

Part II — Nervous Tension

of *Americanitis—Blood Pressure and Nerves* (1925)
by William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S.

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Sources for Part II, in the order in which they appear

- (1) William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S., *Worry and Nervousness: Or, The Science of Self-Mastery* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1914, 1923)
- (2) William S. Sadler, M.D., "Stop a Minute!", *The American Magazine*, April 1925, pp. 46–47, 179–83
- (3) William S. Sadler, M.D., *The Truth About Spiritualism* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1923)
- (4) William S. Sadler, M.D., *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1912)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates a Sadler text (book or magazine article).
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallels.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the two parallel texts pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (f) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.

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PART II—NERVOUS TENSION

2:0.1 Some individuals are born into this world with their nerves so set on edge that they early begin to lead a tense and hectic life. There is no doubt but that a good deal of the high tension of modern times is directly due to this innate nervous tendency of such a large percentage of the population. The man who is tense, high strung, of a restless and driving disposition; the woman who is irritable, restless, fidgety and eternally in search of new thrills, I say, the men and women of this type are distinctively American.

IX: "AMERICANITIS." OR THE HIGH PRESSURE LIFE (*Worry and Nervousness* 107)

"AMERICANITIS" (*Worry and Nervousness* 116)

The man bald and gray in his youth,

the man a victim of **dyspepsia**, of nervousness, of narcotics and stimulants,

is a **distinct American institution**.

He is an engine burned out before his time;

but his work has been done ... (*W&N* 117).

2:0.2 The man who is bald or gray at forty,

who is emaciated, **dyspeptic**, tense, and irritable,

represents a machine that has burned out before its time,

an individual prematurely exhausted and all but ready for the scrap heap at an age when he should be most healthy and efficient.

Such an individual is distinctly an American institution, and represents the price that must be paid if we are going to drive ahead, determined to make speed at all hazards, to out-rival our competitors and lead the world in every sphere of activity, no matter if it is at the cost of burning out the boilers and wrecking the machine.

WORRY AND ANXIETY

2:1.1 Not only does the state of nervous tension—worry or spasm of the attention—influence blood pressure, as we shall note subsequently, and therefore contribute to modern high tension; but directly, by their effects upon the nervous system, these mental states contribute enormously to the total quantity of our national restlessness.

“STOP A MINUTE!” (*The American Magazine*, April 1925)

WHEN your mind is tense,

this tension is more or less communicated to the muscles.

And this muscular tenseness produces other physical results,

not the least of which is a tendency to sleeplessness (*SM* 180).

[contd] We now believe that sleep may be induced merely by complete relaxation of the muscles.

Nervous tension, which interferes with this relaxation, is therefore the great cause of insomnia (*SM* 180).

2:1.2 When you get your mind on a thing and can't get it off,

this mental tension is more or less communicated to the muscles,

and this muscular tension in turn produces physical manifestations,

not the least of which is the tendency to sleeplessness.

We now believe that sleep may be induced by perfect relaxation of the muscles,

that any muscular tension which is carried over into the night directly contributes to insomnia.

2:1.3 While the tendency to this nervous high tension is inherited, there is a great deal which can be done to bring about improvement. Particularly is this true if we begin properly to train the children of nervous tendencies when they are yet young. Self-control, relaxation, poise, adjustment, etc., can all be taught these children, so that many of them who are born with very great nervous tendencies can grow up to be very well-controlled citizens, quite free from this irritability and high tension.

[*Note:* The story of “Mary” in 2:12.1, below, is another illustration.]

2:1.4 Just the day of this writing I saw a little fellow—the child of nervous parents—who has been so trained the past few months that almost all outward signs of his nervous tendency have been obliterated. The child exhibits every evidence of good nervous control and really seems to be an entirely different individual as compared with the nervous, fidgety, restless child it was a few months ago.

COMBINED INFLUENCES

2:2.1 Now it will be clear to the reader that some individuals are victims of all three forms of modern high tension. They are not only nervous, but they partake of drugs which serve to aggravate their nervousness; they upset their digestion and nutrition so that they suffer more or less from increased acidity (decreased alkalinity), and in addition to all this, and more particularly as a result of these things, they come to suffer from high blood pressure;

so that in the end they suffer from toxic irritability, nervous high tension, and mechanical high pressure all combined. We often find such individuals standing in imminent danger of nervous prostration on the one hand or rupture of a blood vessel and apoplexy on the other.

2:2.2 **Emotional conflicts.**—

You will find that *emotional conflicts* are another great cause of nervous tension (*SM* 47).

Many persons suffer from high tension as the result of constant emotional conflict.

They haven't mastered the art of compromising between the emotions of the animal and the ideals and high aims of the angel.

Perhaps you do not realize

Many of us fail to recognize

that you are, more or less, a dual personality:

that we are a queer mixture of two temperaments,

The result is that

that we are all more or less double personalities,

a constant succession of "sham battles" is being fought in your soul (*SM* 47).

and a great deal of the tension we see results from

these "sham battles" which are being fought in the souls of many otherwise healthy, good men and women.

2:2.3 Young people especially suffer from this sort of conflict.

[contd] In the mind of every modern man and woman there is a clash

There is a serious clash in the mind of every modern human being

between primitive instincts and civilized ideals and conventions.

between the instincts, urges and longings of the savage, and the ideals, conventions and fashions of civilized man;

SOURCE

The failure to realize this,

and to know how to adjust and to regulate these conflicts,

results in nervous tension and its aftermath of nervous exhaustion, brain fag, neurasthenia, and so on (*SM* 47).

[contd] I don't mean that I believe in all the quirks of modern Freudian philosophy.

That system is helpful in getting at the bottom of some troubles.

But as for the theory that all forms of worry, tension, and nervous eccentricity are of a sex origin—

well, I simply don't believe it (*SM* 47).

[contd] I recognize that there are other instincts and impulses in all normal persons which are just as strong as the sex impulse (*SM* 47).

II: AMERICANITIS

and it is the failure to understand this fact,

and still more, the failure to know how to compromise, adjust and regulate these conflicts,

that results in so much nervous high tension and the aftermath of nervous exhaustion, brain fag, neurasthenia, etc.

