

Mental Illness

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"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

- Albert Einstien

The Human mind is only now beginning to be slightly understood by psychologists, sociologists, and therapists. Corpgov still prefers to intern most of the severely mentally ill in prison labor camps. BigMed turns it's nose up at any treatment that does not have some pill needed to be "normal" for the rest of one's life. And, Corporations and Landlords still send many to live on The Street. It can help to be well versed about things dealing with the mind and head off most of these before it gets severe. Without one's mind, all other endeavors are futile.

Psychology Basics

Early Psychology should not be taken too seriously. Sigmund Freud was a coke head, Carl Jung studied dreams too much, and their apprentice Wilhelm Reich got kicked out of all legitimate psychology circles by trying to tie orgasms to health and sell devices increasing "orgone" energy. Most of the early work in the field is now widely regarded as superstition and the occult.

There are still many cases where drugs combined with therapy is the best method. Of course, when we talk of drugs, we are not just talking BigMed drugs. Exercise also releases chemicals that can often straighten out some of the less severe mental conditions! Recent research has now discovered different genetics can predispose some to real, physical abnormalities that cause these "brain locks" and may need medicine or avoid certain foods and activities. If someone is locked into behaviors that they can not snap out of, pop psychology may not be able to help them. They need a professional. For example: There is no "positive thinking" for someone with dementia, and medication is the only thing that helps schizophrenics.

Below, however, are the best tricks in their arsenal and have been "stolen" by some of the best motivational coaches, doctors, and writers of today.

- Identity - This is "I Am." It is your internal name tag and can be a source of mental illness if conditions are wired to it. It is the ultimate meme. If you say to yourself "I am a loser, I am an addict, etc" the rest of the wiring in your brain will process this to make this happen. Also, internal statements like "I am a doctor, I am a garbage man, etc" can be used if a wire goes from that to the wiring controlling happiness. If you lose that, you could be in trouble. On the other hand, "I am" can be used to change undesirable things, too, as long as there is no damage.
- Movies - Normal brains can visualize and store any pattern they want and replay this at will. What most do not realize is that, barring no wiring damage, the movies can be altered, created, and erased at will.
- State - This is how you feel can affect the way thoughts become actions. Contrary to popular belief, states can be changed at will with practice. States can also be changed with drugs with the disadvantage of not being able to control when the drug wears off. This is also known as "anger management", emotional intelligence, self control, and maturity.
- Principles and Beliefs - Hard coded rule sets in the mind that are not changed often.
- Thoughts, Actions, Habits, Character. According to Covey, Thoughts become actions. As these actions become done more, the brain makes more wires to make it a habit. After a habit gets wired strong enough over an extended period of time, it becomes part of a person's character and can attach to identity, beliefs, and every other area. These can be helpful, neutral, or life threatening!
- Pain and Pleasure. Rational minds always seek to go towards pleasure and away from pain. However, the brain can associate and attach pleasure to things that are ultimately painful.
- Associations. The brain wires images and thoughts with feelings, much like a DNS server to a website

Do not read too much into it, though. As we mention in Free College Life the study of psychology is an interesting one, if not delved in too deeply.

A quick word on NLP, PUA, and other pop psychology movements

In the 1980s, Richard Bandler and John Grinder elaborated on the previous Transactional Analysis theories to come up with Neuro Linguistic Programming. It is definitely worth a read into, if you like psychology topics. However, while NLP does have valid points and good insights into motivation and the way people use language, it is no magic fix. Recent repackaged uses include everything from being a foolproof method for single guys to pick up women to ways to increase volume for commission salesmen! Like any "religion", take the good things from NLP and discard the hogwash designed only to sell books. If anything, it is only a way to look at how the brain associates things with each other and changing those associations.

Addiction

Addiction is a compulsive disorder. With some drugs, it is also a physical dependence. Free Dope has more on getting clean, if you are dealing with this. Be aware that many times, the more severe addictions are paired with mental illness.

Depression

Depression can be a real bummer. You can also be depressed and not even know about it. The world takes on a shade of colorless grey, and nothing - even things that used to provide joy, matter. You may find yourself laying in bed and sleeping more than usual. In extreme cases, you may have thoughts of suicide or cry uncontrollably. Let's talk about some of the more common depressions.

Curing Depression in General

- Get out! Sunlight produces vitamin D, which is known to fight depression.
- Exercise. An aerobic work-out produces endorphines which can counter depression and restore brain chemical balance.
- Do not dwell on mistakes. Sometimes, we can play bad movies in our head showing failures over and over. It is possible to change these movies through visualization. Next time you play the bad movie, practice changing the colors and scenes to something humorous.
- Yes, life sucks! But, focus on what can be achieved. Do not make rules for yourself like "I can not be happy unless..." Be happy now.
- Many drugs like alcohol are depressants. In addition, cocaine and crack have a very high high followed by a severe depression. Avoid these drugs if you are prone to feeling down.
- If your mind is trapped and none of these tricks work, a competent doctor can prescribe drugs that can force your mind out of depressive patterns. Make sure to ask the doctor if it is possible to not need this medicine for a lifetime and only use the medicine as an opportunity to re-wire your head.
- Remember if you feel shitty at night, your best bet is to go to sleep. Sleeping early is okay: you'll feel better the next day from the rest, and your mind cleans itself up overnight.

