

### C. Case Histories:

The following three examples are from the experiences of a day school for schizophrenic children:

#### Leonard:

Leonard is compulsively preoccupied with lights, switches, strings and electric fans. When these stimuli are near he manifests intense hyperactivity, disorganized behavior patterns and a borderline state of panic. For several months he refused to participate in any activity for more than a few minutes at a time. Whole days were punctuated with uncontrollable outbursts of aggression and subsequent anxiety.

When he was not disabled by his obsessions, Leonard revealed a highly intelligent personality and a good learning potential. Since he was quite verbal and keenly aware of his environment, it was felt that he was ready to learn to read. Like most schizophrenic children, he was tremendously threatened by any new learning situation.

Instead of waiting for his conflict to be worked through, it was decided to utilize Leonard's pathology in the learning situation. Leonard started learning words through picture associations -- but only words that had special meaning for him:-- light, string, fan, parachute, etc. After these words became part of his working vocabulary, he accepted the idea of learning enough to be able to make a sentence.

Slowly neutral words such as "cup", "ball", "house", "tree", etc., were introduced. Former anxiety was mobilized for a short time every morning into excitement over mastering a new skill. Compulsivity was directed into printing a list of words every day.

Leonard has a definite reading period every morning which gives new structure to his day and to which he reacts with great enthusiasm and interest.

#### Karen:

For a long time Karen resisted all efforts at academic work. She wanted to be a baby, she said, and preferred to spend much of her day at school with the very young children.

Karen loved to eat and she went down to the kitchen

every morning to find out "What's for lunch?". This interest in food was exploited and Karen was soon eager to help make and print the day's menu. Playing around with the words in menus and recipes was the beginning of reading readiness. Within a year she was reading on the 4th grade level.

Karen's interest in scissors, paste and crayons and her love of color were used to get her interested in arithmetic. One day, while her teacher and another pupil were making multiplication flash cards, Karen asked if she could make some with her scissors, crayons and colored paper. Interest in multiplication began. Flash cards, in addition, subtraction and multiplication followed.

#### Shelly:

Shelly clings to his teacher for protection and support whenever he is faced with an unfamiliar or threatening situation. He is extremely fearful of any new academic experience, convinced that it will be too difficult for him. Trial and error learning is rejected by Shelly because he cannot accept the frightening possibility of failure.

Shelly's daily ritual of academic work and homework must have sufficient sameness in it to make him comfortable. He must always sit in the same chair, to the left of his teacher, and with his ever-present shoelace that he jiggles in his hand. His previous day's homework must always be checked before his lessons can start. "I don't enjoy this," "I'm bothered," and other distress signals and reactions follow the introduction of anything new. Slowly, cautiously, gradually, with proper dosage and timing, new materials and routines become part of the familiar, lose their threat and are accepted.