

# THE PSYCHIC SYMBOLISM

of Headaches, Insomnia  
& the Upset Stomach



*LECTURES ON PERSONAL GROWTH*  
by Manly P. Hall



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*Fax* 323.663.9443

*Website* [www.prs.org](http://www.prs.org)

*E-mail* [info@prs.org](mailto:info@prs.org)



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## **THE PSYCHIC SYMBOLISM OF HEADACHES, INSOMNIA & THE UPSET STOMACH**

We are all, to a measure, the victims of the environment in which we live. When this environment becomes too oppressive, denying us self-expression, or discouraging it to the degree that we no longer have energy or resistance to demand personal rights, we are bound to become unhappy. The average person then seeks a way of relieving the negative pressures in his life.

In modern society, aspirin and certain drugs and assorted pills have come into the category of escape mechanisms. We must differentiate, of course, between the right and wrong use of medication. There are undoubtedly individuals who need medical help, and who, seemingly at least, definitely benefit from a certain use of tranquilizers. There is no doubt that there are types of upset stomach that will respond to moderate usage of bicarbonate of soda in one of its numerous forms. Actually, however, we learn to depend too much upon this kind of thing. Of course, it is very profitable to the pharmaceutical houses and manufacturers to make us all addicts to these remedies, but it is not profitable to us; it is not a good or valid use of medication.

If a person develops certain symptoms and finds extraordinary difficulty in getting along without sedation; or without

some type of artificial stimulation, then this person is probably sick. Such illness needs proper diagnosis, analysis, and care. It does not pay merely to drug ourselves in the hope that we can pass over certain of these symptoms. Our forefathers and those of preceding generations made use of natural and simple remedies on many occasions, and these were useful. But there is no usefulness in the practice that is becoming too prevalent today of carrying a bottle of aspirin tablets at all times and munching them like candy.

This type of thing is no answer to anything. Nor is it any answer to continually nurse dyspepsia with soda. If we believe we have eaten something that has offended, that we have suffered from some minor upset, certainly we can make use of natural or available remedies, but the use of artificial sedations and stimulants today has reached a point unparalleled in history. We now think in terms of how many packages of aspirin the average citizen consumes in the course of a year. It would seem as though we are depending upon it as a basic element in diet, and this is not good. Yet it is hard to tell people that they should be uncomfortable or should not take care of these symptoms that come along, for the individual must be able to continue with the daily processes of life.

Behind this situation lies a series of false values which we must eventually face if we do not want to become a hopelessly drugged and medicated generation of people. Let us therefore try to summarize some of the facts that we know about this problem of sedation-stimulation as it exists today.

Proceeding from the assumption that each person is an individual, we can say that the individual finds it important, sometimes necessary to adjust what might be his normal disposition to situations that are essentially not normal. Abnormal conditions arise from several causes. Sometimes we blame them all

on society, but after all, society is only the aggregate of ourselves. Actually, there can be several distinct causes, some of which are within our control, while others, apparently, are not. Certainly we should consider first those that are within our control and over which we have a certain power of decision.

One problem that we can control is the voluntary placing of ourselves in a position of definite disadvantage. In other words, there are worries that arise simply from our own foolishness. The individual who surrounds himself with unnecessary debt, for example, is being foolish by attempting to live by a standard above that which he can maintain with propriety. If he has allowed himself to become involved in situations in which he has lost control, he was foolish somewhere along the way, even though at the present time, there seems to be no legitimate escape. So there are factors around us constantly over which we do have control, and other factors over which we have very little control—worries that seem to arise in the universe.

Most of the ailments for which our assorted drugs are available come under the general heading of “nervous disturbances.” We are becoming a generation of nervous wrecks, and each person has his own explanation for his particular case. Hundreds of people have come and told me why they were nervous wrecks. Yet, in the majority of instances, their stories are not valid. Certainly, the individual can become a nervous wreck with very little help or very few lessons. All he has to do is live foolishly—go from wrong habit to another until the collective pattern falls in upon him with a crash.

Actually, of course, nervousness can be due to a number of valid causes, and perhaps the most valid one that we have today is our economic problem. Most of us find it necessary to make a living, and today, the average person does not enjoy his work. I am not thinking of persons who do not enjoy work simply

because they are lazy, or because they have developed some kind of an autocratic complex and feel that they are too good to work. For these there can be very little sympathy except that we have to consider them as psychologically disturbed. There are others, however, who have a natural instinct to work, who enjoy creativity and productivity. They like to be busy, and they want to do valuable and useful things.

The work patterns of today are a very real hardship on these people, for the right of individual contribution has been seriously undermined. The type of work that brings pride and internal satisfaction is more or less disappearing from our social pattern. The worker today is almost like a semi-mechanical instrument in a vast laboratory or accumulation of instruments. Thus the joy, the pride, the creativeness of work—all of which are therapeutic—are diminishing as time goes on.

