

Chapter 6 — Emotional Repression and Rationalization

*of The Mind at Mischief:
Tricks and Deceptions of the Subconscious and How to Cope with Them*
(1929)

by
William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S.

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Sources for Chapter 6, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Paul Bousfield, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., *The Omnipotent Self: A Study in Self-Deception and Self-Cure* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1923)

[Note: Sadler probably used the American edition, published by E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, in 1923.]

- (2) James Winfred Bridges, Ph.D., *Psychology: Normal and Abnormal* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930)

[Note: This book was published one year after *The Mind at Mischief*; Sadler apparently used an earlier, not-yet-identified publication by Bridges that contained the same text.]

Key

- (a) Green indicates where a source author (other than Sadler) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) Magenta indicates an earlier Sadler book.
- (c) Yellow highlights most parallelisms.
- (d) Tan highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.

- (e) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.
- (f) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (g) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (h) **Red** indicates either: (1) an obvious error on Sadler's part, brought about, in most cases, by miscopying or misinterpreting his source, or (2) Sadler's use of an earlier text of his that contained time-bound information which he didn't revise when presenting it in *The Mind at Mischief*, resulting in a historical impossibility, or (3) Sadler's use of an earlier text of his which he revised in such a way as to contradict that earlier text.
- (i) **Gold** highlights key words or themes which will be discussed in the analysis of the chapter.

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VI — EMOTIONAL REPRESSION AND RATIONALIZATION

6:0.1 AS civilization progresses and primitive man comes more and more to occupy his mind with ethical ideals and to recognize moral standards, many of his primitive desires and natural emotions are found to be greatly at variance with these new standards of thinking and living.

6:0.2 This conflict between the biologic instincts and emotions and the later acquirements of civilization is sometimes very annoying to the individual. The average person seeks to avoid this unpleasantness by rigorously suppressing the objectionable thought, the offending complex.

XXIII: MENTAL CONFLICT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (Bridges 370)

Repression. (Bridges 372)

[contd] Another result of mental conflict is repression. This means the pushing out of consciousness of some unacceptable experience (Br 372).

Again, if a man experiences sentiments of love and hate for the same woman,

loving her for one set of characteristics and hating her for another,

This emotional repression is nothing more nor less than resorting to the technique of pushing out of the mind some unacceptable feeling or objectionable experience.

For instance, it is entirely possible for one to experience the emotions of love and hate for the same person, in varying degrees and under various circumstances.

It is entirely possible for us to love a person because of one set of traits and to hate the same individual because of the possession of other traits which are objectionable.

SOURCE

it often happens that either the hate or the love is put out of mind (Br 372).

It is important to note that according to the view here expressed either side of the conflict may be repressed—the desirable or the undesirable. This is contrary to the Freudian view that only the socially unacceptable trend is repressed.

[See 7:4.3.]

Repressed systems of ideas, feelings and impulses are called “unconscious complexes.”

These unconscious complexes are often directly opposite to conscious experience and behavior (Br 372-73).

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This is not compatible with peace of mind, however,

and sooner or later we set about repressing either our love or our hate.

6:0.3 Right here I want to take issue with the exponents of the purely Freudian theory of emotional repression. The teachings of Freud tend to lead us to believe that it is always the objectionable, the undesirable, the unworthy thought or emotion that is suppressed; but in actual experience I do not find this to be the case. I find that individuals are given to suppressing either the good or the bad, the desirable or the undesirable, according to circumstances.

For instance, one may not only suppress sex thoughts which interfere with the religious ideals, but one may also come to the place where he suppresses religious convictions so as to give more free expression to sex emotions. Any of our profound emotions may conflict and thus lead to more or less suppression.

DEFENSE REACTIONS

6:1.1 Now these suppressed wishes, feelings, emotions, and experiences are sooner or later organized in the subconscious into definite complexes;

and it can easily be imagined that such complexes, existing as they do in the subconscious mind, are all the while directly at variance with, and opposed to, our every-day consciousness and behavior.

SOURCE

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Overcompensation. (Bridges 374)

[contd] One of the most common and obvious consequences of repression

is overcompensation or **defense reaction.**

It is an **exaggerated development** in consciousness and in behavior of the **very opposite** of what has been repressed (Br 374).