2:2.4 Now, I don't mean by this that I am a believer in all the nonsense that has been put out under the guise of *modern Freudian philosophy*.

When I have a patient who has a sex worry, I find

the Freudian system very helpful in trying to get at the bottom of the thing

and helping them over their trouble;

but when it comes to the belief that all forms of worry, tension and nerves are of a sex origin,

then I dissent.

While we all recognize much that is valuable in Freud's teaching, it should be stated that he has not convinced the majority of psychologists and psychotherapists that all nervous disorders have a sex origin.

2:2.5 We recognize that there are other human instincts and impulses just as strong as the sex urge.

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

First of all there comes the instinct to live, to get food, and then, in many individuals, the religious emotion is very powerful, so that we cannot accept the Freudian doctrine that all our nervous troubles are due to suppression of the emotions and further that the particular emotion suppressed that is responsible for the trouble is the sex emotion.

2:2.6 **Dreams.**—

XXVIII: THE RELIEF OF REPRESSED EMOTIONS (*Worry & Nervousness* 351)

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PROPRIETIES (*Worry & Nervousness* 356)

[contd] Some practitioners of psychoanalysis go so far as to practically put a sexual interpretation upon every dream that passes through the human mind ... (*W&N* 356).

VIII: CRYSTALIZED FEAR AND DEFINITE DREADS (*Worry & Nervousness* 95)

DREAMS AND MEMORY DREADS (*Worry & Nervousness* 100)

There is no doubt in my mind but that the unremembered nightmares of a frightful nightmare

Neither do psychologists accept the teaching that

all our dreams are susceptible of having an immediate sex interpretation and significance placed upon them;

and in this connection, it is well to emphasize the fact that many nervous people are greatly perturbed by their dreams, not only by the nightmares which they remember, but by those which they are quite unconscious of during the waking time. They have some vivid dream, wake with a start, sometimes with night clothing wet with perspiration,

and although they cannot remember a single feature of their dream,

SOURCE

are perfectly able to render the patient so nervous and uneasy as almost entirely to unfit him for the performance of his customary duties the following day (*W&N* 101).

“STOP A MINUTE!” (*The American Magazine*, April 1925)

[contd from 2:2.6] Our primary emotions

have to do with work,

recreation,

religion,

as well as with sex life;

and if we are either unduly *repressing* our emotions in *any* domain,

or are failing to *control* them,

we are bound to suffer from psychic tension,

which will affect our nervous tension (*SM* 47).

II: AMERICANITIS

they are upset all day by it,

yes, maybe the shock and disturbance extend even to other days.

2:2.7 There is no question but that the suppression of

our primary emotions,

at least their oversuppression,

whether they have to do with ambition in our work,

with play and recreation,

with religion and worshipfulness,

or with our sex or social life;

I say,

in whatever domain we may be unduly repressing our emotional life,

we are bound to suffer from this sort of psychic tension

and in time this tension is going to creep out over the nerves to the body,

and in the end it is going to contribute its quota to Americanitis or modern high tension.

CONSCIENCE IN RELATION TO NERVOUS TENSION

2:3.1 I am not unmindful of the value of conscience in the maintenance of the standards and ethics of modern civilization,

As a physician, I am constantly having patients who are “sick,”

but as a physician I am constantly having to treat well-meaning men and women who are sick

for no other reason than that they are victims of their own conscientious scruples (*SM* 47).

for no other reason than that they are victims of their own conscientious scruples.

[contd] For example, we certainly should pay enough attention to our health

2:3.2 It seems too bad that we can't learn how to pay sufficient attention to our health

to keep from violating the laws that affect it.

to keep from violating the laws of old Mother Nature

But why go to the other extreme?

without going to the other extreme

and becoming so solicitous of our physical welfare, so introspective regarding health, that we get sick from this overattention to our vital machinery, from this

Many of you have a meddlesome habit of “listening in” on your vital processes.

meddlesome habit of “listening in” on our vital processes;

You become so concerned over your physical welfare, so solicitous about your vital machinery, that you are constantly worrying about it (*SM* 47).

and so, in the moral realm, it seems too bad that we can't enjoy the benefits of the guidance of our conscience without falling into this tendency to make ourselves sick by being over-conscientious.

SOURCE

I know people who are so “conscientious” over small details of hygiene that

they make a religion out of the observance of these details.

I have one patient, for instance, who believes it is a positive sin to eat between meals (*SM 47*).

Conscience is largely controlled by our inherited and acquired standards of right and of wrong. It is not always enlightened (*SM 47*).

AS FOR the conscience that directs our actions from the point of morals, it is of great value; but don’t get the idea that your individual conscience is always and infallibly “the voice of God” (*SM 47*).

[repeated] Conscience is largely controlled by our inherited and acquired standards of right and of wrong (*SM 47*).

II: AMERICANITIS

2:3.3 Again, we sometimes allow our conscience to assume jurisdiction over things that do not really belong to its realm.

We take minor matters of hygiene and become so conscientious over them that

we really make a religion out of our health practices.

Many persons become so faddish over their health beliefs that they become conscientious about trifles.

I have a patient at the present time who believes it is a positive sin to eat between meals,

and that is a good illustration of how you can take commonplace practices that may be good in and of themselves, and by making a religion out of them you can make the mistake of regarding their occasional infraction as a sin.

2:3.4 Again, conscience is not always enlightened.

The physician is not disposed to accept

conscience as the “voice of God to the soul.”

We must come to regard

conscience as being merely our inherited and acquired standards of right and wrong.

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

An American mother's conscience would impel her to lay down her life to save her child. A Hindu mother's conscience

would impel *her* to throw her babe into the jaws of a crocodile! (*SM* 47)

Conscience tells you to do right;

but its dictates as to what is right are very different in different people (*SM* 47).

I could recite cases by the score of splendid men and women

who have become semi-invalids,

simply through worry over the demands of a misguided conscience.