To a degree, we are attempting to compensate for this by the restoration of folk arts—cottage crafts and industries. Our vast organization of industry is opposed to this, however, causing the folk crafts to be expensive and usually impractical from an economic standpoint. They are useful principally, for their therapeutic value to the individual.

I have discussed this problem with physicians who were trained in other countries, and were therefore not under the grand hypnosis of our way of life, and they very definitely regard cottage industry and folk crafts as an absolutely essential element in the preservation of health. The greatest expression of satisfaction that we know comes from being able to do something creative in our own way and sharing this with others whom we regard as interested.

In working with sick people and those psychologically unbalanced, it has been my observation that very few of these

persons have any creative outlet. They are doing nothing that satisfies their own psychic life. They are suffering from a complete failure of self-expression. The only answer seems to be to develop creativity of some kind.

The old emphasis upon creativity was valid, and we have not yet been able to find a substitute for it. In the old days, people made things because they needed them, because they intended to use them, and because they could not get along without them. At a time when money was a comparatively rare commodity, people created nearly everything that they required and much of this workmanship is extraordinarily good.

I recently saw a collection of primitive pottery found in old Korean tombs. These articles were not made by artists, but by the average family for its own use. Like most family productions of this kind, this pottery was of excellent design and in the best of taste. It had about it that kind of good workmanship that told of honest, simple, direct people doing a good job. They had no intentions of creating their common kitchen utensils with designs that were unpleasant. They did not develop any of these wild Picasso plates, but a very simple, dignified art.

Today, trained artists are turning to this primitive folk art as a source of inspiration and design. There is a tremendous validity in these works, and they prove that persons living a simple and useful life are able to feel the impulse to create, and can produce that which is truly beautiful and fine. This situation is of great importance to us, because it is the loss of these elements that we now so seriously regret.

Not long ago, I read a little article, written in Japan, in which the author pointed out to strangers that if they would watch along the roadsides and villages through which they passed, they would occasionally see a monument—a simple stone column—on which was this inscription: “Sacred to the memory



of the millions who have been forgotten and whose labor has made civilization.” This is a very beautiful thought, and it indicates the recognition of the tremendous gift of people to life.

The average person of today is not interested in giving anything to life. He is demanding of life that it should give him what he wants, that it supply him with as much as possible for as small an effort of his own as he can possibly contribute. He expects the world to entertain him, make a success of him, keep him healthy, enable him to do a series of self-decided actions, with very little consideration for the value or importance of these actions.

There is tremendous moral and spiritual insight to be gained from the study of ancient folk crafts and arts. We find primitive people meeting their own need for beauty by the production of things that were satisfactory and acceptable to them at that time. The amazing thing about it all is that these productions, which were strangely and wonderfully acceptable to a primitive people five thousand years ago, are still treasured as the world’s greatest art. There was a sincerity and an integrity that sophistication utterly destroys.

Thus, the very simple responses to cultural insight have wonderful meanings for us; and as we study the history and development of art culture, we observe that the moment the spiritual, moral, and ethical overtones of a civilization began to decline, its art fell apart. As long as the individual had great beliefs, even though they might be essentially simple—beliefs that were deep and abiding and strong and essentially good—this individual began to produce beauty. He produced it because his own soul was healthy.

Even if he was only whittling out a soup spoon, he was actually producing something that he was passing through the

criterion of his own psychic nature. If the spoon was badly shaped, he did not like it himself, so he threw it away and made another. He was instinctively an artist, allowing his inner life to move into expression through some very simple means.

Among the very old ceramics, there is so much of this, and modern artists are borrowing, copying, and stealing these ideas every day because they cannot better them. The reason they cannot better them is because essentially the modern artist is not psychically honest. He means to be, but within himself, he has not been able to keep open the natural stream of creativity. He has locked it with an artificial cultural development.

Now, just as surely as primitive Central African tribes produced great honest art, which promptly fell apart when they became aware of our way of life, so we must realize that the integration behind the person is forever producing something. The degree of integration determines the quality of action, and the person who instinctively turns a beautiful bowl on a potter's wheel, simply because he wishes something to eat rice from, is perhaps a great creative artist. He has no knowledge of this, but he knows what he likes, he produces what he feels, and the things he makes are good. If, however, this individual were as confused as we are today, he would be unable to do this.

It is not our purpose to remain in the realm of fine arts and potter's wheels, but merely to point out that when the individual moves from a well-integrated internal, nearly everything he does is beautiful; and on the level of human conduct, beauty becomes goodness, so that everything is good. Beauty becomes lawfulness, so that everything he does is right.

All this, in turn, expresses through further extensions. Things that are done well and beautifully, do not produce evil consequences. The person who has been moved to right action can

therefore live with the effects of his own action without further tension, stress, or trial. Here, through the simple medium of the arts, however, we do have a new way of checking on the degree of penetration that culture achieves in the life of persons. It must be instinctive; it must be innate.