It is well known that **cynical persons are often sentimental at heart.**

This is probably why a cynical old **bachelor, if he falls in love late in life,** may become unusually sentimental and perhaps silly.

His love sentiment repressed in adolescence emerges in an undeveloped form, and his resulting behavior is thus not in accordance with his age and other experiences (Br 375).

6:1.2 One of the results of this systematic suppression of unpleasant and undesired experiences

is that we are subconsciously on our guard lest these experiences be discovered and be brought to light.

This is one of the explanations of the so-called **defense reaction.**

Professor Gault has called attention to this in his Introduction, and, as he has suggested, we are all the while on the defensive, trying to put up a front to society which will be directly opposite to that which we are more or less conscious of having suppressed and put away down into the subconscious realms of the mind.

6:1.3 The defense reaction is nothing more than an **exaggeration** in our conscious behavior of the **very opposite** to those things which we may be conscious of having suppressed in our inner life.

6:1.4 **Some one**¹ has suggested that the **cynic is really sentimental at heart;**

the bully is really a coward;

the hard-boiled and unromantic **bachelor** may be, after all, very affectionate and tender, as is sometimes shown **when he falls in love in middle life.**

From adolescence his affections and sentiment have been repressed, and now they all but engulf him as the accumulated repression breaks loose.

SOURCE

[contd] Again, if a person represses a feeling of **inferiority** due to some real or supposed defect in his make-up, he may develop the opposite traits of character, namely, extreme **vanity**, **conceit**, and aggressiveness.

Also when a person's sensuality is repressed he may become on the surface extremely **prudish** and exacting.

It is characteristic of emotions and impulses which are due to over-compensation that they are very intense and impelling. Therefore if we experience any **unusually strong emotion** or dislike, we may suspect that we are perhaps **overcompensating for the opposite impulse or feeling** within ourselves.

This is particularly true of **prejudice** and **intolerance**.

We cannot tolerate what we are defending ourselves against (Br 375).

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We fully understand how those who have an **inferiority** complex often develop a superficial expression of **vanity** and **conceit**, extending even to the borderland of braggadocio.

There is no question that sometimes **prudishness** is only the result of the more or less conscious and long-continued suppression of normal sex desires.

In fact, when we find ourselves experiencing any set of **unusually strong and insistent emotions**, either likes or dislikes, we would do well to suspect that we may be indulging in some sort of defense reaction in a subconscious effort to **compensate for feelings and impulses of the opposite sort** which we may be continuously and subconsciously suppressing.

This is particularly true of **prejudices** and certain forms of **intolerance**.

It is very difficult for the average person to tolerate in other people those things which he is consistently and persistently suppressing in his own experience.

THE TECHNIQUE OF REPRESSION

II: REPRESSION (Bousfield 19)

[contd] One other faculty of the unconscious mind requires special mention, and that is its power of obliterating memories from the conscious mind, or as it is better termed, of *repressing*, since this word not only implies **pushing out** of consciousness, but also **preventing** from coming into consciousness.

It is found that all persons have formed a regular habit of forgetting or partially forgetting, (and so disguising), things which are unpleasant to them. This especially refers to those things which are **unpleasant to their self-respect**, their moral beliefs and ideas,

and their general **pride in themselves**.

The primitive immoralities and thoughts and actions of early childhood which would now **offend their æsthetic and moral susceptibilities**, are, more or less, completely put out of sight, together with a host of unpleasant ideas and thoughts which have cropped up from childhood onwards.

Indeed, there is a general tendency for **anything of an unpleasant nature** to be pushed out of sight (B 19-20).

6:2.1 Emotional suppression really consists of two distinct factors:

the effort to **push** unpleasant things **out** of the consciousness and the further effort to **prevent** their return to consciousness.

6:2.2 We are desirous of suppressing those things which are **unpleasant to our sense of self-respect**, which offend our ego.

We are particularly intolerant of those which assault our **personality-pride**.

Again, we are all the while desirous of getting rid of those ideas, feelings, and memories that **offend our moral ideals and ethical standards**.

In fact, we practise the suppression of **any sort of psychic experience that is unpleasant** to our every-day consciousness.

