

Fake Suicide Calls

➤ NOT ALL SUICIDE calls are, as most authorities believe, "a cry for help" a survey in Los Angeles has revealed.

The nation's foremost suicide prevention center is regularly receiving calls from potential suicides who seem to want not to be helped but to "provoke irritation" in the social worker answering the telephone.

These are people who, while they threaten suicide, refuse to give their names. Their primary motive is to elevate their own sense of power by frustrating those who could help them.

About 75% of the callers who withhold their names are of this harassing type, the Los Angeles Suicide

Prevention Center reported after a one-year survey of its tape recordings.

In contrast, 94% of those giving their names expressed a desire for help.

Dr. Norman Tabachnick and David J. Klugman, co-chiefs of the center, found that the no-namers were typically afflicted with a low sense of self-esteem.

They felt weak and frightened and blamed their lack of success on the hostility of others. Usually they were highly suspicious of the motives of others, fearing manipulation.

In telephone interviews with the social worker, they would ask: "What do you people do?" "What is in it for you?"

And in describing their current situation, the no-namers concentrated on slights and injustices at work, and rebuffs from friends.

Yet they turn down offers for office interviews, and few of those who accept ever show up.

By withholding his name, a no-namer puts the other person at a disadvantage, commented the researchers. He then can feel he is turning the tables on those who might hurt him.

The Suicide Prevention Center was founded in 1958. It is now operating as a seven-year pilot project (1962-69) under a Federal grant. Its staff of 35, under the direction of the University of Southern California Medical School, takes phone calls from approximately 400 suicide-prone persons each month.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Dreams Related To Conversation

➤ WHAT YOU DREAM about could be related to what you talk about before you go to sleep.

At the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, Dr. Frederick Baekeland, instructor in psychiatry, reports the pre-sleep talk of a number of volunteers influenced their dreams to a surprising extent.

The volunteers were asked to "free associate"—speak on any subject—for a half hour before going to sleep. Taped to their ears were earphones through which a restful, waterfall-like sound was beamed.

This is known as "white" noise—a mixture of all frequencies in the audible range—which is intended to facilitate free association.

The eyes of the volunteers were covered by ping-pong balls separated into halves, and shining on the eye-

covers was a soft red light supposed to promote visual imagery.

After noting rapid eye movement (REM), which is associated with dreaming, the psychiatrist woke each volunteer to ask what he was dreaming about. Then he compared the dream content to previously tape-recorded conversation.

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BIOCHEMISTRY

Test Tube Antibodies Resemble Natural Ones

➤ ANTIBODIES have been produced in the test tube in a way somewhat similar to the way in which they are probably produced in living bodies, reported two scientists at the University of Colorado.

The experiment, conducted by Drs. George C. Saunders and Donald West King of the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver, is another step toward the goal of controlling disease through antibody synthesis.

The researchers used mouse thymus and spleen treated with an inactive bacterial virus. After an incubation period of 18 hours the cultures were washed and concentrated and an active virus was added. The cultures neutralized from 30% to 93% of the virus, indicating that an antibody had been produced by the tissues.

Scientists foresee that such research could lead to methods of telling the body to make the antibodies it needs and stop production of the ones that harm it.

If this were known, it would be possible to control allergies, among other things. Tissue grafts and perhaps organ transplants also could be done more easily if scientists find a method of destroying antagonistic antibodies.

The antibody synthesis was reported in Science 151:1390, 1966.

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