

GOOD HEALTH IS IN YOUR HEAD !

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According to Fr. John Powell :

"A person is not healthy unless he meets the seven criteria advanced by Dr. Karimnninger, the psychiatrist and founder of the Menninger institutes, i.e:

1. The ability to relate to others.
2. The ability to sublimate hostile energies.
3. The ability to lose.
4. Freedom from tension and anxiety.
5. The capacity to deal with reality.
6. The ability to adapt to change.
7. To realise satisfaction in giving as well as receiving."

I. Crucial Points in the Life Cycle of Man

There are certain key points in the development of human beings which are important from the point of view of mental health.

1. Pre-natal period :

Pregnancy is a stressful period for some women. They need help not only for their physical but also emotional needs.

2. First five years of life:

The roots of mental health are in childhood. The infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother and father. In this relationship underlies the development of mental health. Broken homes are likely to produce behaviour disorders in children. And this has been confirmed by several studies.

3. School Child

Everything that happens in the school affects the mental health of the child. Programmes in the school may satisfy or frustrate the emotional needs of the child. Children who have emotional problems need child guidance, psychiatric servi-

ces etc. For this child's mental health and his effectiveness in learning proper teacher-pupil relationship and environment in classroom are very important.

4. Adolescence:

The transition from adolescence to manhood is often a stormy one with dangers to mental health, manifested in the form of mental illhealth among the young, juvenile delinquency in particular.

Basic Needs of Adolescence are:

1. The need to be needed by others.
2. The need for increasing independence.
3. The need to achieve adequate adjustment to the opposite sex.
4. The need to rethink the cherished beliefs of one's elders.
5. *Old age* : Mental health problems of the aged. *Causes* of mental health in the aged are organic conditions of the brain—economic insecurity, lack of home, poor status and insecurity.

Throughout this age man's needs remain the same:

The need for affection; The need for belonging

The need for independence; The need for achievement; The need for recognition or approval; The need for a sense of personal worth; The need for self-actualization.

II. Characteristics of a Mentally Healthy Person

1. He feels comfortable about himself. He feels reasonably secure and adequate, neither underestimates nor overestimates his own ability, accepts shortcomings, has self-respect.
2. Feels right towards others, he is able to be interested in others and to love them. He has friendships that are satisfying and lasting. He is able to feel a part of a group without being submerged by it. He is able to

like and trust others. He takes responsibilities for his neighbours and fellow men.

3. He is able to meet the demands of life. He does something about the problems as they arise. He is able to think for himself and to take his own decisions. He sets reasonable goals for himself. He shoulders daily responsibilities. He is not bowled over by his own emotions of fear, anger, love or guilt.

III Causes of Mental Ill Health

1. *Organic conditions* such as cerebral arteriosclerosis, neoplasms, metabolic diseases neurological diseases, endocrine diseases, and chronic diseases such as T.B., epilepsy, etc.
2. *Heredity* is an important factor. *For example*, the child of two schizophrenic parents is 40 times more likely to develop schizophrenia.
3. *Social pathological causes*: Genetic and environmental factors.

Social and environmental factors associated with Mental Ill Health:

Worries. Anxieties, emotional stress, tension, frustration, unhappy marriages, broken homes, poverty, industrialization, urbanisation, changing family structure, population mobility, cruelty, economic insecurity, rejection, neglect.

The social environment not only determines the individual's attitude but also provides the "framework" within which mental health is formulated.

IV. Types of Mental Illness

1. *Schizophrenia* (Split Personality) in which patient lives in his own world of dreams.

2. *Maniac depressive psychoses*, in which symptoms vary from heights of excitement to depths of depression.
3. *Paranoia*, associated with undue and extreme suspicion and a progressive tendency to regard the whole world in a framework of delusions.
4. *Neuroses or Psychoneuroses*: Unable to react normally with morbid fears, compulsions and obsessions.
5. *Personality and Character Disorders*: This group of disorders are the legacy of unfortunate childhood experiences and perceptions.

V. Warning Signals of Poor Mental Health

1. Are you always worrying?
2. Are you continually unhappy without justified cause?
4. Do you lose your temper easily and often?
5. Are you troubled by regular insomnia?
6. Do you have wide fluctuations in your moods, from depression to elation, back to depression, which incapacitate you?
7. Do you continually dislike to be with people?
8. Are you upset if the routine of your life is disturbed?
9. Do your children consistently get on your nerves?
10. Are you 'Browned off' and constantly bitter?
11. Are you afraid without real cause?
12. Are you always right and the other persons always wrong?
13. Do you have numerous aches and pains for which no doctor can find a physical cause?

The conditions charted in these questions are the major warning signals of poor mental health in one degree or another. According to Dr. Menninger, help is necessary if the answer to any of these questions is definitely "YES".

VI. Preventive and Social Aspects of Mental Ill Health

1. Marriage guidance with emphasis on education and guidance before marriage which has obvious potentialities in preventing mental ill health.

2. Mother and child health services could take care of the vulnerable segment of population (mother and children) by providing guidance, advice and detection of departures from normality in their earliest stages.
3. The school health service could prepare children successfully for life itself. Education for responsibility, for recreation and for "getting on with people"
4. Adolescents: The school health services could extend their scope to the young persons who are in the transition period from adolescence to manhood.
5. Old people: community health and welfare services to the aged (e.g. old age pensions, social security measures, etc.) can help

prevent mental health among the old people.

6. The various social institutions should be oriented to the fact that they are dealing with people and not with cyphers.

Conclusion :

"Good health is not the absence of symptoms nor even the absence of suffering, but an inner attitude—an inner vision—a balance inside, and the ability to see things as they really are.

Because "a great preponderance of illness is in the mind", the patient can be helped by the same type of "kindness and concern" shown to the sick by Christ, Fr. Powel said.

References :

1. *Preventive and Social Medicine* By Park. 3rd edition
2. *The New Leader*, June 13, 1976 Vol. LXII. No. 23.

Election Slate

OCTOBER 1976

Election for the following offices will be held during the First Quadriennial Conference of TNAI at Calcutta on 14th October, 1976. The last date for withdrawals is September 25, 1976

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