So our problem today is to find some way of making common sense innate, to give it the real power to direct and control our conduct, so that whatever we do, is done from a complete sense of internal rightness. The enemy of rightness is ulterior motive, which is essentially false motive. This nearly always destroys creativity.

The moment the individual made bowls for sale, his bowls, were not as good. The moment he found the instinct to compete with his neighbor in the production of a more elaborate bowl, his bowl was not as good. Every time any ulterior pressure was imposed upon him, so that there arose within himself hope of profit, fear of criticism, fear of ridicule—the moment these feelings came, art died. And to a measure, when these feelings arise within us, good dies, reality dies, facts die, and the individual is on his way to the complex existence that must result from the pressure of delusion and illusion.

The answer to this seems to be that the person must gradually integrate his own inner convictions, so that they become so deeply set within himself that they begin to influence his conduct, causing him to make more wise or gentle or reasonable decisions in times when decisions are necessary.

From the frustration of creativity, the loss of individuality, we are getting a group of people who are increasingly neurotic. Education is contributing to the common dilemma. Our religious systems, also, have not yet been strong enough to lift us out of this problem, to give us again the courage of personal conviction in the things we do.

Yet within each one of us there is an archetypal individuality, something that wishes to be true to itself. Nature has its own plans and its own ways, and these are now being continuously blocked by the artificial way of life we have gradually accumulated, which has been a burden upon the spirit since the beginning, and now threatens to be a menace to the survival of the body itself.

It is useless for us to *chemicalize* in trying to meet this kind of problem. It is useless to believe that by some kind of process of medication we can kill out in man that which is man—the individual expression of life. The person who tries to fit into a norm may then consult a psychologist to see if something can be done to adjust him to his time. This adjustment is possible, but, in many instances, only through a different kind of sedation medication.

The individual may be convinced by mind, which he respects, that he might as well accept the thing as it is; he can be talked into a kind of compliance. He can be convinced, perhaps, that adjustment means to fit into the thing as it is; so he desperately tries to do so. But having made this type of decision, he is then practically committed for life to a continual process of trying to conform, because it does not come naturally to him. He is constituted not to “fit in,” but to unfold himself. Where there is no self-unfoldment, there can be no satisfaction and no sense of well-being. Most nervous ailments originate in the failure to develop a sense of well-being in the young as they gradually grow to maturity.

Why, then, do we try to escape by means of these artificial methods? We feel nervous, things have gone wrong, we gradually develop a sour stomach and a headache, and these symptoms are not to be neglected. Twenty-five years ago, it was common practice for physicians to tell patients that they should get

down on their knees and thank God for pain, because pain is nature's way of preventing us from gradually killing ourselves without even realizing it. Suppose we should be indiscreet enough to sit down on a hot stove and had no pain reflex. We would probably be burned to death. Of course, we can say that no one would be so foolish, but everyone is doing more foolish things than that every day.

Pain, discomfort, the sense within ourselves of things not being well—these symptoms are of the greatest use to man. Naturally, we try to eliminate pain, but we should not forget that pain is not there merely to be alleviated. It is there to tell us something. It is a voice crying in the wilderness of our misbehavior, and it is trying to convince us that something we are doing is wrong. If we keep on ignoring this symptom, we will suffer more and more until nature will make it impossible for us to endure the difficulty without very strong sedation. If we sedate ourselves too much, we may damage the pain mechanism.

Thus, although it is perfectly possible to block each symptom, this dash to the medicine closet is no answer to anything. In an emergency, it might be necessary; but as a solution to a problem, it is worthless and always has been. There are a limited number of instances, of course, where minor ailments, aches, and pains can be temporarily alleviated, so that we immunize ourselves for from six to twelve hours, and where the pain will then not return. But this is due to the fact that nature has been working behind the scenes to correct the situation itself. It is not a proof that aspirin has cured anything; it has simply, perhaps, given nature a little help in attempting to ease a difficult situation. This is very different, however, from the problem of man's neurotic pressures, which do not respond permanently

and will return immediately after the sedation passes. To continually relieve these pressures, therefore, the individual must become a chronic or habitual user of various types of sedation or tranquilizers.

Let us take one problem about which a great deal has been done lately—insomnia. This is one of the most disagreeable experiences in the world for most people. Actually, however, the great difficulty of insomnia is not sleeplessness. An individual with a happy, well-integrated disposition can lie awake for several nights with no appreciable damage to himself. Nature, of its own accord, will not let insomnia hurt anyone unless it originates in some serious and basic cause. Nature will put us to sleep when we need sleep unless very serious damage exists. If a case of insomnia is sufficiently valid to require sedation, it is too valid to be solved by sedation in the majority of instances.

