

family



JERRY CAMMARATA
FATHER'S DIARY

Choosing a day care program

It's tough I know! That big decision. The economy isn't what it used to be (and it never will), the dollar is being stretched all it can and you still cannot meet the monthly bills. What can you do? Yes. That big decision. It's time to establish a two-salary household.

But what about the kids? Your two small children are not ready for school and your mother is really not up to care for them while you and your spouse are at work. In your investigations you and your spouse may even have contemplated working different shifts in order that both of you may share the responsibility of caring for the children. And, no luck. The only jobs for both of you are during the day. What to do?

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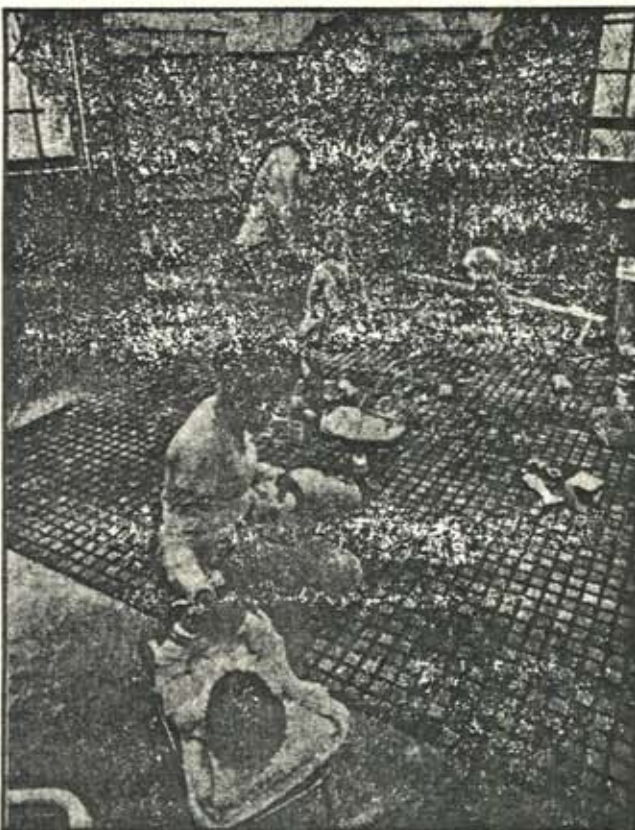
A day care program is the solution to your supervisory problem. A good day care program can be the contributing force in your child's life that will make tomorrow interesting,

meaningful and challenging. According to Edward Zigler, the former head of the Office for Children, "A child in day care spends eight hours a day, day in and day out, outside his home. The quality of that day care determines what the child will become. He can be blessed or destroyed by what he encounters."

Quality day care

Now that you're resigned to using the day care systems, what should you and your spouse be looking for? What makes a day care program good? According to the director of the Green Acres Day School, in Waltham, Mass., Dr. Grace Mitchell, one way to find out is by using your senses in scrutinizing a day care facility. Yes, use your ears, eyes, nose, finger tips and mouth.

When you visit a day care center, listen to the type of noise in the environment. Is the intercom always broadcasting 'official' messages? Can you hear the teacher shouting and ordering discipline? Or, do you



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hear busy little kids talking up a storm, all involved in their work and enjoying every minute of it? Really listen to the organization of the

sounds.

Be sure to look all around the day care center. Are the kids inactive and projecting a general state of boredom

or, do they have beaming smiles and bounce around with vigor? Are the walls brightly colored, the floors clean and carpeted and the children all neatly dressed? Does the center look inviting?

Does the day care center smell clean? If you catch pockets of odors as you tour the facility, possibly the maintenance program is not very good. It's good to remember that we often try to create different aromas in our homes in order to stimulate the smelling sense of our kids. If we can have baking, perfume and flower aromas in our homes, it's a very good idea that these and other aromas should be a part of the environment of the day care center. After all, a day care center is an extension of our home and our community.

And what about touching? Do you get a good feeling that the kids hold hands or put their arms around each other? Do you observe parents doing this when they greet each other at the day care center? The sense of touch can do an awful lot in the communication of good vibes among people. Look for good interpersonal skills.

You say, what about taste? Well, taste can be taken two ways. For one thing, does the day care center have 'taste.' Does it provide the total environment that will give comfortability and encouragement to your child? If so, the center has taste. In another way, can you follow that aroma we mentioned several paragraphs back right into the kitchen and then sink your upper and lower central and lateral incisors into the homemade bread the cook prepared? Certainly, do not hesitate for one minute to see the menu developed by

the center and ask yourself if you would eat what is listed.

Choosing a good day care center can be done, therefore, by using your common (sense). Try and be children once again as you and your spouse make the search for a good program. One will be outstanding and meet your every need.

It's always important to remember, however, that all is never perfect. Even our own homes can leave much to be desired. And, so too, our search for a good day care center should be done with the thought of compromise as a possible variable in the decision making process. All may not be clean as a whistle and the bread you tasted may not be as good tasting as yours and the floors may be warm but not carpeted. Overall, though, the day care center and its program are very good and worthy of consideration. Since life is full of better tomorrows, you may be a very involved parent at the day care center and succeed in getting changes instituted that will make the day care center a much better place for all concerned.

If you want more information about choosing a day care center or a list of recognized day care centers, you can write to:

National Association For The Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009

National Association For Child Development and Education, 500 12th Street, S.W., Suite 810, Washington, D.C. 20024.

Or you can read the following: "The Day Care Book" by Grace Mitchell: N.Y. Fawcett Columbia Books, 1979.