

PSYCHOLOGY

Motives for Suicide

➤ **INTENSE HATRED** of a person previously both loved and hated is the commonest motive for attempted suicides in persons suffering from psychopathic states, it appears from a study of 200 consecutive cases of attempted suicide admitted to a general hospital in a two-year period.

The study is reported by Dr. I. R. C. Batchelor, deputy physician superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Mental and Nervous Disorders, Edinburgh, Scotland, to the *British Medical Journal* (June 12). At least one-fifth of attempted suicides are suffering from psychopathic states, Dr. Batchelor estimates.

The attempted suicide follows its stimulus, often a quarrel, so fast that the number of such acts which could be forestalled would be very small. Prevention, or prophylaxis, therefore must start in childhood when, or before, the first signs of emotional instability, social maladaptation or delinquency appear.

Almost three-fourths of a group specially studied came from broken homes. There

was a history of psychiatric abnormality in 67% of the cases and of suicide in the family in 14%.

Nearly one-third had not been complaining of nervous symptoms and one-half were not under the care of a doctor.

Besides hate, most significant motives for the attempted suicides were evasion, identification with a dead person, fears, experimentation, the demonstration of omnipotence, and manipulation of the environment.

Most of the attempts were impulsive. Alcohol and fatigue were significant factors, along with quarrels, in precipitating the attempt.

In some cases the would-be suicide tries to turn the tables on the hated person and make the suicide look like murder by the hated person. An example Dr. Batchelor gives is the case of a youth who tried to poison himself with his mother's drugs because she humiliated him before others by ordering him to take his cap off in the house.

Science News Letter, June 26, 1954

STATISTICS

Long-Lived Women

➤ **WOMEN LIVE** longer than men for at least 11 reasons, an authority consulted by the American Medical Association, Chicago, says in answer to a question from a physician. The reasons, given in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (June 12), are:

1. "Males are less resistant to disease than females and this is true from birth onward.
2. "Likewise, the death rate is higher for males than females under adverse conditions.
3. "More males are born dead than females, and this is also true among some animals, including cattle, pigs, and rats.
4. "Not only is the death rate higher among males at birth and during the first day of life, but also practically each year and by about the same percentage.
5. "Nearly all diseases and defects cause more deaths among males than females.

Exceptions are cancer, diabetes, exophthalmic goiter and gallstones.

6. "Many men die from causes that affect women much less often, such as murder, industrial accidents, alcoholism, and suicides.

7. "Men are exposed to many more hazards due to their work, and these include accidents, violence and infections.

8. "The death rate among women from childbirth has been reduced drastically in the last 15 years.

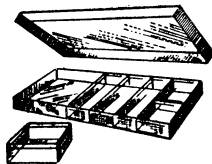
9. "Lung cancer has increased far more among men than among women.

10. "Heart disease takes a much greater toll among men than women.

11. "Improvements in home equipment and safety devices and better and quicker medical and surgical treatment have markedly cut down serious accidents to women in the home."

Science News Letter, June 26, 1954

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Questions

ASTRONOMY—What is the closest Mars can ever approach the earth? p. 409.

BIOCHEMISTRY—What is a new test for cancer? p. 406.

GENERAL SCIENCE—What may Dr. Edward Teller's "flash of genius" lead to? p. 404.

What does Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer consider the modern tyranny? p. 405.

MEDICINE—Should people with blood vessel diseases smoke filter cigarettes? p. 406.

PSYCHIATRY—Who uses "I" most often? p. 408.

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MEDICINE

B Vitamin Needed for Healthy Blood Vessels

➤ **CHOLINE**, ONE of the B vitamins, is needed to keep the heart and blood vessel system healthy, Drs. George F. Wilgram, W. Stanley Hartroft and Charles H. Best of the University of Toronto, Canada, have discovered.

Their findings, reported in *Science* (June 11), apply to young rats. They will have to be confirmed on other species of laboratory animals before their possible significance for human health is considered, the scientists state.

Choline is also needed for healthy livers and kidneys. It was Dr. Best who discovered almost 20 years ago that fatty infiltration of the liver could be cured by choline.

Now he and his associates find that young rats after short periods on a diet low in choline and high in fat, as well as older rats on choline-deficient diets for longer periods, develop damaged heart arteries and aorta. The walls of these important blood vessels get fat deposits and show sclerosis, or hardening.

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