Let us imagine, then, that a patient is in danger of losing a night's sleep, or part of it. Maybe he wakes up at four o'clock in the morning and begins to toss. Why is he tossing? What is it all about? Is it really the fact of lying awake that is causing him trouble? Nine out of ten times, it is not. One person said he could not afford to lie awake because when he did, his thoughts began to go bad. The real reason for insomnia giving us a bad time is that the longer we lie awake, the more sorry we become for ourselves. All the problems of yesterday and tomorrow begin to dance a jig in our brain. We begin to worry about how we are going to get out of debt; whether the job is going to hold up. We wonder whether we have offended a friend; we wonder if the person we lent money to is ever going to pay us back, or if the individual from whom we borrowed is going to want it before we can return it. And in a short time, the insomniac is in a condition of near hysteria.

Actually, all this has nothing to do with lying awake. There are persons who have made discoveries in their hours of insomnia. One man told me, "You know, insomnia has given me back many hours which would otherwise have been spent in unconsciousness. I have had more fun lying awake. I have had all kinds of opportunities to invent things, to devise things, to make plans." With normal peace of mind, general bodily relaxation, and a light line of constructive thinking, the person will usually drift back to sleep; or, if he should lose a night now and then, he has simply gained a few more hours of self-communion, and this will not do him any serious damage.

If, however, his own ability to live with himself is poor, then insomnia is a disaster of the first magnitude. The individual simply lies awake and remembers all his mistakes, or he begins to fear all the things that might happen. For in the night hours, man returns, more or less, to an atavistic state. The unknown is very close in darkness, and it is hard for a person who has a heavy psychic load to throw it off in those small, still hours when he has to live with himself. When he arises and takes on the problems of the day, he submerges the psychic load, but at night, alone, with perhaps nothing except the ticking of a clock, the psychic load becomes heavy; and so, again, the individual dashes for the medicine closet. Under some instances of unusual stress or fear, there may be some justification for this, but for the person who cannot live with himself, the situation is much bigger, and he must learn to get along with himself.

If a person becomes sufficiently nervous, upset, or critically unadjusted, he may find that the sympathetic nervous system will begin fighting with him, and he will probably feel this pressure most in the pit of his stomach, and then he will develop acidity. This, of course, can easily be cured by any one of

a number of mysterious preparations which may be seen spiraling down through a small glass tube and completely disintegrating before they hit the stomach. This situation comes to our minds automatically now; we are conditioned to it. The moment we think of an upset stomach, we think of one of the recommended remedies, and keep our minds completely away from the real cause. We feel that the solution to an upset stomach is to take one of these little tablets or something that fizzes gloriously in a glass of water.

Suppose someone should say to us that the head of a corporation is making a series of very bad decisions that are likely to destroy the corporation. Would we rush to him with a bromide? Probably not. We would assume this problem of the upset stomach also requires more than a bromide. We cannot solve it that way. Certainly, if we have a touch of ptomaine or something of a definitely temporary nature, we have to do something that will give us immediate relief; but the upset stomach is becoming chronic.

I have talked to people in recent months who cannot go from one day to the next without an upset stomach. The children upset their stomach; the arrival of the head of the house five minutes late is most upsetting; the dinner is not quite what they hoped, and they are upset and disappointed; the radio or television program annoys them; the wrong politician is in office. Everything in life has become the basis of an anxiety mechanism and a dash for the soda. They face every emergency with a bottle in each hand.

These problems of the upset stomach and insomnia very often are the results of the habits of over-eating or over-drinking, and all this finally tells us one simple truth—that we are losing control of ourselves. We are losing the power to think things through; we are losing the desire to make any real personal



effort to solve things. We do not wish to solve them; we wish to be immunized by some fancy method. This can ultimately become as dangerous a national or international emergency as any we face today on a political level. Actually, the strength of a nation has to be the integrity and integration of its people, and where this falls to pieces, there is no political power that can hold a nation together.

What can we do to gradually curb this condition in ourselves? First of all; we must realize that when something goes wrong, we cannot instinctively depend upon advertising to get us out of it. Let us realize also that there is no use in merely blocking symptoms, inasmuch as symptoms tell us facts. Usually, in modern people, these symptoms are more difficult than they were in our ancestors because we have less resourcefulness. We are not as resourceful a people as we were even ten years ago.

Resourcefulness means that we have something in ourselves that is capable of taking over and contributing to the solution of our problem. It arises from experience, from the actual fact of discovering that we can stand on our own feet. This discovery is becoming increasingly rare; it is almost considered unnecessary. All we have to do is pick up that convenient telephone and almost anything we want is available. Our ancestors could not do that, so when problems arose, they had to either work them out or suffer the consequences.

It is nice to hope that our way represents a new standard of living that will go on forever, but actually it will not. This so-called luxury living, resulting in increasing mental and emotional laziness, is not producing the happiness or security or well-being that were envisioned in the beginning of our great era of modernization.