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6:2.3 Summarizing in another way, it may be said that

It is not only **memories**, however, which are repressed and remain dormant in the unconscious mind. Most of our **primitive instincts** handed on from our savage forefathers before even the evolution of man in his present form, lie similarly buried in this unconscious part of the mind, and we are wont to deny emphatically that we possess these unpleasant instincts (B 21).

we make an effort to suppress all unpleasant **memories**, and to repress those **primitive instincts** which are inconsistent with current civilized society; that is, our unconventional biologic urges.

6:2.4 We form a habit of doing these things. We cultivate a memory for the agreeable, and try to put out of our minds the undesirable and unpleasant. Of course, we do not wholly succeed; we all have unpleasant memories which bob up now and then, and which we would give almost anything to be finally rid of. Nevertheless, on the whole, we do succeed in the practise of this repression technique;

Our upbringing and conscious outlook upon [our primitive instincts], however, causes them to be so abhorrent to us, that we successfully keep **the majority of such ideas and feelings** *from ever coming out of the unconscious in their primitive form* (B 22).

we actually do get rid of **the majority of those things** which we dislike to entertain in our daily consciousness.

This habit of holding on to the pleasant and suppressing the unpleasant is shown in many phases of our daily lives,

We **mislays bills** very readily, but rarely do we mislay a **cheque** (B 20).

as, for instance, in the fact that we may easily **mislays a bill**, but are hardly likely carelessly to throw about a large **check** which has come in as a remittance.

6:2.5 When certain primitive urges or other unpleasant feelings and experiences have been consistently and persistently suppressed, they become organized at length as subconscious complexes; and when that takes place, it is possible for these complexes of repression to seek to gain for themselves action and expression in the life of the individual by indirect methods and through such roundabout channels as the various neuroses—

Occasionally, however, there is a tendency for these ancestral instincts to become conscious, and in our further efforts to prevent this we may develop instead hysterias, obsessions and unreasonable fears, together with other nervous and abnormal signs and symptoms, into the nature of which it is not my intention to inquire further in this present volume (B 22).

All that I wish to emphasise here is that we do push out from the conscious mind unpleasant thoughts and memories, that we do repress and keep in the unconscious mind unpleasant desires and instincts, and that we do, as a result of this, have many unconscious or semi-conscious conflicts within ourselves, which may lead to unpleasant feelings of depression, irritability, fear, or in more pronounced cases hysterias, obsessions, and even permanent mental derangement (B 22-23).

fatigue, anxiety, unreasonable fears, hysteria,

and even semi-conscious experiences.

SOURCE

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[See 22:2.1.]

6:2.6 There can be little doubt, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, that much of our hysteria is, after all, an effort on the part of these imprisoned complexes to seize the domain of personality for the time being, and thus to find temporary relief in a roundabout mode of expression. We know that this is true, because, by properly disposing of these psychic skeletons hidden away in the closet of the subconscious, we are often able to relieve sufferers from various forms of the psychoneuroses.

[See 8:0.5.]

6:2.7 In the case of persons of strong constitution and balanced nervous systems, it is, of course, possible to indulge in this sort of subconscious repression throughout a lifetime without precipitating serious nervous disturbances. It is in the case of those who are constitutionally neurotic that this sort of subconscious suppression results so disastrously.

RATIONALIZATION

[contd] A further and somewhat important result of our possessing so much which is unconscious and of having so many feelings and ideas in consciousness of which we do not know the origin, or of whose origins we have but the vaguest and haziest notion is known as *rationalization* (B 23).

6:3.1 *Rationalization* is another pitfall into which neurotic individuals early fall.

We are not always able to suppress our undesirable memories and unpleasant emotions so as to keep them entirely out of the conscious memory, and so we gradually fall into another species of self-deception in an effort to get along more peacefully with this undesirable residue of psychic life which we are not able completely to suppress. We are tricked by our own inner consciousness into practising a form of deceptive insincerity upon ourselves.

[But the logic of rationalisation is false logic (B 24).]

We develop a system of false logic designed to enable us either to reject or to compromise with certain unacceptable facts which are constantly coming to us from the outside world, and which we cannot bundle up as an unpleasant complex and sink into the oblivion of the subconscious.

