

Mental and Emotional Health



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Mental health problems are possibly the most misunderstood affliction of mankind today. More people are hospitalized for mental health problems than for any other cause. The use of tranquilizers, mood elevators, and other types of psychic drugs is steadily increasing. Advice to take this medication to help cope is often heard. It is unfortunate that medications and long-term hospitalization often do nothing to correct the basic cause of the problem.

There is a positive note in the understanding and treatment of mental and emotional problems. The problem needing attention may be a severe case of schizophrenia, depression, hyperkinesis in children, or possibly the tenuous "housewife syndrome" or too much business pressure. The brain is an organ with specific functions to accomplish. When it does not function normally, there is often a physical or chemical reason for the dysfunction.

The nervous system is partly controlled by chemicals called neurotransmitters, made in the body by glands and the nervous system itself. Some of the drugs used for tranquilization and mood elevation work to manipulate the production and use of neurotransmitters. A natural method that is gaining more popularity is to improve the body's production and control of the natural neurotransmitters. This is accomplished by nutritional supplementation or treatment to improve the digestive, glandular, and other systems of the body.

There is a mystique about the brain and its functions because it is such a complex, little-understood body organ. Its great complexity

makes it even more apt to cause significant and severe symptoms when it is subjected to abnormal chemistry within the body. We can draw a parallel for better understanding by comparing two systems. Consider the digestive system as a complex of organs comprising a system with many functions to accomplish. Another system with a major purpose consists of the brain and nerves. Let's assume that you're functioning normally, showing no symptomatic health problems. Dinner at a friend's house provides the opportunity to eat three jalapeno peppers with an excellent Mexican dinner. These taste great at the time; however, later that night you can't sleep because of digestive burning and pain. It doesn't take a mental giant to diagnose the disturbance in your digestive system as excessive irritation from the jalapeno peppers. The experience teaches you that this type of dietary indiscretion is not compatible with a good night's rest or good digestive function; consequently, you do not readily repeat the ingestion of excess jalapeno peppers.

This is easy to understand because it is a process with which we are quite familiar. The digestive system is one that doctors and physiologists understand very well. We even hear about this system on television commercials.

Similar types of symptomatic complexes can develop in the nervous system, including brain activity. Let's look at some of the ways improper function of our bodies can affect our mental and emotional patterns.

Allergic Reactions

Allergies to natural food products and/or chemical contaminants have been shown to cause severe brain reactions. We have all seen swelling occur from an allergic reaction to a particular food or chemical compound. The swelling may be in the eyelids or in the mucous membranes of the nose, commonly referred to as hay fever. Swelling and constriction can be in the bronchi, a condition known as asthma. Swelling of the skin is referred to as hives — and so it goes.

The same allergic swelling has been observed in and around the brain during surgery. This is more difficult to understand; we can't see it and the symptoms are not easily understood because the brain is confined within the skull. Swelling causes pressure on the brain's nerve tissue, producing irritation that may result in brain function change. This reaction is not unlike the swelling of tissues in the air passages of the nose and bronchi. The only difference is that when the breathing passages are closed down, passage of air — the basic function of that bodily system — is impaired. In the skull the swelling, instead of interfering with air movement, interferes with the brain's basic function — thinking.

When one understands the process of allergic effect on brain function, it is easy to understand how doctors have observed allergic response to be the cause of a schizophrenic patient's symptoms. Ingesting the problem substance can cause immediate recurrence of mental symptoms. During examination, doctors who use this natural approach to mental and emotional problems may witness a schizophrenic patient, who has been without symptoms for many months, hold a small amount of the allergen under his tongue and within minutes go into a schizophrenic attack. This attack may last for hours or even days after the allergen test is performed.

There are many foods and chemicals in our environment that can cause this type of allergy. Some individuals are sensitive to natural food products, such as different grains and sugars. Another class of allergen is chemicals added to our foods in the form of preservatives, food colorings, and artificial flavorings. These chemicals are foreign to the body; they often must be eliminated from the diet in order to regain normal mental and emotional function.

Certain types of nutritional deficiencies can render the body incapable of coping with chemicals, either natural or synthetic, which may be causing the allergy. With various tests of body function, a doctor can determine the nutritional supplements necessary and the foods or chemicals adversely affecting mental health.



Blood Sugar Handling Stress

In today's society, the body is often under stress to maintain blood sugar levels within normal ranges. This function is accomplished primarily by two glands, the pancreas and the adrenal. If the blood sugar level drops into a low state or fluctuates rapidly, mental ramifications may accompany or follow the blood sugar stress. A common type of mental-emotional problem accompanying low blood sugar levels (hypoglycemia) is depression and an inability to think clearly. Blood sugar can be compared to the gasoline that runs an engine. One of the tissues that depends most significantly on normal blood sugar levels is nerve tissue. We can see that the brain is not going to function well when the blood sugar level is too low. Just as important is the rapid change from a low to a high, or a high to a low, blood sugar level. This causes rapid mood changes and other mental symptoms. Unfortunately, many individuals who suffer from a blood sugar handling stress find that they feel better after eating a candy bar, drinking a soda pop, or ingesting some other form of sugar. This just aggravates the condition and will ultimately make the situation worse.

A subsequent involvement of blood sugar handling stress is often functional hypoadrenia. This means that the adrenal gland is unable to handle all the demands placed on it. This secondary condition will aggravate an allergic reaction such as has been discussed. The adrenal glands produce hormones for the body that are pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory. These hormones help hold allergic reactions in check. When the adrenal glands do not function adequately, there is a lack, or an imbalanced supply, of these hormones. When this occurs, we have not only the emotional problems from blood sugar handling stress — depression and

mood changes — but the individual is also susceptible to allergic reaction, causing a swelling around the brain and other nerve tissue.

When we take the mystique away from mental illness, we find that the brain and nerves act as a system which may have reactions much the same as the stomach and digestive system in our earlier jalapeno pepper illustration. When there is mechanical pressure from an allergic reaction there is an effect, whether it be blocked air passages in the nose or bronchi, or impaired brain function; it just depends on the location of the swelling. If there is a lack of certain nutritional complexes that are detoxifiers of hallucinogens, the brain and nervous system react. If there is a low blood sugar level or rapid change in blood sugar level, the brain and nerves cannot function in an optimum manner.

Take away the mystique, and many mental health problems respond to natural health care as any other health problem. The key, as usual, is to obtain the proper treatment as early as possible, rather than masking the condition's symptoms with chemicals that act as tranquilizers or mood elevators. It is possible that the delay of proper treatment can make the condition much more difficult to correct.