Actually, the primary problem that we all face is the integration of the mental factor in ourselves. A person who has a well-ordered mind can face a variety of external situations with reasonable confidence, but if his mental growth is simply pressed upon him by emergencies outside of himself, he becomes a very spotty thinker. He develops no essential pattern for life. Every emergency must then be faced as an isolated occurrence. Having passed through it in some way, he relaxes with relief and goes back to thoughtlessness again until some other emergency forces mental action.

Not only are we emergency thinkers, but we try to develop the mind in relation to emergency situations. This always means that in some way or other, we are not quite sufficient for our problem. All emergencies are a little different. Having passed through one does not necessarily mean that we can meet the next one with assurance of success, for every emergency departs to a degree from all classical solutions.

The answer, apparently, is to forget the importance of problem for the moment and to emphasize the importance of mental organization, for once we become truly thoughtful, we have solved the primary factor. If we know how to use the mind as it was intended to be used, it will not only gradually prevent emergencies from arising, but if some do come over which we have no control, we can apply to them the full strength of an organized mentation.

The problem, therefore, is not primarily how we are going to reach some goal, or how we are going to get higher wages or more creature comforts. The real problem is always to develop the ability to apply well-organized mental energy. Once the mental structure itself is able to cope with the fact of problem per se—that is, when the mind is able to recognize that it will

always be placed in situations requiring its use—then we are beginning to get hold of the situation.

I would strongly suspect, therefore, that each of us has the problem of putting his own mental life in order in reference, first of all, to himself, and not in reference to other things. Once the mind is in order, it will have a certain clarity in relation to other things; but until it is so organized, it is inadequate for the conduct of our own lives and for the solution of other problems.

I believe that the most valuable procedure in this is to attempt to understand, to our own satisfaction, how the mind should be used by human beings living in a complicated civilization such as we have. One thing the mind should always do for us, which it hardly ever does, is to reduce tension. The purpose of the mind is to make possible a relaxed existence. It is not intended to be an instrument of belligerence. It is not supposed to thrash its way through situations, nor to pound itself forever against stone walls.

The mind is primarily intended to keep down pressure, or perhaps more correctly, not to permit pressure to arise in the first place. Pressure always arises from bewilderment, inadequacy, from situations that seem to be uncontrollable, from intensities of temperament that have never been disciplined, from appetites that are insatiable, and from vast world situations about which we can do very little as individuals. In other words, the mind opens itself to receiving a tremendous amount of worldly responsibility and intensity; and because it is unable to cope with this, it leads us into bewilderment and confusion, and the confused individual is tense. He is also on the way to some form of psychological difficulty.

Nearly every person who is in need of analysis has made improper use of his own mental-emotional structure. To meet

this, the individual has to go to work on himself, and he has to have some particular area of application. This business of forever fighting out ideas on the level of theory alone will never solve our difficulties. No matter how magnificent our theories may be, or how devoutly we may hold them, they do not provide us very much real support in time of emergency.

The individual who has an excellent comprehension of something, can still make a miserable mess of trying to live if he is not able to bridge the interval between theory and practice. This being a basic situation, we know that knowledge is never ours, is never real, until we use it and thereby experience the inevitable benefits of the right use of right knowing. Once we experience for ourselves the value of ideas, this experience creates the real understanding by which we gain increased confidence and courage with which to advance knowledge.

We can say, perhaps, that nature is forever attempting to solve the problems that arise. About forty years ago, psychoanalysis and psychiatry began to loom large on the scientific horizon. These discoveries seemed to fit in with a new need that was arising, and it is quite possible that most psychotherapy is keyed to complexities that have come as a result of our present way of life.

A hundred years ago, there were no psychologists as we know them today, and probably not as much neurosis as we know today. People are always referring to the miseries and sorrows of ancient times. We know that in those days, people did not enjoy most of the facilities that we have; life was harder; working hours were longer; rewards were fewer. Yet with all these limitations, and these other pressures, people were not as consistently unhappy as we are. Having less, they expected less, and this made a certain balance. Being more active, more physically

bound to their problems, they slept better, for insomnia often arises in the individual who is not physically tired.

Actually, nervous tension is not the same as physical effort. We can get more miserable today over the front page of the newspaper than our ancestors did after a fourteen-hour working day. We are more concerned with situations that have less validity, and our sufferings are due to a fantasy that has gradually come to be so real that we are unable to cast it off or evaluate it correctly.

All these causes together create insomnia, headaches, and the upset stomach. Our civilization is producing these as inevitable by-products, and if we continue to nurse them, we will certainly come to grief. These disturbances in the body do not simply represent clouds that pass. They are becoming so chronic that it is astonishing to consider the amount of research and scientific chemicalization being directed toward these problems today. Whereas five years ago, we had one or two tranquilizers that were of some value, today we have dozens; tomorrow we will have hundreds; before very long they may become as common as aspirin tablets.

