing that most stuck out in the

minds of the three, all former or current

educators, was a clipping Mrs. Lloyd

The story discussed union negotiations

between the local schools and the

teacher's union. The schools proposed an

increase from \$24,595 for a beginning

teacher to \$32,855. The union was

brought back to show to her friends.

Alaska

working all night long."

paper. The city was spotless."

said Lloyd.

ment in all doctor-patient relationships is trust. It's even more important in the treatment of psychological problems.

Trust is more difficult to come by when preconceived negative attitudes are held by patients or therapists about people who are different by virtue of race, religion, six or class.

The burden of maturity and competence- the responsibility of being fair and respectufi-is on the professional. Such attitudes and ways will make it possible for them to help patients who are different.

Understanding the culture and style of a patient is helpful but not curical. Certain behaviors- def-My sister, his mother, erence to elders, comfortable psysical distance when talking or eye contact in communications, the degree and style of aggression- are culture based. There are culture influenced attitudes. values and ways.

When a therapist is knowledgeable about these differences and can respond to them appropriately, it helps a patient feel understood, reasonably comfortable and can enhance trust.

But again, in the vast majority of cases, sensitivity to differences, fairness, and respect of the individual can overcome the lack of knowledge about specific cultural differences.

Therapists can be helpful to people who are different because their major job is not to tell a

from page 8

said Mrs. Lloyd.

"She was scared she would

die without seeing the 50th state"

supervisor.

if you don't say hello."

holding out for more than \$40,000 to

"If I were younger, I'd go to Alaska,"

While in the 50th state, the travelers

took a side trip to visit two Winston-

Salem natives, Robert and Annette

Wells, both graduates of Winston-Salem

State. "They live in Eagle River and

they've bought land up in the mountains

and are working on their third house."

She's a teacher and he's a prison

of racial prejudice or intolerance. "It's

almost utopian," said Lloyd. "Everybody

says 'Hello, how are you' and you almost

don't know how to act. You look like a fool

The three said they found the state free

patient or client what to do but to help them think through their own life situation and act to improve it. Thus it's not necessary to know every detail or cultural differ-

While race, religion, sex and class make us more or less different by groups, we all have problems and opportunities that are the same or similar because we are human beings.

We all have feelings, energies, life tasks and experiences that give us joy, hope, sorrow and pain. Our ways of handling these situations, and the severity or frequency of them, can permit us to continue to function well or result in emotional or psychological problems.

When we develop problems, we sometimes need help. In the case of your family and your nephew, I suspect that the therapist will have to deal with problems related to divorce and separation from the father more than racial or cultural differ-

Your sister may have two or three concerns that need to be recognized. She, like many other people, may feel that a psychological problem and a need for help is a sign of weakness. Her lack of contact and knowledge about therapists in the area and their racial attitudes can be causing her to have hesitation and

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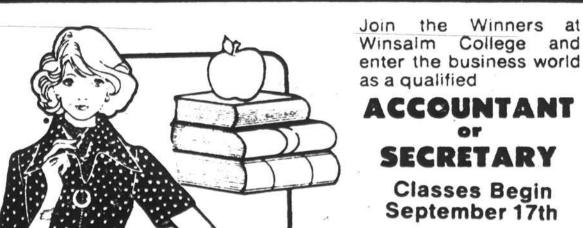
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