Here are a few who have come to me only recently:

A young man who has almost wrecked his health and his career

by worrying over trifling indiscretions of his youth.

Nothing serious, mind you;

and nothing which is not entirely past and done with now (*SM* 47).

Conscience is merely our ethical guide, but it may not always be right.

The same conscience in you that may, because of enlightenment and practiced judgment, direct you aright—

that same conscience in a Hindoo mother

impels her to throw her babe into the jaws of a crocodile.

Conscience tells us to do right,

but never tells us what right is.

I could recite cases here by the score, how splendid men and women

have made themselves sick,

have developed a chronic semi-invalidism,

as a result of worry over the demands of a misguided conscience.

I can run through half a dozen that are right on my hands at the present time.

A young man who has all but wrecked his health and ruined his career

because of overconscientious worry about some very trifling sex indiscretion of his younger life.

Mind you, nothing really serious—

just trifling things in the nature of dreams and troublesome thoughts,

SOURCE

[contd] Then here is a minister who has become hyper-conscientious about his work.

He has ruined his health, has nervous prostration, and now has developed that quite common fear—

the fear of having committed the unpardonable sin (*SM* 47, 179).

[contd] Here is a splendid woman

who has almost worried herself insane—why? One evening, as she was saying her prayers, an incongruous thought passed through her mind.

The thing seemed so sacrilegious that

she has brooded over it, accusing herself of incredible sinfulness.

It is mighty hard to go insane through worry alone; otherwise, she might have worried herself into an asylum (*SM* 179).

II: AMERICANITIS

but he has taken these things so seriously that, as I say, he has all but ruined himself.

2:3.5 Then here is a minister who started in along this line and became so hyperconscientious over his work

and so exercised over the salvation of his flock that

he has ruined his health, has nervous prostration, and now has become possessed of that common fear and worry,

viz, that he has committed the unpardonable sin.

2:3.6 Here is a splendid woman,

the mother of three children, around 30 years of age

who had a passing thought go through her mind one evening as she was saying her prayers,

and the thing seemed so sacrilegious,

she became so exercised over it that

she has all but driven herself to the insane asylum.

She didn't lose her mind because her heredity was too good. There is no insanity in the family, and it is mighty hard to go crazy just from worry alone.

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

Most folks who go to the insane asylum over worry already had a through ticket to that institution when they were born into this world, and worry simply cut down on their stop-over and sent them on a little ahead of the time when they would naturally be due there.

[contd] Here is another fine woman,
the mother of three children. She is so over-conscientious about them
that she has made herself a nervous wreck.

From the time her first child was born
she has seemed to forget her husband's claims on her, and has lived only for her children.

Which, by the way, shows how twisted our consciences sometimes become (*SM* 179).

[contd] She said to me one day,
“Doctor, it is a fearful responsibility to have the lives of these children put into my hands,
for me to mold and train and direct” (*SM* 179).

[contd] *Of course* it is a responsibility.

2:3.7 Here is a woman

who is taking the raising of her children so seriously—three of them—

that she is a nervous wreck,

and she has all but broken up her home.

The moment the first child was born into that family

she forgot all about her husband and lived only for the child.

Little does she realize that these children are going to grow up, get married or run away from home, and that in her old age she will be left alone with her husband, but

as she said to me:

“Doctor, it is a fearful responsibility to have the lives of these young children put into your hands

to mold and to train and educate for their life work.”

Of course it is a responsibility,

SOURCE

But she took a strange way of meeting it,
when she worried herself sick and had to
go to a sanitarium—

leaving strangers to look after her children!
(*SM* 179)

[contd] Conscience serves a divine
purpose in human experience.

But it can be so misused

as to become a menace to health and
happiness; even to goodness itself (*SM*
179-80).

[contd] Much of our nervous tension
comes from our craze for speed, thrills,
excitement.

We want to drive fast motor cars and to
ride on “limited trains” (*SM* 180).

II: AMERICANITIS

but her worrying over it has now broken
down her health and she is in a sanitarium
trying to get well,

while strangers are trying to raise her
children.

2:3.8 And so I might go on multiplying
illustrations of how this wonderful thing
we call conscience, which is so
indispensable to personal character and
which is one of the props of civilized
society—I say, I could go on showing
how

it not only serves its divine purpose in
human experience,

but how it can be also so misused,

so prostituted

as to become a disease-producing agent,

become a real cause of Americanitis, or
modern high tension.

THE CRAZE FOR THRILLS

2:4.1 Early in life we begin to seek for
thrills. At a tender age the small boy
wants to ride the roller coaster. His
seniors crave to be hurled through space
at increasingly rapid velocity.

We want automobiles that go faster and
faster,

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

and we are foolish enough to drive them at a rate that is causing the automobile to become a well recognized cause of death in this country.

The moving picture makers understand this craving for thrills and they plan more and more to give us pictures that surprise and startle us.

V: THE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 121)

4. THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 128)

The average man

likes to dabble with the extraordinary.

We tend to overlook the remarkable nature of the common occurrences of everyday life,

and we long to make contact with big things and unusual events. We enjoy the exhilaration of talking through the air; wireless telephony and radio appeal to our imagination;

2:4.2 We turn our backs upon the things and spectacles that are tame and drab.

The average American

goes in quest of the lurid, the spectacular, and the startling; whether it is the movie, the theater, or the novel—he goes in quest of sensation and exhilaration.

2:4.3 We tire of the commonplace;

we crave the extraordinary;

we loathe that which is natural and everyday,

SOURCE

and we long to project the experiment one step further to hoist our spiritual aerials and get the wireless waves from other worlds (*TTAS* 131).

“STOP A MINUTE!” (*The American Magazine*, April 1925)

I had a young woman patient, some time ago,

who had come to Chicago from a small town farther west.

She wanted more diversion and excitement than she could get at home.

In order to support herself, she secured a position which kept her busy eight hours a day.

At night she went to the theatre or to dances—often to both (*SM* 180).

[contd] She kept up this pace for two and a half years.

II: AMERICANITIS

and we seek for the phenomenal, even the supernatural, not hesitating to satisfy our thirst for the unusual by seeking to penetrate the veil of death and communicate with the spirits of those who have gone beyond.