This does not indicate progress. It is merely scientific ingenuity trying to struggle against private stupidity. The pain killers are not progress, but patches upon something that threatens to fall apart. They do not represent any positive advancement in knowledge, but are merely escape mechanisms for people demanding these to a far greater degree than ever before in scientific history.

There is, however, a truth lurking in the story of the tranquilizer, the aspirin, and the stomach anti-acid combination; it does give a lead on something worth considering. What does the tranquilizer do? It simply lowers nerve function. What does

the anti-acid combination do? It simply counteracts, temporarily, acidity in the system. The same is true of the sleeping pill. It lowers nerve tension temporarily, or creates a temporary state of toxin in which the individual becomes unconscious. What we can learn from this is that the answer to the problem lies somewhere in the reduction of the activity of nerve tension. This activity can be blocked.

The individual whose nerve reactions are not quite so acute feels happier. He becomes increasingly comfortable as he lowers the threshold of consciousness. If he could be totally unconscious, he probably could be happy all the time. It is only when he is awake that he worries. It is only when he is conscious that he is sorry about anything. So if we can keep the individual further and further under the influence of negative drugs, he will gradually emerge as a kind of happy idiot, where he will experience nothing unfortunate because his centers of responsible cognition have been numbed. This, apparently, is the end greatly to be desired at the moment. We want to enjoy being foolish, and that seems to suggest these tranquilizers.

Actually, however, there must be a normal manner and proper means of reducing nervous tension. Nervous tension has to arise from causes, and if these causes can be corrected, the tension will lower, and the individual will be happy without being foolish. Thus, the happy person, the contented person, the integrated person gradually frees himself from these symptoms. But how is he going to achieve this under the world situation in which he lives? Actually, the world situation is not his primary trouble. Nature is not punishing the individual for the world situation, although this may be the nearest valid excuse there is for his trouble.

The person is not the victim of world situations. We pick up the morning paper and read that 10,000 Chinese have died of

starvation; so we turn to the next page to see what the sales are for the day. These things do not really move us. The world does not press in upon us as heavily as that. It moves in upon us only when we are precariously poised in a neurotic situation ourselves.

Man cannot worry successfully about what he has never experienced, or what he does not know personally to be an occurrence. News is not the basis of his worry; things around him are not the basis of his worry. The real basis lies in his own inability to adjust to change, to adjust to motion, or adjust to conditions constructively. It is because he panics rather than because of the magnitude of the problem that he gets into trouble; and every year he is panicking more easily.

What we call our problems are really evidences of hysteria in ourselves. We know, as philosophy teaches us, that we live in a world of facts. Some of these facts are good, as far as we can understand them; some we do not understand; and some appear to be very dangerous. But we do live in a world of facts, and facts can be changed only by direct action. A fact is a simple thing requiring a simple and direct action.

It is possible that by attempting to explain these facts of nature we must go beyond any knowledge that man possesses and into a sphere of infinite complexity, but on their level of reaction upon us, facts are simple; they are direct; and they require direct action—not genius, but competency. They do not require illumination, but common sense. And the direct solution of fact, the meeting of fact with all available natural resources, in a simple, direct relationship, will do more to solve our problem than perhaps any other single ingredient.

If a fact, or an immediate situation, is not solved, however, then the overtones begin to develop. The fact is changed into

a series of distorted values. By degrees, our own interpretation takes the truth out of the fact and leaves us in a mystery with which we cannot cope effectively. The neglected fact is one of the big causes for the stomach ache. The failure of the person to use his energies, his resources, and his abilities, here and now, results in a strange kind of procrastination that can, and usually does, end in insomnia. Thus, the direct procedures of life are of the greatest importance in preventing chronic psychological tensions.

Another situation that is involved in the current prevalence of the use of tranquilizers and pain-killers is the tendency of modern man to pass easily from a state of tolerance to a negative acceptance. We take something that we instinctively know is wrong, and we learn to accept it simply because our friends do or the consensus of popular opinion accepts it. We have done this with progressive education, modern art, fashions, and various other phases of life. The serious part of the situation is when we begin to take on attitudes and habits that are contrary to health, that gradually cause us to lose the simple patterns by which we can maintain personal integrity.

When we are undermined in this department, we will gradually fall under the habits of the moment, nearly all of which are bad. Almost everyone who is practicing these habits is also taking aspirin. So in a little while, if we practice them too, and become thoroughly adjusted to the aspirin age, we will be taking just as many pills as our neighbor and feel, at least, that we are normal. For today the pill-taker is the "normal" person; but he is still sick. He is not normal, and he never will be. All these things are just plain foolishness.

Our only escape and true solution to most of these situations is to face the facts. Facts are not always what we want, but if we permit ourselves to war with them, we are fighting the most



losing battle of all time. If we have a certain amount of money to spend, that is what we have, and if we do not stay within that, we join the \$400,000,000,000 of public debt that nobody knows how we are going to pay.