Following on this rationalisation comes also a certain conservatism, which tends to retard progress of any sort, which dislikes looking at new ideas, and this for a very obvious reason. Looking at new ideas, examining ourselves or our work very closely, has a tendency to bring to light, from time to time, the very primitive instincts and feelings which we have been at so much pains to repress.

6:3.2 The vast majority of people fear to make new discoveries.

We are afraid we shall be upset by them; that the smooth running of our day-by-day consciousness will be disturbed by newly discovered facts. We dislike to be constantly rearranging our ideas and readjusting our standards of thinking and living. We like to go on somewhat after the care-free manner of nursery days. We don't like to have our mode of life interfered with,

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and so when anything disconcerting comes up we develop a system of logic which enables us, with some show of conscious fairness, to reject the new and hold on to the old, altho strict sincerity would compel us to admit that the old ways are wrong and the new ways better;

[Hence it is that the truth takes long to emerge, and that obsessions and hysterias, and even trivial abnormalities are difficult to cure, for the cure involves seeing our own imperfections naked and undisguised (B 26).]

and so truth has a rugged, uphill road to travel over the inertia of human prejudice, this inborn disinclination to remodel our ways.

6:3.3 Another feature of the practise of this foolish reasoning:

And rather than submit to the indignity of discovering how really imperfect we are, and having our pride in our divinely constituted natures shaken, we have acquired a habit of denying and fighting strenuously against discovering truths connected with either our moral or physical evolution which would be unpleasant to us (B 24).

We all object to having our pride injured.

We dislike to view our naked selves. We really hate to be shown up, and so we are always on the defensive, lest we be led into some sort of practical admission that will injure our pride, debase our ego.

6:3.4 We are particularly eloquent—and, on the surface, logical—when we argue against

Whenever there is a likelihood that examination, particularly through research work, has thrown light on his psychic evolution, on the imperfections of his moral laws, or on the crudity of some conventional custom, the process which takes place in [a man] is much the same.

Firstly, dislike of the idea.

some idea which we dislike, which we have made up our minds we will not accept;

SOURCE

Secondly, on further examination of it, **hatred** of the idea.

Thirdly, rationalisation directed against the idea. Fourthly, contentment, in that he has proved by logic and reason that the idea is wrong (B 25-26).

[This method of dealing with arguments is not peculiar to the lunatic. Examples of its employment are to be seen everywhere around us, and it has become proverbial in the couplet—

“A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still” (Hart 130).]

IX: RATIONALIZATION (Bousfield 98)

The reason for reverting here to rationalization is this. Already I know that there are few readers who will not have discovered some material in this book which will have touched a tender spot in themselves. And since we know that the great **effort** of Narcissism is to **cover up** those tender spots,

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this sort of foolish argument will be kept up in the mind until we develop an intense **hatred** for the thing which we have settled we will not accept.

You know the old saying,

“Convince a man against his will, and he’ll be of the same opinion still.”

Now, this process of arguing inside ourselves against what we wish to keep out of the mind has been called *rationalization*. And rationalization is nothing more nor less than a technique of thinking designed to help us in repressing those things which are unusually difficult of suppression. If we find that forgetfulness and the ordinary pushing of undesirable ideas out of the consciousness will not serve to repress them, we resort to rationalization.

6:3.5 We employ rationalization in our **efforts** to smooth over and **cover up** the **tender spots** in our experience.

It is marvelous with what ingenuity we will take some real weakness of character

SOURCE

and to deceive ourselves in thinking that either they are not there, or better still, that they are **virtues** and really particularly healthy spots, it is as well to examine these tendencies and observe one of the chief methods by which we do produce such disguises successfully (B 98).

Now, the unhappy thing about life is that we are continually wishing to do things or feel things or believe things which do not follow logically upon other things which we have also had to feel or think or believe at some time.... Moreover, we very often do not wish to believe or think things which do follow logically on actual facts which have gone before.

How are we then, as reasonable people, to deal with the situation? By **rationalization**, [continues at 6:4.2]

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and argue ourselves into recognizing it as a **virtue**.