JAZZ CHASING

2:5.1 Miss G.

was not quite 30 years of age.

A few years back she had been disappointed in a love affair, which resulted in

her coming from the West to Chicago

to seek diversion and environmental change.

She was lonesome and night after night she went from the theater to the dance, and from dancing to the theater. It was parties and suppers.

She was a working girl and was employed eight hours each day.

The income from an estate was not sufficient to support her so she sought to supplement her income by daily toil,

and this pace she kept up for two and a half years.

SOURCE

Meanwhile, she had begun to lose strength and weight.

When she finally came to me for medical advice,

she said:

Doctor, I am

getting more nervous every day.

I am traveling a pace that is killing me, and yet I don't know how to stop.

I just can't stay at home evenings.

I have lost all interest in reading.

It is go-go-go all the time!

What am I to do?" (SM 180)

[contd] This patient, after three weeks in bed, with rest and proper food,

II: AMERICANITIS

Slowly she began to lose in strength as well as weight.

Her sleep began to be more and more disturbed. The dark circles began to appear underneath her eyes. She was getting more and more nervous and irritable.

In fact, when she finally came to seek medical advice,

she described herself as follows:

2:5.2 "Doctor, I am

going to pieces. I am running down and

getting more nervous every day.

I am traveling a pace that is killing me, and yet I don't know how to stop.

I just can't stay at home evenings.

I have lost all interest in reading.

I am madly driving on in quest of happiness, satisfaction, or something,

and I don't find it. I started out more than two years ago to drown my sorrows, to seek diversion and comfort, but I haven't found them. I am just about all in. I fear the end is just around the corner.

What am I going to do?"

2:5.3 Now, here is a very common case of high-tension anxiety, with nervous breakdown just ahead.

Here is a patient who, following three weeks in bed with proper nourishment,

SOURCE

was given a definite program of work, play, study, relaxation, social life:

a well-ordered, well-balanced scheme of living.

Her nerves have recovered

and she seems to be supremely happy (*SM* 180).

[*Note:* In *Worry and Nervousness*, Sadler writes: “Dr. Cabot [in his 1914 book *What Men Live By*] has arrived at the conclusion that there are but four essentials to the real enjoyment of life. These he calls work, play, love, and worship” (*W&N* 327).]

II: AMERICANITIS

has for more than a year been following a definite program of work, play, study, relaxation, social life—

a well-ordered, well-balanced scheme of living.

Her nerves have recovered.

She seems to be supremely happy.

She has gotten hold of the idea that there are at least three or four sides to a human being

and that they must all be adequately exercised; that our program of life must be more or less well-balanced.

2:5.4 This young woman now finds that she is interested in psychology, sociology, and even astronomy. She reads a variety of things. She indulges in a varied social life. She is at an evening party and dance maybe twice a month instead of every night. She is not up until one or two o'clock every night as her former life compelled her to be. Well, in a word, she is simply living a normal, natural, average life now, and finds, as she says, indescribable happiness, undreamed of pleasure, in doing the things that are adding to her store of information, while she is taking a new interest in her work and as a result she has the satisfaction of having had two promotions within a little more than a year, and seems to be on the road to developing into an efficient, healthy and unusually happy individual.

COMMERCIAL HIGH TENSION

[contd] Every man knows the danger of high tension resulting from the drive of American business life.

Ambition, competition,

speeding-up processes—

these are all very well, if you don't allow them to enslave you (*SM* 180).

XL: THE EMANCIPATED LIFE (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 493)

THE BONDAGE OF CIVILIZATION (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 493)

This is well illustrated by the case of the young woman from the tenement district, who went to work in a box factory, to make paper boxes.

2:6.1 Take just a passing look at the game of commerce as it is played in this country at the present time,

the fierce competition, the intense struggle for business.

The organization of the modern business world is such that it contributes markedly to the production of our national high tension.

The speeding-up process of our manufacturing establishments

tends to make mere machines of the workers,

while contributing to gradual exhaustion of their nervous energy, so that after a period of high tension they fall victims to low tension, exhaustion and prostration.

2:6.2 This is well illustrated by the factory girl

SOURCE

She was paid for her services. at so much a hundred boxes. She reported that she enjoyed the work, and she was very sociable with the other young girls who worked with her, some of whom were younger than she. After the first few weeks she ceased to talk with her fellow-workers, and her sociability at home was noticeably decreased. When asked for an explanation for this change in temperamental behavior,

she replied:

“I have learned that I cannot make so many boxes when I talk, therefore I cannot earn so much money” (PF&F 493).

“STOP A MINUTE!” (*The American Magazine*, April 1925)

There is a point, on every man’s gauge of nervous intensity, which is the maximum of safety (SM 180).

II: AMERICANITIS

who was asked by a welfare worker as to what she thought about while she made paper boxes,

and to this question the girl replied:

“Think? I don’t think. I get paid so much a thousand for making these boxes

and I have discovered when I think I cannot make so many boxes.

The less I think, the more boxes I make. I don’t think; I just make boxes.”

2:6.3 There is a point beyond which efforts to speed up the individual worker—to more highly organize and systematize there is a point beyond which the efficiency expert dare not go, unless you are willing to pay the price of overstraining the human machine, overtiring the human mind and body.

There is a certain point on the gauge of nervous intensity which indicates the maximum of safety,

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

the point beyond which you cannot go in your effort to speed up, to augment efficiency, unless you are willing to pay the price of sacrificing the health and happiness of the men and women who form the individual human cogs in the great economic machine of modern commerce and business.

2:6.4 In other words,

When the struggle for efficiency brings about a state of high nervous tension it defeats its own aim (*SM* 180).

when modern efficiency reaches a certain point of high tension, it begins the inevitable defeat of its own object and aim,

as well as to become responsible for overworking, breaking down, and finally wrecking the human factor of the modern complicated economic and industrial mechanism.

TENSION OF DEFINITE DREADS

FEAR, in one form or another, is responsible for a great deal of nervous tension.

