

MEDICINE

Fatigue Is Real Illness

The fact that Churchill's doctors are allowing him to see visitors indicates that the illness he is suffering from is fatigue as has been reported.

► THE FACT that Churchill has been seeing visitors during the rest ordered by his physicians speaks against a heart attack or slight stroke as the reason the rest was ordered.

If he had suffered either of these conditions, as some have wondered, he would have been completely isolated and had no visitors.

The mental fatigue he is reported suffering from may have shown itself in much the same way that a tired child shows fatigue. As every parent knows, a tired child is irritable, even to the point of temper tantrum, and often does not eat.

Grown-ups with just a little of the fatigue Churchill must be suffering grow irritable and tempery. And they grow forgetful and sometimes confused.

Many a person when tired from a long period of mental work and strain forgets names or telephone numbers or engagements. Business executives when overtired may forget that an order has already been

issued or a directive given and repeat it. Or they may forget that the order was rescinded and get in a temper because the order was not carried out.

The very tired person often cannot sleep and suffers insomnia. Or he may suffer the reverse and be drowsy.

A fatigue state such as this, if not stopped, can go on to the point of exhaustion when the person is completely out. Churchill's physicians naturally want to save him from this.

A tired, overworked person accumulates what doctors call a "fatigue deficit." And he must feel worse before he can begin to feel better. Until such a person relaxes he does not realize how tired he is and therefore after he has started to rest he will feel more tired.

If Churchill has recognized himself that he is too tired to carry responsibility, and is willing to rest, it shows the high level of his I.Q.

Science News Letter, July 11, 1953

PSYCHOLOGY

Intergroup Prejudices

► FEW PEOPLE act strictly according to their own prejudices. This is one of the hunches or hypotheses being tested out in an eight-year study of intergroup relations at the Social Science Research Center at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

This hypothesis, which developed from a preliminary "pilot" study, would account for the fact that the same person acts differently in different situations. A man may accept Jews at work, for example, but strongly oppose admitting them to his club.

One bartender refused to serve Negroes and argued firmly for racial segregation in restaurants and taverns. But the same man argued just as firmly that Negro baseball players should play in the major leagues, a practice that is now accepted.

A member of a women's club talked cordially with a Negro speaker before and after his talk. But when a white field worker questioned her later about her prejudices, she was found to be "full of them." She said she thought Negroes should be completely segregated "on an island by themselves."

A reverse situation occurred when a white referee at an inter-racial basketball game struck a Negro heckler. Later interviews brought out the fact that this referee was nearly free of prejudice against

Negroes. He was not down on Negroes; he just didn't have patience with hecklers.

Another preliminary finding is that many people live in a remarkably strict self-imposed segregation, going through the same little cycle of activities day after day and week after week, never coming into contact with new people. In one community, 50% of the white gentiles interviewed had no contact at all with any member of a minority, either at work, in the neighborhood or socially.

"These narrow social environments have a strong influence on beliefs and actions," Prof. John P. Dean, one of the directors of the study, said. "If there are few contacts, few friendships can develop. Unexpected contacts make both parties uneasy."

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SURGERY

Tests Tells Whether Lungs Stand Operation

► TO TELL whether it is safe to operate on a patient with lung trouble, doctors can first have the patient inhale the inert balloon gas, helium, from a spirometer. This is an instrument for measuring the air taken into and exhaled from the lungs.

From the decrease in percentage of helium as the patient breathes from the machine, the doctor can calculate the efficiency of the lungs at mixing gases and therefore whether an operation will be safe. The test was reported by Drs. Oscar J. Balchum and Abe Ravin of the National Jewish Hospital, Denver, to the Trudeau Society.

The speed with which inhaled air is mixed and distributed to various parts of the lungs is seriously reduced, they found, in patients with asthma, emphysema and tuberculosis of the lungs.

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