

Early Signs of Mental Illness

By

Sister Marie Clotilda, C.R. & M

Ardeshir Dalal Tuberculosis Hospital, Jamshedpur.

If emotional strain is a factor to poor mental health, then we as nurses have a responsibility to teach others how to solve their emotional problems. A little time devoted to the study of Mental Hygiene may be helpful. One will acquire a better understanding of himself and his emotional life. Human emotions are the normal mental reactions to certain situations. Every emotion—great or small—is accompanied by a pouring of adrenalin into the blood stream. One who stewes over small problems will intensify and prolong the emotion itself and the bodily resonance which accompanies the emotion. It is possible to control our emotions. How can we exert this control? By an attempt to understand this emotional mechanism and acquiring various attitudes in the presence of trials, disappointments, misunderstandings and contradictions. We will see things from a more wholesome point of view. The result will be the lessening or even eliminating many violent emotional states—tension which could lead to a mental disorder.

Let us consider three of the emotional drives which frequently occur in daily life and are the cause of much unhappiness and unrest: *depression, anxiety, anger*. These, when not properly controlled, do lead to mental disorders.

Depression is normally a sporadic event. The emotional pendulum swings to the opposite extreme. The life of a normal individual is a scene in which there is elation and depression. One differs from another, not in the presence or absence of elation and depression, but in the degree of duration and frequency of their occurrence. One consoling thought in the midst of a depression is to realize the fact that depressions are transitory. One need but wait and it will pass. In the meantime it

is the part of wisdom to refrain from making any decisions or taking any important step during a spell of depression.

Is there anything like regularity on the cycle in which depressions recur? It has been found that there is. We have at present little knowledge of what the causes of depression may be. Some physicians say that there may be an accumulation of products of metabolism that affect mood by way of cerebral centres, and these may be eliminated by sleep and exercise. And so, a nap, or at times a good vacation, may be the price of a brand new outlook on life. Body and mind constitute one unit of substance, not two; and so the old adage, "*A sound mind in a sound body*" is based on an important philosophical truth.

Anxiety. To be fearless and have no anxiety when in a situation of really grave danger is not the reaction of the normal healthy mind. The brave man is not without fear and anxiety in the presence of danger, but he does not show any sign of fear or anxiety, and acts in a cool reasonable and efficient manner. There is a distinction between fear and anxiety. When one is in the actual presence of danger he is said to be afraid; but when he merely anticipates a future danger and looks forward to it with various misgivings, he is said to be anxious. Anxiety performs a useful psychological function. It makes us look before we leap and consider the consequences. A certain amount of anxiety is a sign of intelligence. But when anxiety has performed its function, and we have taken the necessary look and carefully considered the pros and cons, it should, like a player who has played his part, leave the stage and appear no more. Unfortunately it doesn't always play its part and cease but con-

tinues to reappear again and again. Furthermore, many anxieties are about things that could scarcely ever take place or are utterly impossible. Many fears or anxieties have an inhibitory effect; they seem to promote, retreat or withdrawal. They frequently seem to induce futile expenditure of time and energy and in the end they never happen. An individual who suffers the anxiety-complex will be a problem to himself as well as all whom he comes in contact with. In the industrial world he will never advance. If he is ill, his convalescence will be retarded. Such individuals accomplish little that will benefit society.

Anger. Over-worked and tired individuals are the victims of anger. Just a slight error on the part of another will throw some people into a frenzy. Such outbursts are very hard on the physical constitution of an individual for when the incidence is over his nerves are so tense that it is impossible to relax. He will lose sleep and his food will not be properly digested. His anger episodes will become more frequent. Unfortunately few pay attention to recurrent fits of anger. An effort to control this fault in the beginning may save one from developing a mental sickness. Changes of occupation, developing outside interests and even a physical check-up are very beneficial towards controlling unnecessary anger outbreaks.

Frequent depression, excessive fear and abnormal outbursts of anger are the first hints of approaching mental breakdowns. Let us remember that at first these are unruly emotions that can quickly get out of control. We all

have our problems and we must bravely face them and solve them. If we understand ourselves and are tolerant with our failures and the failures of others we will avoid mental illness.

Nursing in Industry

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to work on it, not for a few days or a few months, but for several years. Accurate recording also gives a picture of the nature and the volume of the work undertaken in the health department and can serve as an indication to conditions within the establishment.

Administration

The amount of administration work to be undertaken by the industrial nurse depends on the set up of the health department. In the absence of a full time medical officer, the nurse is expected to attend meetings of canteen committee, medical committee, safety committee and others where health problems are likely to be discussed. Keeping records, compiling statistics, submitting periodic reports to management, making necessary recommendations to the personnel office on individual health problems, selection and training of departmental staff and first aiders in the factory are some of the many duties that become the nurse's responsibility.

Where there is a full time medical officer to attend to the administrative work the nurse is fortunate to share this responsibility with him and receive guidance. There she helps him to carry out the day to day work in the best interest of the employer and employees.

(Concluded)

Mental illness in India

"About 2 per thousand of our population is likely to be afflicted with a mental disorder which sooner or later requires hospitalization. We have also to take into account the mental defectives who average at least 8 to 10 per thousand of our population, and epileptics who perhaps number 0.5 per cent. of the population. Further we must include in this category various types of physical illnesses like high blood pressure, skin disorders of various types, cardio-vascular conditions and others in which chronic emotional stresses do contribute a major share. Added to this formidable list we have problems of social pathology. In our country, about 1,750,000 crimes are committed every year; between 15,000 and 17,000 people commit suicide in a year; and at the lowest estimate, about 15 to 20 per cent of our teenagers are juvenile delinquents."

(Journal of All India Institute of Mental Health 1958)