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PREFACE

To be healthy and happy, to be self-confident and to achieve: these are the initial hopes that each of us, as parents, feel as we first cuddle our neonate. Even as our helpless infant nestles in our arms we sense the fear, the challenge and the excitement of the heavy responsibility of parenting. We look back to our own family life and hope that we can continue what was good and that we can correct what was bad. We are aware that there is much that we don't know about parenting, but we resolve to learn so that we can become effective mothers and fathers.

Smiling faces, twinkling eyes, crisp clean apparel and shiny new shoes file into our classrooms each fall. As teachers we survey the eager expressions and wonder what this school year will bring. Will they learn and will they grow in self-confidence? Will these be good classes or will there be behavior management problems? Which children will be the stars and which ones the "pests?" Which students will be motivated to work up to their abilities?

The beginning of each new school year stirs within teachers the questions, the frustrations and the anticipation of guiding those students in their classrooms. Since teachers want to teach well and because they know that there are many children unwilling to learn, they wonder how they can motivate these nonlearners toward achievement.

It is for the parents who value achievement in their children and for the teachers who are challenged to motivate all students that *Underachievement Syndrome* is written. It is my purpose to assist them in guiding the many children and adolescents who want so much to be bright and important but who have not learned that the path to achievement and personal control includes commitment and perseverance. The trifocal model which was created at Family Achievement Clinic, S.C., targets children, their parents and their teachers in the cure of Underachievement Syndrome. Therapy conducted at the clinic is not theoretical but

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Definition of the Syndrome

Our nation continually searches for better ways to educate our children. National studies and blue ribbon commissions routinely report depressing statistics about lack of basic skills, inadequate knowledge of science, inept critical thinking or problem solving abilities and even poor social skills. The villains censured individually or collectively are television, the economy, breakdown of the family, low teacher salaries, lack of racial integration, not enough class time, shortages of funds and poor discipline. Educational issues are doubly complicated by the use of such inside jargon as cultural deprivation, learning disabilities, tracking, test bias, Title I, Chapter I, bilingual education and mainstreaming the handicapped. The controversy continues endlessly, complicating the schooling process to the average person.

There is an essential error in our efforts to determine why American children do not learn as well as they should. Even if we add time to the school day, give fine new titles to federal funding, increase teacher salaries, reduce class size, label children as “LD” or “EMR” and change tests to reflect differences in cultural environments, we have not faced a central problem in our schools. Millions of children who are very capable of learning - children with average, above average and even gifted abilities, including those from middle class homes where education is supposed to be valued — are simply not performing up to their capabilities. These children suffer from Underachievement Syndrome. Their true capabilities are obvious to both their teachers and their parents. They may be very creative or verbally or mathematically precocious, yet despite their gifts they do not do well in school. Underachievers sit in every classroom and live in many families. They waste educational resources, try the patience of even the best