

book reviews . .

**DON'T TELL ME ABOUT GOL-
DILOCKS.** Eva May Illustrated by Nan
McNab. Kilmore: Lowden Publishing
Co., 1974. 24 pp.

"Goldilocks" is a children's book in which an adoptive mother lays aside the usual bedtime stories and tells her adopted child, Tony, his story. Tony hears about his parents, and why they gave him up for adoption; about his adoptive parents' contacts with the adoption agency and the application process; the preparation the adoptive parents went through, and their joy and excitement when Tony actually came to them. Finally the hoped-for arrival of a second adopted child is discussed with him.

Aimed at the early primary school group, the book deals sensitively with the natural parents and their problems, and focuses mainly on the anticipation and happiness of the adoptive parents. The story is told the way young children like their personal stories to be told, with the atmosphere created by lots of intimate detail — from the items of clothing being purchased for Tony, to the way his adoptive mother burned the evening meal in her excitement at the news that Tony was coming.

"Goldilocks" is a children's book, yet it is much more. It is essentially a guide to adoptive parents who are wondering what to tell their adopted children, and how to tell them. By demonstrating the process, it becomes a demonstration also for social workers and others who must counsel adoptive parents in this area. One of the values of the book is that it can so clearly be used by such a range of people and yet, through the simplicity of its text and the warmth of its illustrations, remain a book that children would want to read.

I felt that the book erred in its too-fulsome description of the natural parents. Describing the parents as "wonderful people" for example, may be going too far for some children to understand as their comprehension of the probable limitations of their parents develops. Such descriptions clearly ensure that the book is appropriate only for children who were adopted as babies and would not remember their parents, but still underestimates the ability of such children to draw their own conclusions about what

their parents were really like. Such descriptions, insofar as they are frequently far from reality, run the risk of confusing children.

My ten year old daughter, whom I asked for reactions to the book, said that it was good and would help adopted children to understand what had happened to them, even though it would upset them. The reason for the upset, she said, was that they would never know who their real parents were.

I felt some unease, too, about the sections which dealt with this matter. Not because of the way the book was written, which is excellent, but because this is a book which is clearly written within the limits of current Victorian adoption policies. One sees so many adolescents who are confused and disturbed by their obscure origins, that one wonders whether the current policy of making so sure that adoptive children never see their natural parents again is really wise.

It is not the function of a children's book to challenge such policies. Within the limits of its use with children adopted as babies within current adoption policies, "Goldilocks" is highly recommended. What I would like to see is more books like "Goldilocks" for adopted children who remember their parents; for children in foster care or institutions who may actually have to deal with the reality of current contact with their natural parents; and perhaps, eventually, for the adopted children of the future who might be allowed to relate to their natural parents as real, and not fantasied figures.

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THE CHILD UNDER STRESS —
Edna Oakeshott, O.B.E., B.Sc.,
Ph.D. Priory Press. Ltd. 1973. \$3.75.

The prime concern of community health care with prevention and the concomitant educational task is one that increasingly demands attention. The concept of stress in childhood is of particular importance in this context.