Winter Blues

Unless you are in a tropical location winter is the hardest time to survive any of our alternative or low income housing strategies. Besides freezing our asses off and dealing with moisture, mold, and illness there is another problem that often leads to many depression, drug use, and even suicide.

This is why people feel so shitty around late October through November. Work or school combined with daylight savings time means that we get more time to sit in a building under florescent lights while the sun is up. Less daylight means less time spent outside. Do your best to get out!

SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder strikes in the months of the year when clouds, short days, and staying indoors reduces our sunlight exposure. Even worse is when we are often forced to cover over our windows to prevent detection of our squats or to replace broken windows. Alternatively the cheapest apartment rooms often have little natural lighting denying needed sunlight.

SAD may set in so slowly you don't notice your sluggishness until you find yourself almost confined to bed or badly depressed. Here are some non corpgov drug treatments, if these don't work see a competent doctor or natural healer.

- Spicy food is thought to increase endorphans giving a temporary break from the depression symptoms.
- Full spectrum lighting, find light bulbs that produce full spectrum lighting known to help reduce SAD.

- Light box, for the worst sufferers a prescription to spend half an hour or more every morning in front of a light box to stimulate the somatic centers of the brain. We knew a guy who made a portable lightbox setup, he stuck two bright white LED's in a pair of cheap sunglasses, he claimed they really helped when used in the morning during breakfast.
- Exercise, we have found this to be the best answer, force yourself out every day for a run or long bike drive up several steep hills(whatever drives up your pulse), exposure to the sun and aerobic activity are both good treatments for SAD.
- The English and Cascadians are famous for their rainy winters and their tea and coffee, caffeine runs up the metabolism and helps you wake up. Do not stay awake on caffeine for sustained periods of time.

Watch out if you are working on quitting a drug habit, this will be the hardest time of the year for most drugs even if you have been successful so far, plan ahead coping strategies.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder takes many forms. It is pretty much an anxiety disorder in which the person believes that certain things must be done almost on a ritual basis. It usually takes the form of intrusive thoughts that "urge" the person to do something over and over. Almost everybody has topics that they favor and things they are into or insist must be done, but the sick mind does this to unhealthy levels - sometimes ignoring everything else. The object of obsession can take almost any form! Everything from the old classic of washing hands until the hands bleed to being worried about damnation from the devil to even being unhealthily concerned with sex can all become obsessions. When these obsessions become actions that someone is compelled or almost forced to do, it becomes OCD.

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Folks that have OCD are definitely not stupid. In fact, higher IQ is often a requirement for OCD.

Severe OCD sufferers often re-enforce the intrusive thoughts they have with delusions to justify their actions. For instance, an obsessive hoarder who can not even see the floor to his house will justify it by claiming to "be able to use this later", even if the item is worthless trash!

Fortunately, if caught early, this can be dealt with fairly easily. If the person can look at the outcome a bad behavior is causing and cope with the anxiety that results from not doing that action, eventually the anxiety goes away. However, if the behavior has gotten so strong that the anxiety is crippling, a doctor may be needed to give drugs to lessen the anxiety until that person can overcome it on their own and learn better habits.

Manic-Depression

Manic Depression is a literal roller coaster ride through life. Everybody has highs and lows, but the manic depressives highs and lows are extreme. It is an imbalance affecting mood.

During a "manic" cycle, the person is on top of the world! Creativity is at a high. Less sleep is needed. Speech becomes clear and confident. Sometimes in the manic phase, delusions of grandeur can appear and the person can exhibit quite a bit of unwarranted self-importance. Some of the greatest artists in history like Beethoven suffered from this and created inspiring works of art during their manic cycle. However, at worst, the manic stage can make a few easily agitated and violent, if no controls have been placed.

The depressive side is like any other depression, sometimes worse. Nothing is worth doing. The person may dwell or feel sorry for what he/she has done while they were feeling "up". At worst, this can be a full-blown clinical depression with suicide attempts. The man who wrote the book that inspired this project, Abbie Hoffman, suffered manic depression all his life. In the end, his depressive state is what killed him. Despite being a best selling author and father of a vast culture-jamming movement, he committed suicide using a large amount of prescription pills.

The causes of this are still being looked into. There is evidence that this is genetic and has something to do with sleep patterns and being very sensitive to melatonin (brain chemical affecting sleep) and uppers like caffeine, taurine, and ritalin. If you are noticing cycles between moods, you may want to look at what you are taking in and how you are sleeping.

Doctors do have drugs that can stabilize the moods by blocking certain receptors that affect state. Of course, this is at the cost of losing the manic state. Many manic depressives stop taking their meds, thinking they are cured or believing life has become bland because of this. However, with the more severe sufferers, this just winds them back up in the hospital.

Relocation Stress Disorder/ Stress

Stress is a constant in life, but the worst stress is called Relocation Stress Syndrome. Now, before everyone claims "moving around does not phase me much", let's look at what publications list as the most stressful things in life.