If it were not so tragic it would really be amusing to see patients, in the consulting room, rationalize after this foolish and insincere fashion, even going so far as to try to convince the doctor that the obvious plague-spots of the mind should be treated with consideration and tenderness rather than be attacked with rude determination to effect their complete obliteration.

6:3.6 We are all conscious of more or less that is inconsistent in our living.

We dislike to get right down to brass tacks and settle our conflicts, harmonize our complexes, compose our disagreements, and otherwise put our mental house in order.

We much prefer this easier and lazier method of psychic **rationalization**.

We want to do something which, our better nature or mental censor tells us, isn't right; and so, instead of resorting to true logic, calling conscience to the bar, hearing the testimony and settling the matter in accordance with the real facts, we resort to rationalization,

[This word signifies that we **find reasons for doing or believing** things which are of a pleasant nature and agreeable to us, and *vice versa* (B 23).]

which is nothing but a dishonest way of **finding a reason for doing** what we want to do **or believing** what we want to believe.

THE TECHNIQUE OF RATIONALIZATION

6:4.1 Rationalization is resorting to the **magic** methods of the nursery.

And we have already learnt that *the infant has early associated words and sounds with **magic**, since by the persistent use of these he has **got what he wanted*** (B 99).

In the days when we were children in our cribs, if we wanted something, or desired to be rid of unpleasant surroundings, we merely uttered a cry, and as a rule we succeeded in **getting what we wanted;**

but as we grow up, we are forced to abandon our cry-baby stunt; and thus, to the adult, rationalization becomes a substitute for his infantile crying. Foolish reasoning becomes the new magic wand with which he can make his situation in life more pleasant and acceptable. He "kids" himself into believing that the thing he knows is not right, is, after all, not far from right, and perhaps is altogether just and righteous. This is a subject which we will discuss more fully in a later chapter.

SOURCE

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6:4.2 Many neurotic individuals almost wear themselves out with this constant process of rationalization,

[continued from 6:3.6] by finding a reason which suits our purpose; and this can only be done, as a rule, by leaving out some important factor, by ignoring some truth, and by arguing from false premises.

We do not do this consciously, that would be unworthy.

Our unconscious censor manages to delete from consciousness the unpleasant truth, as we have already pointed out, and brings forth an array of facts which appear irrefutable,

and he succeeds in giving us most plausible reasons so that we may believe that which is most convenient to us (B 99-100).

[See B 100-04.]

In a similar way, on the much discussed subject of "prohibition" the prohibitionist will rationalise on a certain few facts, in order to support his emotions and desires (B 104-05).

this ever-present effort to find a reason that suits their purpose and convenience.

Presently this becomes a subtle habit of one's inner life; it becomes the accepted technique of the subconscious,

and the subconscious censor accepts this as the normal mode of reasoning and so is able constantly to push up into the conscious mind entire groups of logical arguments, ready made,

thus putting us only to the trouble of saying "yes, yes," and going on with this merry whirl of self-deception and dishonest living.

In time the subconscious becomes so expert that it is able day by day to "kid" us into the enjoyable belief in whatever we wish to believe.

6:4.3 We are peculiarly prone to rationalize on such matters as politics, religion, sociology,

and even prohibition.

SOURCE

[The literature on the effects of smoking is enormous, but much of it is of little importance scientifically because of its definitely polemical nature (Conklin 373).]

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I am amused frequently in my office at the way people reason about such a commonplace thing as tobacco. This is a subject on which I seldom find any attitude that is fair, sincere, or scientific. Those who use tobacco rationalize in its behalf much as a mother would argue in defense of the virtues and beauties of her own offspring. The majority of those who do not use tobacco likewise rationalize against it in the same unscientific and unreasonable fashion.

6:4.4 But the great mischief of this habitual rationalization, this effort to sustain our self-pride, to bolster up our self-defense, is that it interferes with our progress in life. It is the great enemy of education, the great foe of truth,

And in order to examine facts and to get rid of rationalization as far as possible, we must try, with the utmost power at our command to refuse that reaction of self-defence and self-pride, which prevents us from looking at ourselves and from realising that most of our opinions about ourselves may be completely erroneous.

and we cannot hope to break ourselves of this tendency toward rationalization until we cultivate the habit of looking at things honestly, fairly, and squarely—

until we learn to face facts willingly, to desire the truth,

We must be prepared to accept temporary, not fixed, judgments, based upon the evidence which we have. We must be prepared to reverse those judgments in the light of new evidence. We must be careful not to reject this evidence merely because we do not like it (B 106).

to accept all the evidence and to reserve judgment until the evidence is all in.