An individual who is up to his neck in debt can never be happy or secure. If he has certain means, he can use it; if he does not have this means, he should not try to use it; and no amount of aspirin will give him pleasure from unreasonable action. It is a problem of straight thinking, and if we do not use this straight thinking, the pressures of our time will continue to punish us for our mistakes.

We must learn to use our own nervous system as a thermometer. When it begins to go high, we are in trouble, and there is no solution to that trouble but to find out what caused it. If it is due to an organic or systematic problem, it may be that we are finally reaping a long harvest. Perhaps many years ago we developed attitudes that we have never been willing to change, and which are basically wrong. No individual can hate and be in good health, no matter how just his dislikes may seem to be. No one can be jealous and not finally come to the pill-taking stage. He may think, perhaps, that the pills will neutralize jealousy; that he will be able to continue to be jealous and not feel discomfort; but he is creating a cause and effect pattern here. He is not improving his attitude, and he is endangering his body. So his jealousy will ultimately penalize him twofold. It is the same thing with worry. We may say, "Well, I can't help worrying." But we can help worrying; a half dozen tranquilizers and we do stop worrying—for a while. We can create positive tranquilization within ourselves.

The purpose of education, of religion, and of philosophy is to make the individual tranquil by understanding without the aid of dope. If he does not wish to grow, if he does not wish to

use these instruments to improve himself, then he will take the pills and hurt himself. Nature, seemingly, continues to fight with man on the ground that nature's end is that the individual shall be sufficient, and that this sufficiency shall not require a pill bottle. It is very possible, also, that some day man will move into other dimensions of space where the advertisers cannot reach him. Wherever he is, he must live with himself.

We think sometimes of the quiet, meditating faces of Christian saints and Eastern mystics. We find that these people have found tranquility; and the tranquilizer is a horrible substitute for it. Tranquility is an achievement; a tranquilizer is a dead loss. Tranquility means that the person has grown to the control and direction of his own thoughts and emotions. This seems to us like a big job, and today we do not want big jobs. We want all kinds of big pay, and as little work as possible. And out of this psychology, the individual is losing interest in the work he does do.

This is the great day of the sloppy work. There has never been a time when you had to return the same product to be worked on again as often as now. If this sloppy work meant that the worker was so filled with noble thoughts that he could hardly get down to the ordinary daily labor, it would be one thing. Or if he were trying to break the traffic rules in order to get home two minutes sooner because of some vast project he intended to do when he got home, we could have a good deal of sympathy for him. If he were one of those who is trying to break through into the sphere of his own creativity, it would be wonderful. But what does he do? He beats the traffic, he throws the car into the garage, rushes in the front door, and takes a tranquilizer. What is he accomplishing? Nothing.

These medications by the way, do have gradually cumulative serious results. The pill that takes the edge off worry also

takes the edge off the will to achieve. The tranquilizer gradually dedicates the individual to mediocrity. It digs in continually under the incentive mechanisms, and the loss of pain also means the loss of self-directive. It means that the individual gradually falls into a state of comparative inertia, for this same nervous mechanism that has finally complained must also be the basis of our conscious acceptance of constructive stimuli. The individual who is becoming dead to his worries, is also growing dead to his hopes.

I would say, therefore, that if you are not happy and you are not functioning adequately—if it has reached a point where every time you turn around you ache somewhere—then there are three or four things that are immediately indicated. If you are developing serious patterns of physical or nervous discomfort, then, in all probability, a good physical checkup is indicated. There may be something really wrong that needs help. If you block these symptoms long enough by self-doping, you may some day reach a condition in which it is no longer possible to take care of your problem.

Therefore, if you feel that things are closing in on you, and there does not seem to be any real reason why fatigue or discomfort patterns should be what they are, then you certainly should seek adequate medical counsel. If your intuition tells you there is nothing physically wrong—which is nine times out of ten what you will learn—then you must realize that your problem is psychological. If you are so inclined at that time, you can seek psychological counseling, but this is rather expensive, and many people have turned to bromides when they got the bill.

The other answer to this situation is to take a serious look at yourself and say, “What is wrong that could make me sick? What am I thinking or doing that could reasonably explain

my condition?" And a half hour of honest contemplation will reveal the truth in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. The only person who cannot be helped by this procedure is the one who has become such an automatic liar that he lies to himself. He belongs in the same group as the person who cheats at solitaire. There is not very much you can do about it. But with a little thought you can say to yourself, "I am certainly surrounded by situations that are discomforting, unpleasant, unsatisfactory; I am not getting expression; I am not getting certain necessary things out of life."