- Divorce / Breakup
- Bereavement
- House moving
- Losing job
- Wedding planning
- Work
- Kids / Family
- Debt
- Commuting
- Studying for exams

Notice that most of these are related to or actually involve changing a location or your environment permanently. It can get so bad, that even elders in a nursing home will sometimes go ballistic if forced to move even across a hall in the same facility. The longer an environment has remained the same, the worse the anxiety gets.

Fortunately, there are ways to deal with stress and anxiety. If you breathe and exercise, this will affect you less because of the endorphines work-outs release. Also, if you become accustomed to situations and can train your mind in how it deals with change and frustrations, the anxiety can become less or nonexistent.

Dementia

We have all read short stories or comic books that talk about the "demented" bad guy. However, when used as a medical term, the word demented has a totally different meaning. If the bad guy was truly medically demented, he would not even know what day it was and may poop in his pants because he forgot how to use the toilet!

Dementia typically only affects older folks that have had strokes or have Alzheimer disease, Parkinsons, or other dementias. However, some drugs have dementia as a temporary side effect.

Symptoms of dementia include:

- No short term memory. Long term memory of days past may still be intact.
- No ability to keep track of time.
- Not remembering names - even close family members.
- Getting stuck on one idea and brain locked into not letting go of that idea. Example: Insisting folks are stealing from them, but the item that was "stolen" has not been owned for years or wanting to go home to a place the person has not lived in for decades.

If you find yourself needing to care for a relative or an old-timer revolutionary from a bygone era, constant redirection and constant observation is mandatory. Most folks with this illness must be placed in a locked down psych unit for the rest of their lives as the condition gets worse.

This has become an alarming epidemic amongst the elderly. There are massive lock-down facilities in every major city housing dozens and even hundreds of these patients. There is no cure, but it is believed that the cause of the disease is related to plaque on the brain choking out all stored memories. A vaccine is in the works for a few years away, but any damage that is done already is irreparable.

Delusions and Hallucinations

Delusions are "lies" the brain tells itself. Hallucinations are the lies taking visual form. Normal minds justify themselves all the time to reinforce habits and defend against things that threaten those habits. The delusion is when the reinforcement is totally out of touch with reality. Most of us have a construct of wiring in our head that compares reality to a belief and can sort things out. However, if the logic wiring harness is malfunctioning due to drugs, bad wiring, or brain damage from dementia, delusions can thrive.

A perfect example of malfunctioning wiring and delusions and hallucinations is this:

Imagine a dog sitting in the chair beside you. Some folks have powerful imaginations and can even give to color, size, and even put an odor to the dog. (That is, unless there is brain damage or some sort of mental retardation that affects the center of the brain that controls imagination!) Is the dog real? Of course it is not. Certain wiring in your head knows the difference between a thought and a real dog. If this wiring is suppressed or damaged, delusions and hallucinations come about. You would be unable to tell the dog in your head from an actual, real dog!

Delusions can also "stack" on top of other delusions and inject themselves into other areas of the mind, like the part controlling identity and perception. The guy in a psych ward who thinks he is Jesus is a classic example of a complex delusion that has become part of an identity.

"Magical Thinking" is another delusion. Usually this involves convincing one's self that merely thinking a certain pattern can change something in reality and if this reality does not change, then you need to "think" harder.

Most of the time, though, delusions are a bit more subtle. It is more like having a bad road map and trying to find a location but refusing to ask directions when lost. It is possible to be totally convinced of something and still be wrong. Just remember that no amount of belief can make something right.

Be careful to guard against bad information and delusions. Also, be cautious of what drugs you take as some of them have delusions and hallucinations as side effects... unless you are on some shamanistic journey, then be our guest. Just be sure the journey you embark on, you can come back from.

Beware that use of stimulants, smoking, alcohol, and weed are all going to offset your brain chemistry to increase the possibility of delusions and hallucination. Then again there are people who parachute a half gram of meth and are fine.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is when the brain wiring gets totally mis-wired. Delusions, compulsions, and hallucinations all coexist and thought patterns can not be focused at a single task at many times. The hallucinations are often auditory and can not be shut off. "Voices" which the normal mind associates with the helpful voice that tells them to wake up for work, reminds them to make a needed phone call, or get around to doing laundry can turn into something hostile or spout nonsense. The mental disorganization also carries over to appearance. Many times, someone who suffers from this will dress inappropriately and have disordered speech patterns -often using words out of context.

Usually, this disease onsets in the mid-twenties and can get worse as time goes on. There is no cure, as it is believed to be an actual, physical brain abnormality. However, certain treatments can stabilize this. More often, someone with schizophrenia must spend the rest of their lives on disability as it can severely impact daily life. Schizophrenics must be very careful what drugs they take. Even harmless drugs like pot can trigger episodes.

The cause of this disease is still under hot debate. Most doctors do agree that it is genetic. However, inconclusive studies have also been done implicating everything from early teen heavy alcohol abuse, what time of year born, and even early childhood drug use.



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