

**GOOD BOOKS - MORE THAN A REVIEW**

**Preschoolers: Questions & Answers**

**Psychoanalytic Consultations with Parents, Teachers and Caregivers**  
 Editor: Erna Furman Publisher - International University Press Inc.

**P**reschoolers: Questions and Answers is a collection of papers written by an exceptionally highly qualified group of experts. Erna Furman, Advisor to Barbara Burrows Parenting Magazine, is the editor.

Dr. Art Farley, Director of the Child Development Center - Houston, Texas says,

"No collection of authors knows more about the toddler's life and his impact on primary caregivers, parent substitutes, and preschool teachers. . . . Erna Furman's Chapter 13 on the sexual abuse of young children is a masterpiece of cumulative insights and practicality [and] should be required reading for preschool educators, policy makers, and mental health professionals. Mrs. Furman's skills as an editor, writer, and clinician permeate every measure of this work. . . ."

The book focuses on helping young children reach their fullest potential through strong, healthy psychological growth. These are the issues that all toddlers and young children face - learning to like oneself and one's body, using the toilet; managing anger without falling apart in a temper tantrum; developing the wish for self-care and helping youngsters deal with stress. These are common enough topics in writings for parents of toddlers - but this book offers a difference rarely found in today's parent literature. These topics are explored from a psychodynamic perspective - always trying to understand what is behind the child's behaviour or developmental struggle, in terms of feelings and worries.

The example of Cal's return of hyperactive behaviour in his pre-school classroom illustrates what I mean by "psycho-dynamic approach" (P. 53). Cal was over 3 1/2 years when he became quite hyper in school one day (as he had been much earlier that year). When he aggressively attacked an older boy, the teacher removed him and asked what might be upsetting him so that morning. Cal replied "Well, he's all broken up now." "What's that all about?" the teacher replied, but got no answer. In a short while, Cal knocked down all the blocks another child was building. The teacher removed him firmly and Cal said, "Pow, I knocked it all down." He continued, "That's what they did to the old house. Pow, and it

was all gone." Finally the teacher was able to get the story out of Cal that while stopped at red light on his way to school, he had seen a wrecking crew demolish a house. The house had been standing perfectly fine the day before. The teacher now realized what had upset Cal and spoke about it. She suggested that it was scary to see a house disappear just overnight. Cal did not verbally agree, but he did settle down.

The teacher asked Cal whether he would be willing to tell the other children about what he had seen, which although scary, was also interesting. He agreed. She added to Cal's story to help the others understand Cal's earlier behaviour, which had frightened and puzzled some of them. The teacher knew some of the other children would have seen the same sight, and realized they could have also been upset, although more quietly than Cal. She talked about how unusual and hard it was to see something destroyed so suddenly, but explained that this would not happen to their homes. She stressed the skill of the crane operators and explained that the old building was being taken down so something new could be built.

Cal's behaviour improved as soon as his anxiety was relieved through the discussion. The children took great interest and brought frequent reports over the next months of the new building as it progressed.

