

The Pumsy program's mind benders invade elementary schools

In Virginia and many other states, an insidious program is currently in effect that combines hypnosis and eastern mysticism to brainwash elementary school children into joining the "feel good" society. Known as Pumsy: In Pursuit of Excellence, it is one of several curricula used in mandatory guidance counseling programs required for all public school children in Virginia. A guidance counselor coaxes children into a guided fantasy, featuring a dragon named Pumsy and her Friend.

A song used in the program, sung to the tune of "Frère Jacques," conveys the "me-centered" idea:

"I am special, I am special, So are you, So are you.

"I am enough, I am enough, You are too, You are too."

George E. Twente II, M.D., doctor of adolescent and adult psychiatry at Decatur General Hospital in Decatur, Alabama, is circulating an open letter, dated Feb. 20, 1992, which is highly critical of the program. Here are brief excerpts:

. . . Another aspect which concerns me in some of the programs used in the public school system is that they tend to imply that the answers to the child's problems are within himself. This approach is directed toward kindergarten and elementary school age children when it is well known that developmentally, children of this age are normally dependent on external authority for guidance and security. . . .

In general, hypnosis is described as creating an altered state of consciousness, a partial sleep. The person being hypnotized is responding to suggestions in an uncritical and automatic fashion. . . . Appropriate hypnotic suggestions also can prompt the subject to embrace false beliefs or delusions, for example, a belief that they lived in previous lifetimes. . . .

Induction of hypnosis requires little training and no particular skill, a tape recording often being sufficient. Even though little skill is needed to induce hypnosis, considerable training is needed to evaluate whether it is appropriate or not. When used in the treatment context, hypnosis should never be employed by individuals who do not have the competence and skill to treat such problems without the use of hypnosis. . . . Improperly used hypnosis may add to the patient's psychiatric or medical difficulties. . . . Of particular concern to

me is that children are told that they can feel the way they want to feel just by using self suggestion or self hypnosis. . . .

In particular, I want to talk about the *Pumsy: In Pursuit of Excellence* program that is used from the first grade on through elementary school. In the program summary it says, "Pumsy decides how to stop waiting for something good to happen to her and learn how she can feel good about herself all by herself." Most of the Pumsy Program is dependent on hypnotic trance induction and hypnotic suggestion. Most of the slogans that are used, such as, "I can choose how I feel," "I am me, I am enough," and "It's good to have a friend," are all introduced to the child in an altered state of consciousness or hypnotic state. I will give you an excerpt from Session 6 which is typical of hypnotic induction in all the sessions but this one in particular has to do with manipulation of feelings.

"Session 6. Discuss how we can use that power in whatever way we want. That is, we can choose to have positive thoughts or negative thoughts, and nobody can stop us. Nobody can make us feel bad, and nobody can stop us from feeling good—unless we let them. That is a lot of power!

"Painting Mind Pictures—To Be Read Aloud Slowly: Let's take a moment to paint a Mind Picture. Relax and get comfortable with both feet on the floor. Let your shoulders relax, and let your arms and hands rest in a comfortable way. Let your head relax. . . . Take slow, deep breaths. . . .

"Imagine for a moment that you are outdoors sitting next to a stream with water slowly going by you. It is a beautiful day with the sun dancing and sparkling on the stream in front of you. . . .

"Next to you on the ground is a pile of little rocks just the size that you can pick up very easily and wrap your hand around. These rocks have words written on them that say how we might feel. Some of the rocks have words for a good feeling. Other rocks have words for a bad feeling.

"You can pick up the rocks one at a time. The first rock you pick up has the word 'happy' on it. Do you want to feel that way? If you want to feel happy, keep the rock and put it in your picnic basket. . . .

"When you are ready, you may start wiggling your fingers, and then when you are ready, you may begin to move your arms around a little bit. Next, you may begin to open your eyes and repeat aloud with me in a clear, strong voice. . . . 'I can choose how I feel. I can choose how I feel. I can choose how I feel.' . . .

One of the problems we have in our society today is that young people and adults seek instant gratification. To suggest to the children that they can feel any way they want to by mind manipulation encourages this problem we have in our society today. . . . Part of this Session 6 states that by picking up a rock with "happy" on it, a child should be able to feel happy whenever he chooses to. This could encourage drug abuse by implanting the idea of instant gratification. . . .