In this simple and factual self-analysis, you may discover that your tension is due to certain obvious things that must be cleared up if there is to be a solution. It may then be possible to isolate some of the contributing factors. Perhaps you are naturally a fearful person or a worrier; perhaps your job is not suitable to you; perhaps you do not really like your friends; or your apartment is not pleasant; or the neighbors are too noisy. There are many simple problems that can be factually solved.

I remember one individual who discussed his problem with me and finally came to the conclusion that the cause of his nervous tension was a neighbor in his apartment house. This neighbor liked to make unusual noises at unusual hours, and it had gradually become a fixation. So finally I said to this person, "With all the apartments in the city of Los Angeles, why don't you move?" And the individual was aghast. To take all that time and trouble? Why, it would take days for him to move! He would have to go out and find another place! So what did he do? He ate handfuls of bromides and will probably do this until he lands in the hospital. But the simple problem of moving away from an unnecessary difficulty was just too much. The day will come when it is going to be too much of an effort to breathe, and that will end that, for the moment anyway.

Actually, when you look over some of these problems that people consider monumental, many of them are utterly ridiculous; and yet, to the person involved, they have become tremendously vital. The only answer lies in facts. Know what you want, and have the courage to do it. When situations are wrong, correct them as quickly as possible; and if you cannot correct the situation, if there is no way to correct it, and you see that it is making you sick, simply move out of it. Do not try to find escape by dulling the sensory perceptions; with most people they are too dull already.

Artificial stimulants are no better. The stimulant is only a whip, and the individual who whips himself has not one more ounce of energy as a result of the beating. If the stimulation problem is present in an individual who is in good health—and a medical checkup shows that nothing of a physiological or organic nature is endangering function—then the only reason that this person does not have sufficient available energy is because he is bored. He has no incentives. He is tired from the conflict of trying to make decisions and at the same time trying to escape decision. He does not seem to be able to handle things.

In this condition, there are a number of things that will help. The individual must have constructive mental occupation, and this can be achieved through creative outlets of expression, philosophy, hobbies. If he is in a state of mental or emotional frustration, there must be outlets, and if we take over our own lives before we numb ourselves, we can generally cure these things. But if we go on sedations or stimulants, we will gradually lose interest in curing anything.

The same is true in the problem of chronic indigestion. I have talked to specialists on diet, and have come to the conclusion that nearly all persons who suffer from chronic indigestion also

suffer from bad eating habits. There is no solution in simply nursing these bad habits and trying to cure the effects. Nature is telling us frankly and directly what we need. If we evade this information, we merely injure ourselves.

In working with insomnia, the individual can achieve a great deal by opening new frontiers within his own experience. I know one person who suffered considerably from insomnia for a long time, and the way he solved it was to revive an old interest that he had never had the opportunity to develop, and go to work on it. He went to school and studied about it; he worked much harder than before; and he slept fine because he was at last doing something that he felt was compensatory, valuable.

Wherever there is psychic fatigue, there is the kind of boredom that does not normally exhaust the body enough to cause sleep. This kind of fatigue can often be cured by working harder, the purpose being to shift mental and emotional stress to physical tiredness. The individual who is physically tired will sleep; if he is mentally and emotionally tired, he will not sleep.

All these patterns must be brought down to earth, to the point where we can cope with them. If we make a half a dozen quick decisions, we can cut down our sedation-stimulant problem ninety per cent. Even if these decisions do not work out entirely well, they are always an improvement over indecision, which leaves us continuously in the grip of unsolved problems than ever before; yet we must solve them, and each person can start by doing something that is solutional.

So if we find that we cannot enjoy the average normal functions of the body without continual minor medications, then either there is something wrong with our health, or there is something wrong with our psyche; and either of these conditions must be cured, or at least corrected as far as possible. In

most of these cases, it is hardly necessary to go to a doctor, because the situations represent only psychic stress.

If, after you have made a series of good personal adjustments, the condition remains, then it may be well to consult your doctor. The beginning, however, is always to do the thing you realize right now you should be doing. Most persons know what is wrong with them; they just will not face it. And in order to forget, they will use every conceivable means. What we need to do is remember, and while we still have the courage to do something about what we remember, roll up our sleeves and do it. This will be hard on the pill manufacturers, but it will certainly be a great saving to the individual and a great enrichment to the future.

Unless we solve some of these problems, we are going to have a very poor heritage to pass on. We have no way of knowing yet what all this doping and drugging is actually going to mean in terms of heredity. And while we are fearfully worrying about the possibility of atomic mutations, we are under constant stress from these more common and immediate causes, which may have far greater seriousness in our lives.

If, therefore, you are resisting these medications because you would rather be a little uncomfortable than take them, that is very good; but do not remain uncomfortable unless you have to. Study yourself and pick out several things you know are wrong with you—and do something about them. Cure the cause, and the effect will die of itself. You will have better health, freedom from stress, and vitality and courage you have never before experienced.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., a non-profit organization in 1934, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than seventy years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.

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