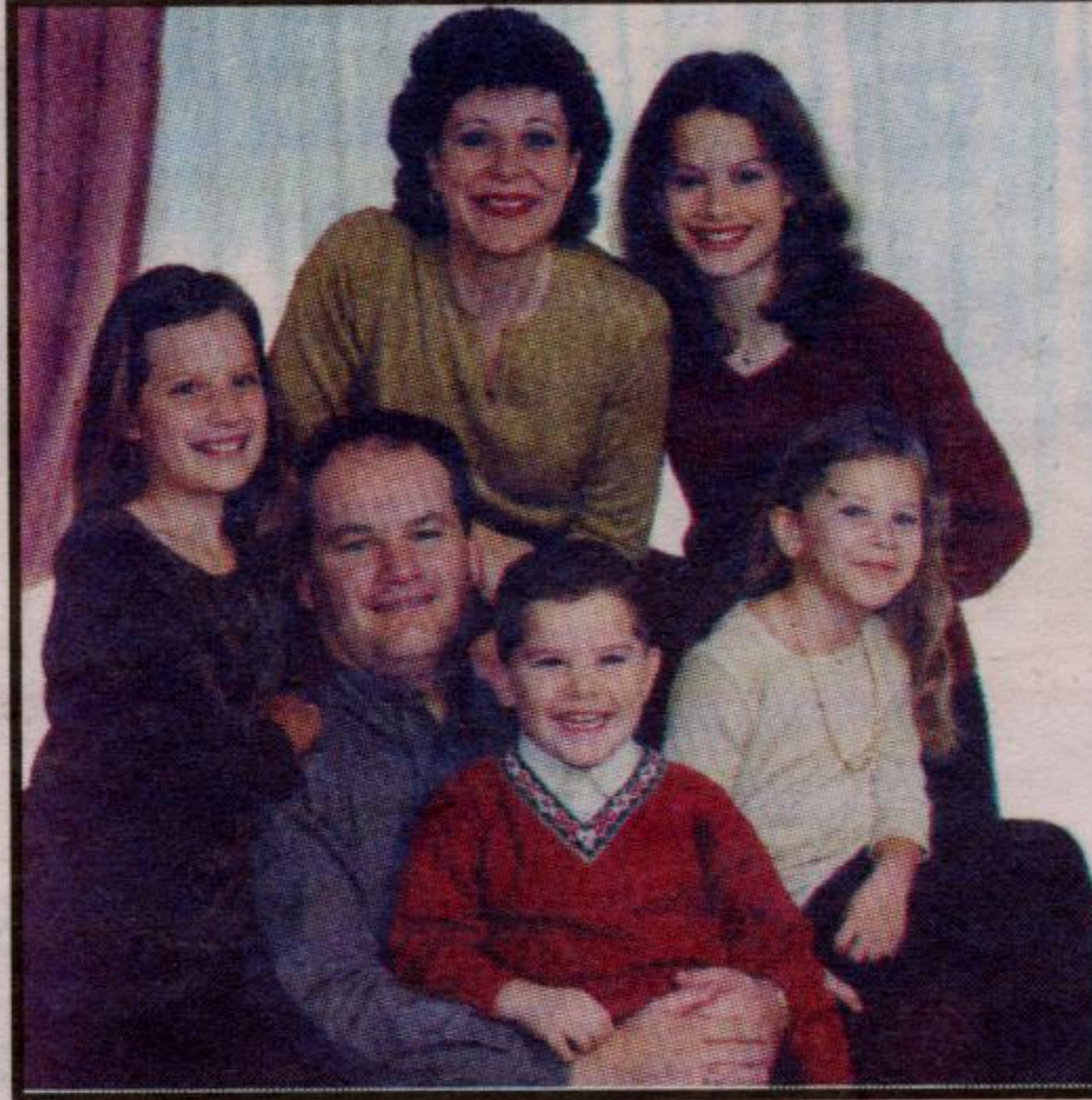
The example points out how important it is to children to identify and help them understand the things that trouble them. The anxious behaviour eases once the anxiety is addressed. This is "psychodynamic" - trying to understand the dynamic psychological processes going on within a child's mental life at all times - even while sleeping in the form of dreams. In this case, Cal's unspoken worries led to his hyperactive and aggressive behaviour that morning.

The book describes real children in real situations - some ordinary, some difficult. It offers new insights and wisdom gleaned over the past 50 years through the clinical and classroom work done with children and their parents at Hanna Perkins Center, Cleveland.

This clearly written, easy to understand book can help parents, caregivers and teachers dealing with young children in everyday ways.