SOURCE

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We must wait until we are thoroughly convinced that we have been honest with ourselves and then render judgment, and, like real men and women, abide by that judgment and see that it is enforced in our consciousness.

6:4.5 If will is the chief executive of the human intellect, and our various mental powers may be regarded as the cabinet of the psychic administration,

[Reason is simply the attorney-general of the mind, appearing before the supreme court of the will. How frequently we see men who persistently hold on to certain opinions which are contrary to all reason. They will so to think, and you may be sure that such persons will see to it that their servile reasoning powers furnish them with abundant, and, to themselves, satisfactory reasons for their positions (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 58).]

then we can only come to regard reason as a wholly servile attorney general, ever ready to supply its master and chief executive with apparently logical and superficially legal reasons for doing anything that its master really wants to do.

The sophistries of the subconscious, together with the deceptions of selfish human nature, will furnish sufficient evidence to enable the court to hand down decisions which will in every sense justify us in pursuing the course we really want to pursue.

6:4.6 Human reason is far from being true to logic and loyal to truth.

[We must not forget, even in the case of our modern civilized men, that human beings are controlled by their hearts and not by their heads (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 6-7).]

Man, after all, is ruled by his heart and not by his head;

*Of course this does not imply that no one is ever capable of putting his conscious feelings on one side, and examining a subject in spite of preconceived ideas and desires, but that this is the exception rather than the rule (B 105, footnote).

I repeat, whatever it is that you really and truly long to do, reason will sooner or later find justification for your doing.

Of course, to some degree, all this is modified in the case of the enlightened and disciplined mind of the educated individual.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION

6:5.1 For the purposes of this narrative we will call a certain young woman of twenty-seven, Jane. Jane was a movie fan, and how the silent drama did thrill her! Hardly a day passed that she was not at the movies—indeed, she went twice a day, and sometimes three times. This constant arousal of her emotions without adequate opportunity for expressional relief gradually wore on her nerves until she was compelled to seek medical advice.

[And there is no doubt that the unconscious effect of such mental stimuli is excessively deleterious to the race in general.... Nor does the evil stay itself here. For the phantasy in the cinematograph consists usually in the fulfilment of impossible wishes, and in this, as in other cases, the emotional output is increased out of all proportion to the real exciting causes. This results in a misplacement in the emotional output in the unconscious mind, which in its turn is the basis of many neurotic conditions which may even require a physician's aid to eradicate (B 150).]

There is no question in my mind that this tendency to allow the mind to dwell upon exciting and emotional scenes in the motion-picture house, this repeated arousal of the strongest emotions that surge in the human breast, without providing any opportunity for the mind and body to respond to these emotional urges, represents a real and very deleterious strain upon the nervous system.

6:5.2 At the height of this movie debauch, our young lady began to entertain a secret love for a man in the neighborhood; he was unmarried, but was already engaged, and this affection she bottled up in her own soul, never telling anyone about it until she confessed it in the medical office.

6:5.3 Here, you see, is a vicious combination of circumstances: A highly unstable and semi-hysterical woman in almost constant attendance at the movies, having her emotions inordinately aroused, is all the while suppressing a secret love affair securely within the confines of her own soul; and, as this experience always does, sooner or later, it got her—she collapsed. After six months of training, in which she was taught how to indulge in legitimate self-expression—in her case more particularly in public singing—she was eventually able to go to the movies once a week without any deleterious effect, and in time succeeded in eliminating and sublimating her affection for the man, who was married soon after her collapse. She seems now well on the road to complete recovery, and there is no reason why she should not enjoy good health, as she has learned how more properly and naturally to live her emotional life.

6:5.4 Emotional troubles, of course, are not all due to suppression of sex-complexes. **As I shall endeavor to explain in a subsequent chapter,** there are other complexes which are capable of making quite as much mischief when they are unnaturally suppressed.