2:7.1 Some folks suffer from perpetual high tension because they are the victims of perpetual fear.

Sometimes they are afraid of some definite thing,

It is at the bottom of our worries, anxieties, and struggles: the fear of being sick,

like a disease.

of being poor, of being slighted socially, of failing to make good in our work (*SM* 181).

I have a patient at the present time whose life is well-nigh wrecked because of germ phobia. Every time she has a visitor she goes around with a rag saturated in bichloride of mercury, washing off the door knobs and furniture. She will not use fruits or vegetables unless they are in original boxes, packed on the farm. She will not touch an orange unless she takes it out of the box herself, and she must open the box—the maid must not be allowed to touch these oranges, only her own hands can touch them, and then she must wash and scrub her hands like a surgeon preparing to perform a major operation, before she will deign to open the box of oranges.

2:7.2 In another case, a woman gets the notion in her head that she can't leave the house alone, or that she must not be left alone in the house after dark.

[*Note:* Sadler described several fears and phobias in Chap. 8 (“Crystalized Fear and Definite Dreads”) of *Worry and Nervousness*.]

It would indeed be a long catalog if we undertook to mention all these fears and phobias that are responsible for much of our nervous high tension.

The cure for this sort of thing is not to be found in physical treatment nor in taking medicine.

2:7.3 Now the cure of this sort of thing is not to be found in physical treatment, or in the taking of any known medicine.

It is to be found in your ability

It is to be found in the ability

to sit down and talk with yourself,

to reason with yourself,

to reason with yourself,

and so to put an end to your bondage of fear.

to put an end to this bondage of fear

with its associated high tension,

You must learn to talk plainly to yourself. Tell yourself what to do—and then

and then, after having told yourself what to do,

SOURCE

see that you do it.
There will be ups and downs, of course;
but in a few weeks, or a few months,
fear and its associated high tension
can at least be partially overcome (*SM* 181).

[contd] It is surprising how many people cherish *superstitious* fears.

A woman told me recently that

she always takes the precaution of spitting when she sees a black cat!

She is an intelligent woman too (*SM* 181).

[contd] Try having a dinner party of thirteen, if you doubt that people are superstitious. Perhaps you yourself refuse to start on a journey on Friday the thirteenth;

II: AMERICANITIS

follow yourself up
and see that you do it.
There will be ups and downs, of course,
but it is only a matter of a few weeks or at most a few months
until the tension that results from these sorts of fears and phobias
can be wholly or partially cured.

SUPERSTITION

2:8.1 It is surprising the amount of superstition that still pervades the minds of many men and women.

I recently talked with an intelligent woman

who felt that dire consequences would result in her life if she failed to spit promptly upon seeing a black cat.

In fact, she told me of frequently tearing a veil off her face in order to be able to expectorate before the cat passed out of sight.

Friday the thirteenth is still all but a national hoodoo

notwithstanding the fact that Old Glory has thirteen stripes and is the luckiest banner that ever floated over a free people.

SOURCE

perhaps you won't walk under a ladder,

or are careful to see the new moon over your right shoulder, or have some other pet omen of good luck or bad luck (*SM* 181).

VIII: SUPERSTITION AS RELATED TO HEALTH AND DISEASE (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 78)

EXAMPLES OF ANCIENT MEDICAL SUPERSTITION (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 80)

[O]ne can scarcely help recognizing numerous modern counterparts in the notion of planting potatoes in the light of the moon,

wearing charms about the neck, carrying a rabbit's foot,

and many other superstitious practices in vogue even at the present time (*PF&F* 81).

II: AMERICANITIS

2:8.2 Intelligent people still refuse to sit down with thirteen at the table

and whether it is walking under a ladder as an omen of bad luck

or a horseshoe as a token of good luck,

wherever we make inquiry we find the roots of superstition.

Some farmers still plant potatoes by the light of the moon,

and the superstitious darky clings to his rabbit foot.

Even in medicine superstition still exists—I mean in the minds of the people as regards health and disease. Not only in matters of faith cure and mind cure but in such contrivances as electric belts, porous plasters,¹ and the Abrams treatment,² superstition still rears its head and people are willing to spend valuable time and their good money in wooing health by such ridiculous and preposterous methods.

SOCIAL RIVALRY

“STOP A MINUTE!” (*The American Magazine*, April 1925)

Countless women, and even a good many men, are kept at high tension by their social ambitions (*SM* 182).

One of my patients,

a woman of splendid physique, good education,

and usually of good sense,

married into the reigning social set in her town.

She thought it was her duty to keep up with the procession;

but after three years of the constant strain she had a nervous collapse which almost finished her (*SM* 182).

2:9.1 The whirl of society with its numerous functions, rivalries, parties, dances and late hours is a contributing factor, first to high tension,

and then, when carried a little farther, these things become responsible for a large number of nervous breakdowns.

2:9.2 Mrs. C.

was only 36 years of age,

a woman of splendid physique, good education,

and ordinarily possessed of a fair amount of common sense,

but she was so unfortunate as to

marry into a reigning social set

and it became her duty, so she thought, to keep up with the procession.

Now, this woman was the daughter of nervous parents. She had all but broken down when in college,

and it only required three years of the social whirl of a big city to just about finish her.

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

The stress and strain, the eternal tension, the never-ending preparation, the constant anxiety about this thing and that—well, all of these things put together brought about a nervous collapse. For more than eighteen months we were able to tell her what was coming, but she just couldn't stop. At least, that was her feeling about it, and so she drove on until the collapse came.

[contd] This woman had inherited a nervous temperament. So had her sister.

2:9.3 She had a sister that did the same with her work at college.

She got so terribly wrought up over the mid-winter examinations, a few years back,

They should have realized this. But they did not; and one had this collapse because of her social ambition, while the other broke down in college

that she simply went to pieces, blew up;

and had to go to bed for three months (*SM* 182).

went to bed and didn't get up for twelve weeks.