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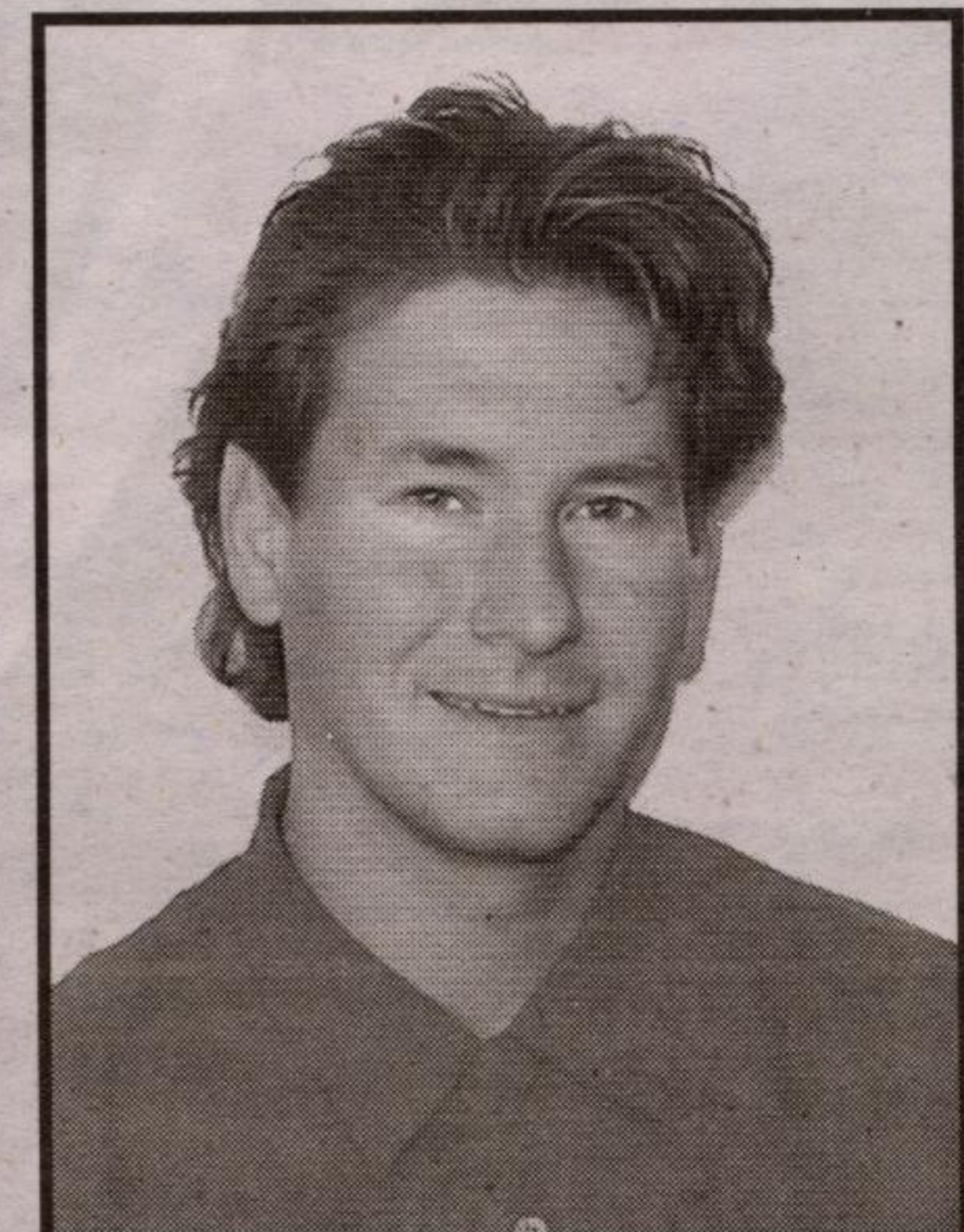
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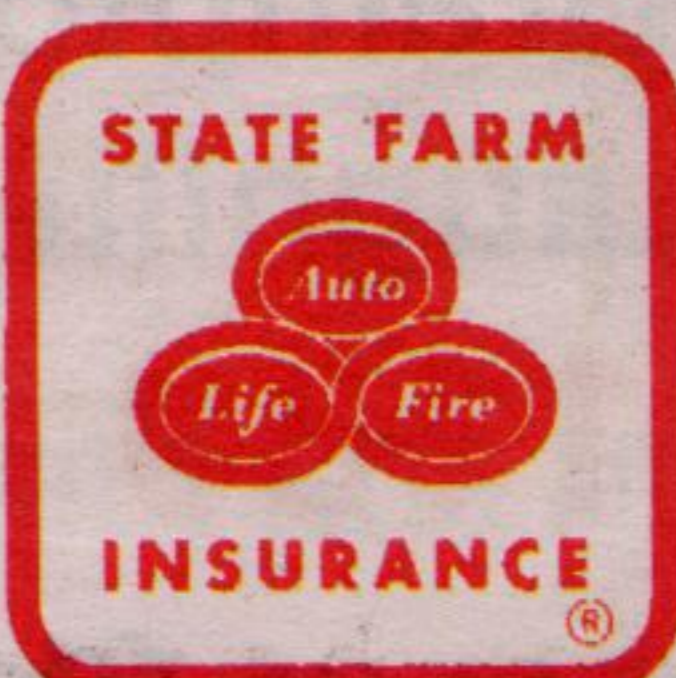
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