

TRICK CHAIR TESTS FEAR REACTIONS

The collapse of a faulty chair in which he was seated during a class period at the University of Chicago and his consequent tumble to the floor have been turned to good account by Dr. W. E. Blatz of the psychology department. Remembering his own sensations as he clutched at his desk for support, Doctor Blatz has devised and put into effect a scheme for arousing the emotion of fear and controlling it for experimental purposes.

The scheme takes the form of a specially constructed chair which will collapse and let the occupant drop suddenly when an electric switch is turned. As the chair is heavily upholstered no injury results but fear is aroused in the mind of the subject as falling, or loss of bodily support, is one of the two fundamental ways in which fear is created.

Unaware of what is about to take place, the subject acts as he would naturally if the drop were not prearranged. His heart beats faster, breathing becomes more rapid and he grasps for support. Electrodes, fastened to the subject's arm, are connected with an electrocardiograph in another room, which records in detail the effect on his heart beat and the change in his electrical state before, during, and after the fall of the chair. An electrical pneumograph records the effect on his respiration.

The same experiment is tried a second, third, and fourth times. Knowledge of what is to happen results in the subject making no effort to save himself and he may think he no longer has any fear during the test, but the recording instruments prove that the heart still beats faster and the breathing is more rapid.

Doctor Blatz believes that the experiment may some day develop a method of studying, diagnosing, and treating emotional abnormalities which are conducive to certain forms of insanity.

The twenty-five students who underwent the test proved themselves "good sports" Each refrained from telling those who had not yet undergone the experiment what was about to happen.

BATH FOR SEEDS SPEEDS UP GROWTH

Soaking garden seeds to give them a running start also increases their speed through life, according to reports from the Plant Breeding Station at Proskau, Germany. Radish seed soaked for two or three hours in solutions of magnesium chloride or magnesium sulphate gave an increase in leaf and root development and a more than trebled yield in the most striking of the treated plants. Even soaking in pure water more than doubled the yield.

Officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture stated today that simply taking precautions to start with disease-free seed may lead to a false impression of stimulated growth. The Department has been studying the effects of chemicals in destroying seed-borne parasites. Treated seeds may lead to normal healthy plants and such merely healthy plants may give the impression of leading a faster life when compared with sister plants from untreated seed.

The Department of Agriculture is now launched on experiments which will determine whether there is a genuine speeding-up of the life of plants from the soaking of seed as the Proskau experiments suggest.