Breakdowns of this sort are the net result of continuous high tension. Following a period of fretting, fussing and anxiety, a large number of these people with hereditary nervous predisposition are going to break down. Now, the remedy for all this sort of thing is a bit of common sense. Some people must recognize that they are not designed by Nature to speed up beyond the average pace of humanity. Folks with this sort of nervous tendency must know that protracted tension means a blow-up eventually.

2:9.4 Look yourself over. Take stock.

Look at your pressure gauge.

Glance at the pressure gauge.

SOURCE

Don't allow yourself to go to the point where your "boilers" are bound to blow up!

Stop in time. Let go. Slow down. Ease up.

Let the other fellow pass you.

Let *him* reap the consequences of high tension and overanxiety.

Let *him* enjoy the luxuries of a nervous breakdown, while you regain your self-control, your health, and your happiness (*SM* 183).

In many cases of nervous tension the explanation is found in family troubles. Not long ago, a man came to me with high blood pressure, insomnia, indigestion,

and various other miseries—

all due to domestic worry.

II: AMERICANITIS

Don't allow this thing to go on to the point where you are going to blow up the boilers.

Stop in time. Let go. Slow down. Ease up.

Let the other fellow pass you;

let him reap the consequences of high tension and over-anxiety.

Let your neighbor enjoy the luxuries of a nervous breakdown while you regain your self-control

and avoid the evil consequences of this senseless rivalry and useless stress and strain.

FAMILY TROUBLES

2:10.1 Not long ago a middle-aged man consulted us who had high blood pressure, nervous tension, insomnia, indigestion

and numerous other minor miseries.

Examination revealed that he was organically sound. What was the explanation of his apparent disease and actual suffering?

There was but one answer—family trouble.

Investigation revealed that this fellow was slowly but surely undermining his health as the result of worry, anxiety and sorrow associated with his domestic difficulties.

SOURCE

I have known dozens of similar cases: men who collapsed under the double strain of business and of unhappy family life (*SM* 182).

II: AMERICANITIS

It was a case where they just did not seem to know how to get along. Everything that the one did got on the nerves of the other, and it must be very plain to every one that when a man is a victim of this sort of worry, when tension is the result of this sort of thing, whether it be

family trouble on the one hand or business worries and financial difficulties on the other,

if the cause of the difficulty cannot be removed or improved, or if the individual suffering from high tension can't master the art of adjustment and compromise—all the medical skill in the world and all the theories of mental medicine will be of no avail.

They will move swiftly on toward the final "bust-up" unless they can either remove the cause of their troubles or learn how to react less intensely to the things that worry them.

2:10.2 The tension of anxiety, worry and apprehension is a very real thing and it constitutes a very considerable factor in the production of the general state of mind and nerves which we call Americanitis. In other words, the mental state is a real factor in the production of our modern high tension.

A MISTAKEN DIAGNOSIS

NOW I want to give you a word of caution. The first thing to be done, in any case of high tension, is to find out whether there is some *definite physical disease*. One patient came to me, apparently suffering from “nerves.”

2:11.1 Not long ago a young man came to see me who had been told by several physicians, so he said, that he was a victim of “chronic nervousness.”

Indeed, he seemed highly nervous. His blood pressure was up a little. He was restless, more or less sleepless. He complained of an almost constant, nagging, dull headache. He was 27 years of age. His family were all nervous—parents, brothers and sisters and it seemed a very simple matter to make the diagnosis. He was very tense.

2:11.2 Now, in all these matters of high tension it is well to know definitely that we are not suffering from a real physical disorder,

But the real cause of his condition was a well-advanced case of Bright’s disease (*SM* 182).

as investigation showed that this man was suffering from a well-advanced case of Bright’s disease.

His case was so apparently one of tension and nerves that several years had gone by and none of the physicians he consulted ever took the trouble to make a urine analysis. It is highly probable that his kidney trouble originated with the “flu.” He was severely afflicted with this plague when it passed over the country a few years back, and it is probable that he got up out of bed before he was well, went about his business too soon, and the result of it all was that his kidneys were left crippled.

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

2:11.3 Let us make sure in case we are victims of high tension that it is not the result of any underlying physical disorder, and then let us go about the matter of the conquest of nerves and the acquirement of self-control in a thorough-going and businesslike manner.

Another patient—

2:11.4 Not long ago I saw a very pitiful case;

a woman this time—

an unmarried woman

told me that she had “fighting her nerves” for years.

about 32 years of age

who had been fighting her nerves, she said, for years.

The real trouble with her was anæmia.

The poor woman was suffering from anemia.

After she had been kept in bed a while, properly fed, and iron injected, she didn't have much of a battle with her nerves (*SM* 182).

She did not have much of a battle to fight with her nerves after she had been put in bed for a while, properly fed, iron injected—

when her blood had come up to normal she found it a very easy matter to control her nerves.

[contd] It is a mistake to treat a purely nervous condition as a definite organic disease.

It is a bad thing to treat as a nervous trouble a real physical disorder,

But it is far worse to overlook the presence of a real disease and assumed that a person has only a case of “chronic imaginitis” (*SM* 182).

and still worse to treat as a real disease a pure case of chronic imaginitis.

THE NERVOUS CHILD

2:12.1 Mary was a little girl not quite four years of age when, because of her nervous tantrums, her parents sought medical advice. It was evident that the child was going to grow up a highly neurotic, unstable individual, and it seemed doubtful whether anything could be done for such a nervous child, the offspring of such inordinately nervous parents. Notwithstanding the discouraging outlook, a program was made. This little girl was put on a thoroughgoing régime that was simple and yet withal regular and rigid. In brief, all practices that would tend to spoil a child or contribute to lack of self-control were stopped. The little girl was made to eat, drink, sleep and play at regular hours, and within three months this child had discontinued her tantrums, began to take on flesh, digestive troubles disappeared—and in place of an irritable, whining, nervous child, we had a well-nourished little girl with a surprisingly well-controlled nervous system. In fact, the child presented in every way a perfect picture of health, and showed no evidence whatever of her former nervous tendencies. Of course, if the child were startled, it was easy to elicit the fact that she was possessed of subconscious fears and of an easily excited nervous system, but in general, she gave every appearance of being a thoroughly normal, splendidly controlled child.

