

## THE DOMINO THEORY

Said Joe to Jim: "I don't want to play with you. I don't like you." Said Jim to John: "I don't want to play with you. I don't like you." Said John to ..... "here did it all start? Who knows? Unfriendliness spreads whatever its origin until a pall of unhappiness spreatens to envelope all. Children have the least build-up for backlog of disgruntlement. Generally, everyone they come into contact with has nothing to gain by being unpleasant. Quite the contrary, adults enjoy being kind to children. So if a child can be jollied, jogged, or lifted out of his set or condition of unhappiness, he is usually willing to forget the whole thing. The important thing is to block the dominoes and prevent any more hurts.

Little children love fun and humor as long as they are sure what they are experiencing is fun and humor. It could be to an adult funny/to see a child disturbed because he was called a "poo bah," for the adult recognizes the term as innocuous. The child isn't too sure and probably the child who said "poo bah" isn't either. A long discussion isn't called for. If possible to isolate the two in contention the matter can be quickly settled. If this is not possible, asking the injured child if he is a poo bah will distract his attention from hurt self to contemplation of the characteristics of poo bah. The child may not know what a poo bah is but she will certainly know she isn't one. For one thing neither parents nor teachers ever said she was. When it isn't possible to confront and clearup the matter instantly, this method is a band-aid for the feelings; later, when the time is better, the teacher can resolve the difficulty.

Hurt feelings should not be brushed off. Because an adult does not see a matter as important does not mean that the child

~~desan't~~, feels the same way.

Confrontations are not always so easily resolved. When reaction to epithet is not hurt feelings but a cross, <sup>right</sup> ~~te-the-right~~ ~~At~~ the first thing to deal with is the ~~use~~ use of physical means to resolve arguments. Jamie was inflamed with resentment at having the wheelbarrow taken away from him and punched Tony in the back. The teacher quickly removed Jamie, Tony, and wheelbarrow from the center of activity and first reiterated the rule that hitting was never right, never allowed, no matter ~~why~~. Next to consider was rule that one child might not take anything away from another. Next was reason for the rule. That matter settled, the wheelbarrow was returned to Jamie and both children were asked what they would do next time. Tony considered. "I guess I'll ask him next time if I can have a turn." And Jamie? Jamie considered. If Tony did it again, he couldn't hit him. But he would be angry again. Jamie's face cleared. "If he ever does it again," he said, "I'll put him in my batmobile and never bring him back!" Tony was delighted with the solution and, tears and recriminations forgotten, they were playing happily together.

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My thought behind these informal essays (exerpts, ??) is not didactic but sharing of the fun I have had all these years learning with children. I find children endlessly interesting...they question all things..especially those adults have held "certain" for years. Their growth in all ways...mentally, socially, creatively....is breathtakingly rapid. Each child is very different and must be considered in his terms and to a certain extent on his terms. It is my hope that parents will see some of their own problems, realize they are not unique, & perhaps find both solace and solution.