To illustrate this, let me relate the story of a young married woman with an inordinate social ambition. She was what you would call, in modern terminology, a social climber. She had the entrée into society, but she didn't have the wherewithal properly to carry on.

There was more or less trouble at home because of the money she spent on her social activities, but, notwithstanding all this, she aspired to gain the top round of the social ladder, and she had all but succeeded when her overexertions and her suppression of the mixed emotions connected with her social climbing resulted in her undoing. She had a nervous collapse—literally went to pieces.

6:5.5 This woman confessed to me that she used to “burn up” with envy at the thought of her social rivals; that she indulged in anxiety to the point of emotional white heat when she heard of the achievements of women in her social set who were gaining on her or forging ahead of her. She told me that since early girlhood she had indulged this inordinate longing for social leadership. In this particular case there was a great deal of suppression on her part of the urge to power. The emotion of pride was involved in her manifold activities, and she was very sensitive in this respect. When she met with any temporary defeat or social slight, she was intensely hurt, and she harbored the desire for revenge against those who chanced to incur her displeasure.

6:5.6 She was much interested in charitable work, civic enterprises, etc., and rationalized to herself that all her social ambitions were justified because of the good she would do when she once attained the unquestioned leadership of her set.

Her foolish and deceptive subconscious made her believe that all her strivings were unselfish and that her ambitions were wholly altruistic. Nevertheless, the crash came, and it was in a sanatorium that she found herself when she began to realize what a fool she had been.

She afterward said to me: "Doctor, it doesn't pay to harbor inordinate ambition. It doesn't pay to want too much, and most of all it doesn't pay to suppress in your mind and nurse in your heart, grievances, grudges, or any other emotional sore spot."

SPIRITUAL ANEMIA

6:6.1 Not long ago I came in contact with rather an unusual case of mental disturbance brought on by emotional repression; it further illustrates my contention that ill health from emotional suppression does not always indicate that the suppressed emotions are of a sex nature. This is a case of the suppression of religious feelings. The subject was a business woman about forty years of age, who had had average religious training in her youth, and who had given more or less attention to her religious emotions until she was about thirty years of age, when she came to Chicago and became connected with a large concern. Business and social activities and other "cares of his world" multiplied, and before long she found herself quite neglectful of all things religious.

Notwithstanding her absence from church and her apparent indifference to everything of a spiritual nature, she had the constantly recurring conviction that she should pay more attention to these matters; but she kept putting this aside, suppressing it. She rationalized, telling herself that the religion that had been taught her at home was largely superstition, but she gained little comfort from this line of reasoning; so she began to indulge in the rationalization that she was too much occupied with her other duties now, and would attend to these matters in the future; that she perhaps had paid too much attention to religion in the past, and that it was due to herself now to take full advantage of her business and social opportunities. She became fairly happy with the life she led, all the while subconsciously—and sometimes consciously—suppressing, repressing, putting out of her mind, this urge to spiritual growth and development.

6:6.2 Years went by and her health began to fail. She grew nervous, began to suffer from fatigue and eventually from insomnia, and it was only then that she sought medical advice. You can be sure it was quite difficult to find out what was the matter with her. She didn't know. A thorough examination revealed that she was organically sound. She professed to be happy in every respect and assured us that there was no emotional conflict going on in her mind; but the sounding-line of emotional analysis revealed in the depths of her soul this suppressed conviction, this subtle struggle, this spiritual starvation, this suppression of religious emotion—and when these things were brought out and placed before her she was frank to confess that the root of her trouble had been found.

[See 1:7.4.]

SOURCE

6: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Before a week had gone by she had established connection with a group of friends who were engaged in religious research, friends from whom she had been more or less separated for years. In two or three other ways she made connections of a religious, or spiritual nature, and within one month from that time she was a new woman, gaining in weight, to some extent relieved of her fatigue, and enjoying refreshing sleep almost every night.

6:6.3 I have never in all my professional experience seen a more remarkable or rapid transformation than this one which followed the discovery of repressed emotions and their normal elimination.

1. An indication that the Bridges text came before Sadler's.