2:12.2 While you cannot uproot hereditary tendencies completely, you can, by training, largely overcome their undesirable effects.

You can bring about such control on the part of a young child as to enable it to grow up and present every appearance of being a fairly normal individual. The proper place to treat hereditary nervous tension is in the cradle. The real work of overcoming and mastering this tendency to nervousness should be accomplished before a child is 8 or 10 years of age.

HIGH TENSION AND ADOLESCENCE

2:13.1 Particularly dangerous is the practice of allowing adolescent youths, boys and girls from fourteen to eighteen, to over-tax their nerves, to follow one continuous round of late parties, unnatural excitement, and overstimulated entertainment. We deplore the practice of allowing the rising generation to remain up late at night so many nights a week. It is all a part of the seed sowing which is going to contribute to more and more of this Americanitis high-tension tendency in the next generation. It is this sort of life in the early teens that leads to that high tension which makes it impossible for the average American to have an automobile collision without indulging in a hasty flow of words. Modern high tension is well shown, not only by the speed at which the average motorist is wont to drive his car, but is also shown in the case of a little accident, how with hasty words each driver seeks to lay the blame upon the other. How seldom we witness calm behavior and controlled speech following an automobile accident.

SOURCE

[*Note:* This section is similar in theme to the section, “The Folly of Making Threats,” which appeared in Chap. 36 (“The Power of Positive Suggestion”) in the Sadlers’ 1916 book, *The Mother and Her Child*.]

[*Compare:* Personally, we have found it to be a good plan not to be too arbitrary with the little folks, like putting him on a chair and saying, “You must sit there one hour by the clock” (*The Mother and Her Child* 320).]

II: AMERICANITIS

2:13.2 **Parental threats.**—On the other hand, we see this tension in the case of parents, in their efforts to bring up their children. How often we foolishly and in haste threaten children with some sort of punishment and then have to go through with it in order to uphold the dignity of parental authority! One nervous, high-tensioned mother threatened her daughter to shut her up in the closet if she did a certain thing. The child, of course, promptly disobeyed her mother and the mother had to make good, so she shut her up in the closet. The child became very quiet after a brief period of storm and strife, and the mother was exercised to know just what was going on, so she went to the closet door and inquired: “Jennie, what are you doing?” This was the reply the mother received: “I pit on yo’ dress, I pit on yo’ coat, I pit on yo’ shoes, and I’s e just waiting for more pit.”

2:13.3 It is all right to provide penalties and punishment for juvenile disobedience, but let us do it thoughtfully, in our sane moments; let us not do these things in haste and anger.

It is not always a good plan to tell the child you are going to make him sit in a chair for an hour if he does some trifling thing,

for you might want to go out yourself before the hour and you can’t be sure he will carry out your orders unless you stay home and watch him.

Tension produces haste; haste makes waste; and the result of waste leads to regret, sorrow and discouragement, and these in turn contribute to produce that state of mind that leads to secondary tension and thus the vicious circle goes on, until we break into it and begin to exercise rational control.

2:13.4 Think of the many accidents, the blunders, the inefficiency that come from high tension, overwrought nerves, increased excitability and chronic anxiety. True, high tension favors speed. High pressure increases the output of either our mental efforts or physical labor, but sometimes the price is not worth paying. There is a certain point beyond which anxiety, alertness and high pressure serve to defeat their own purpose. There is a limit to the capacity of the human being to stand stress, strain and high tension.

2:13.5 **The speeding-up craze.—**

Five years ago, a young man decided that he was going to get “to the top,” and that he would do it in record time.

Five years ago, a young business man started in to get at the top.

He decided to speed up, to stay on the job early and late to get ahead of the procession,

All went well, apparently, for three years.

and all went well for three years and a half.

He worked early and late, winning one promotion after another, in rapid succession (*SM* 180-81).

He secured one promotion after another,

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

but he failed to reckon with the fact that he was naturally of a nervous temperament, and so his high ambitions were all but defeated a year ago when his cherished hopes of receiving a certain position were disappointed.

[contd] Then—something seemed to go wrong with his progress! He was growing more and more nervous and jumpy.

He had begun to get nervous, irritable, jumpy.

He didn't get along well with his business associates.

He no longer got along so well with his business associates.

His judgment wasn't so good as it had been.

His judgment began to be defective.

He found it hard to concentrate, to make decisions.

He began to find it difficult to make up his mind.

His concentration was lessened,

Even his memory was affected (*SM* 181).

even his memory was a bit affected;

[contd] Finally, when he failed to be given a certain position which he had hoped to get, he went to pieces; and now he is slowly recovering from a siege of nervous exhaustion.

and now he is just recovering from a real siege of nervous exhaustion,

genuine brain fag.

His sufferings have been terrible, his disappointment keen, and he looks ahead even now to

It will possibly be another year before he will be anything like his old self (*SM* 181).

possibly another year before he can get back in the harness and be anything like his old self.

2:13.6 This whole experience has left a real scar in his mind. It will be hard for him to regain his old-time self-confidence, to indulge his former high ambitions and to experience the keen delight he used to have in the doing of his work, but he will come back all right. He simply exceeded the speed limit. He broke down and instead of getting ahead of the game he lost out for the time being. In fact,

[contd] By driving himself too hard and too constantly he has set himself back at least five years (*SM* 181).

he set himself back in the neighborhood of three years as the result of his undue haste;

and this case only goes to show that sometimes in the struggle of life we will get there just as soon, or sooner, if we don't drive quite so hard, if we don't travel quite so fast.

HIGH-TENSION COURTSHIP

2:14.1 **I understand in these days that** young people, even when courting, don't know what it is, as a rule, to

As for the modern young man, he really needs our sympathy. I should think he would gladly welcome a return to the old-fashioned courtship. Instead of sitting down in the parlor and getting acquainted,

sit down for a quiet evening in the parlor to visit and get acquainted with each other—

young folks nowadays are madly rushing about in quest of excitement.

they must sally forth in quest of thrills.

