

Preventing Mental Breakdowns

MENTAL ill-health is a problem of advanced communities. Wherever there is development culturally, and a satisfactory standard of living economically, there is a higher insanity rate than in countries thought of as underdeveloped. The insanity rate is something like two per cent among people of developed countries; in addition, there is a rate of neurosis of about 10 per cent. It is certainly hard to understand why, wherever there is progress and development and increase in wealth, wherever countries have good health services, hospitals, and medical care, there should be one in ten mentally ill. Yet the World Health Organisation is the authority for this estimate of the mental health of developed countries.

Our own pattern of mental health seems to conform. We have something under two per cent of mental disease, and our doctors are called on to treat a steady stream of people with neuroses. We have ceased to use the words "insane" and "asylums," and our "mental illnesses" get "psychiatric care" in "mental hospitals." These are abreast of modern skills, and our recovery rate is good. But our breakdown rate remains high. I want to take you back to root causes. Why is it that some people break down mentally and others have nervous instability?

Too little is known yet of the causation of mental disease, but, as time goes on, more is understood of the basis of mental health. So we must approach the problem from the preventive side, and do what we can to fit people to bear up against the stress of everyday

This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, ZA, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

life. The basis of mental health lies in respect and affection—the recognition of "individuality" as such, and regard for it. This begins in the home. Parents are in the front line in the attack on mental disease. Bringing up children involves responsibility for their mental as well as their physical well-being.

It begins with showing love. The child has a sense of being a part of the family unit, for those around care for and love him. Mother and father like him, not only when good, but also when naughty. Even if not so clever as others, there is pride in his particular achievements, and this is expressed. He doesn't have to be the same as others. It is what he is and how he makes out that pleases his parents, and they will not unduly influence him this way or that, but let him develop in his own way. So many parents break down here—they want their boy or girl to carry out some conception of theirs and mould children to their wishes. Interfering with individual development destroys the feeling of acceptance, and this sense of acceptance for one's own sake, for what one is, and for what one chooses to be, is vitally important to mental health.

Children must be given a sense of safety in this world. Whether you like it or not, you should always be "on tap," to be run to when anything fright-

ens or goes wrong. The home grows into a safe haven. The sense of belonging develops, of being a unit—a personality, and there is certainty of security. There develops a feeling of protection. Parents guarantee safety, it seems, for they are always shielding one from harm, and are there when awkward, new and upsetting things happen.

Parents can overdo the weaving of security and protection, and blight the development of independence. This feeling must be encouraged. The child must be allowed to do things for and by himself. You show confidence by doing so, and this sense of belief in the child's own ability to branch out and encompass new things now, later becomes confidence when he leaves home that he can "manage."

In the home you develop the sense of right and wrong, and of moral values. Father and mother must encourage kindness to others and to animals, teach bravery—"crying doesn't help"—and that it always pays to tell the truth and be straight and honest. You must demonstrate fairness and justice in your own family, so that being fair and just is understood. You must demonstrate, not quarrelling and bickering, but how to get on with neighbours and others at work, and always be watchful to suggest the correct behaviour to others. Finally, there must be discipline, or the child will resent limitations and become anti-social later. So the home teaches what is allowed—how far the child can go—puts up with temper displays but frowns on damage to things or persons—and so on. Bring your children up with these points in mind. You will be laying sound foundations of mental health in the adult.

HIGHLIGHTS OF HISTORY

ALAN MULGAN and Guy Scholefield are again retracing the footprints in New Zealand history, and their new series of talks are now being heard from 1YA and 3YA three times a week.



Alan Mulgan



Guy Scholefield

They will start from 2YA on Sunday, April 21, with broadcasts once weekly, and from 1YZ on Monday, April 22, with broadcasts three times a week.

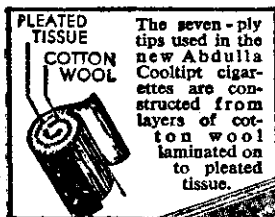
In an introduction to the earlier series, Mr Mulgan explained that these talks were planned to tell listeners where the historic places are and how they can be reached, and in that way to encourage holidaymakers to visit them. Where these places are marked by monuments, these are described, together with the events which they commemorate. Places mentioned in these talks include the Wellington city memorials, the early missions and their martyrs, the beginnings of Hokianga, the Church Hill at Nelson, Hongi's Track, the landmarks of Foveaux Strait, Tainui's voyages and resting-place, and churches erected by Bishop Selwyn.



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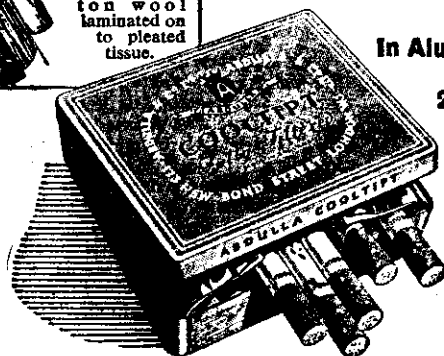
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