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Guideposts to Mental Health

The ability to live happily within our environment begins with good nutrition. Dr. Weston A. Price, in his book *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, has this to say about mental and moral degeneration: “After one has lived among the primitive racial stocks and studied them in their isolation, few impressions can be more vivid than that of the absence of prisons and asylums. Few, if any, of the problems which confront modern civilization are more serious and disturbing than the progressive increase in the percentage of individuals with unsocial traits and lack of responsibility.” Recent publicity regarding mental disease, which is rapidly becoming our number one health problem, reflects the truth in Dr. Price’s observation.

Behind the Curtains

A brief review of the symptoms which may be caused by disturbances in the body chemistry will make obvious to anyone how impossible it is to be able to enjoy life- a prerequisite to mental health- in the presence of these chemical derangements. Of these, two basic disorders of chemical balance are particularly important: (1) an imbalance between the acid and alkaline minerals (acidosis and alkalosis), and (2) an inconstant supply of oxygen and sugar to the nerve cells (anoxia and hypoglycemia). Thus when the acid-alkaline (pH) balance of the body is disturbed or there is a deficiency of sugar or oxygen, the result may be symptoms which are indicative of an instability of the nervous system. We will mention a few of the many symptoms concerned with each condition.

Acidosis

The over-acid persons may suffer from symptoms of increased nervous irritability, dehydration and anoxia (symptoms of suffocation). Noise and excitement and other ordinary affairs of the day will cause them unusual distress. Dryness of the mouth and a “feeling of a lump in the throat” is common. Bright lights irritate their eyes and they prefer darkened rooms; bright sunlight often prevents their driving without dark glasses. They may feel “stuffy” in closed rooms, are uncomfortable in high altitudes, sigh frequently, and become breathless easily. They may be abnormally sensitive to pain. All of these symptoms are likely to give the sufferer more introverted personality traits, such as preferring to be alone rather than endure the friction of social contact.

Alkalosis

In alkalosis we find the “stiff board” types. They notice stiffness of the muscles and joints, particularly in the morning. They feel worse on cold days and cramp easily when holding a position for a long time, as “accelerator foot.” The nausea-type of stomach trouble is often a complaint, expressed as “heartburn” or “sour stomach.” There is generally a tendency towards poor circulation,

cold hands and feet. It is not uncommon for the eyes and nose to water easily, especially on cold days, and drooling of thin watery saliva may occur while sleeping. There may be a loss of taste and smell. These are the persons most likely to be victims of allergies such as sinusitis, asthma and allergic colds.

Sugar (Glucose) Oxygen

Dr. Benjamin P. Sandler, commenting on rapid falls in blood sugar, (Lee Foundation Reprint No. 52), has this to say: "During such periods of rapid fall (blood sugar), symptoms such as headache, dizziness, faintness, nervousness, tremors, sweating, pallor, flushing, palpitation, tachycardia (rapid heart), abdominal pain, and psychoneurotic manifestations may occur." These are the people with the "nervous appetites." If they go for more than a few hours without food, they feel nervous. There is definite craving for sweets, and like the alcoholic they must have "a hair of the dog that bit them," a vicious cycle. Irritability before meals, especially in the morning is characteristic. Early morning insomnia is often present, waking up after a few hours sleep and not being able to return to normal sleep.

Stimulation and Response

The living being is constantly stimulated by his environment and responding to that stimulation by reactions. When these reactions to stimuli are lacking or excessive we may observe abnormal behavior. This may be as subtle as not being able to laugh at a funny story, not being able to "snap out of it," or not being able to "hold on to oneself." These are the forerunners of mental disease. Many farmers believe that a delicate test for poor nutrition is abnormal behavior in their animals, a test we as human beings could well apply to ourselves.

Basic Food Lesson

The balance of acid and alkaline minerals can only be accomplished in the body if it is supplied with each in the diet. Whole-wheat, with its phosphorus-rich bran, is a good source of the acid minerals; white bleached flour is not. The green leafy vegetables, rich in organic potassium, are a good source of alkaline minerals, preferably in the raw state. The best way to avoid rapid fall in blood sugar is to avoid refined sugars as found in doughnuts, pies, cakes, ice cream, candy and other forms of sweets. If we examine the average diet of white flour, particularly no green leafy vegetables and excessive refined sugars, we can readily understand why instability of the nervous systems is an almost universal complaint.