I should think the young man of limited income would be in favor of a return, in some degree at least, of the old-fashioned method in which he would spend an evening with his sweetie

SOURCE

And the young man has to dig up the price!
(SM 182)

[contd] All joking aside,

this feverish pace

breeds a craving for drugs; first, for the stimulation they give,

and then for their apparent, but false, effect of relaxation (SM 182).

II: AMERICANITIS

and not have it cost him five or six dollars for show tickets, ice cream sodas, taxicabs, etc.

But laying all joking aside,

this hectic, feverish pace

that old as well as young are living has a tendency to

breed the habit of looking to drugs for stimulation at one time,

and for relaxation and rest at another.

Whereas a more normal, sane mode of life would not only be productive of just as much happiness, but would help us to avoid that unnatural state of nervous tension which in and of itself is an inducement to resort to toxic drugs, which in the end only serve to produce more tension, which results in a craving for more drugs and so on the vicious circle goes.

THE THING AT THE BOTTOM

[Note: This paragraph is very similar to one in the section on fear in Part III ("Joy Killers") of Sadler's 1926 book, *How You Can Keep Happy*. See p. 181.]

2:15.1 We must remember that in the case of primitive man as he roamed the primeval forest, fear and flight as associated instinct and emotion served a valuable purpose. But with the advance of civilization, many of the causes of our ancestral anxiety have been more or less controlled, removed, so that to-day fear does not serve the same biologic purpose that it did in former generations. It has therefore become attached to other phases of our mental life, social existence, and economic struggles;

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

and we have to watch out for its nefarious influence when it becomes attached to these newer phases of human activity. There is great danger that it may become a real disease-producer, that it may come to serve the purpose of breaking down our self-confidence and courage.

2:15.2 It is well in this connection to bear in mind that it is of great value to train children early in life, not only to understand their own emotions, to avoid the blighting influence of chronic fear, but also to have them grow up with the proper appreciation of the difference between

[Now, each day's work, in your own mind, must be divided into essentials and non-essentials,

the essentials and non-essentials of daily life.

We must learn, if we are going to combat this tendency to modern high tension, to do each day the more important things

and you must allow yourself no worry if you happen to neglect some of the non-essentials—that is, if emergencies arise to crowd them out, let them die with the passing of the day (*Worry and Nervousness* [1923 ed.], pp. 569-70).]

and to let a lot of non-essentials die with the passing day,

giving them no further thought, and fully understanding that life will be just as long, as happy, as successful if we don't get a lot of these trifles attended to as the days go by.

2:15.3 It is a great thing in this effort to reduce modern high tension to have

[*Note*: The main source for Chap. 41 of *Worry and Nervousness* (1923 ed.) was D. Macdougall King's *Nerves and Personal Power* (1922). In the preface, King wrote: "The author has sought to be as little disturbing as possible to those who have a working philosophy of life" (K xiii).]

a settled philosophy of life, to have a practical working plan for each day's living.

Too many people are victims of high tension because they are all the time up in the air. They have little or nothing in their life really settled. They do not have a practical working program.

2:15.4 One reason we can't stand this sudden mania for speed is that the expansion of the human mind has far outrun the evolution of the physical nervous system. Adaptation and natural selection have not had sufficient time to produce a race that is nervously suited to the stress and strain of the high-tension demands of modern civilization with its intensified social and economic organization.

2:15.5 **Early training and self-control.**—What can we do about it? Since we can't select our ancestors the best thing we can do to fight this high-tension tendency is to train the child in self-control and moderation of thought and action, and we must begin in the cradle. If youths are allowed to grow up, indulging every whim, appetite and passion, they will find it difficult to control themselves when they are older.

2:15.6 This is perhaps the greatest good that comes from teaching children not to eat between meals—to use hunger as a means of discipline. Children should be taught some self-control in this respect, how to curb the appetite. Don't let them all grow up like Johnny, who, at his grandmother's, had already, following a sumptuous meal, eaten three large pieces of cake, when grandma looked over at the lad and remarked: "Johnny, if you eat another piece of cake you will bust." Johnny looked thoughtfully at the cake, and then eyeing his grandmother, said: "Pass the cake, grandma, and get out of the way."

2:15.7 The real work of preventing high tension must be carried out early in life. This is the time, when the children are young, to teach them relaxation, how to lie down, like in their afternoon nap, and completely let go, and then, as we grow up, let us not forget this art of muscle relaxation. It is this muscle tension that breaks down the health of so many people and prevents their going to sleep even when they go to bed at night.

2:15.8 **Expressing the emotions.**— Don't try to change a nervous temperament. Learn how to control it, how to live with it, how to provide for normal emotional elimination and healthful self-expression. Remember that "the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin," but these nervous folks can learn to live so as to prevent blow-ups and breakdowns.

2:15.9 In our effort to combat high tension, let us remember that outdoor play, wholesome, natural relaxation, diverting recreation, interesting sports and games are much more valuable in most cases than are the more exciting indoor forms of entertainment, like thrilling movies, exciting dramas, etc. We must not overlook the fact that there is more or less harm from the standpoint of the nerves in having the emotions constantly aroused and excited without providing in any way for an opportunity to exercise or indulge them. It is not the most desirable thing to go to an exciting play or moving picture where every human emotion is stirred from the very depth, and have to sit there quietly.

There is nothing you can do, aside, perhaps, from indulging in a little applause, and we know from a health standpoint that it is not best to have too much of this thing, at least, it is not in the case of nervous youths and highly excitable adults. It is better if we can have an opportunity now and then to exercise and indulge in some sort of emotional spree when we have our feelings thus deeply and profoundly aroused.

2:15.10 **The modern sex craze**, with its tendency in literature and on the stage, and even in the Freudian doctrines of the practice of mental medicine—I say, this undue tendency to emphasize and specialize in sex thinking and sex feeling becomes a factor of no inconsiderable importance in this modern high-tension tendency, in that it likewise commits the error, through constant reiteration, of arousing sex feelings while the demands of convention and ethics do not permit of their ready gratification. There is a distinct harm in the over-arousal of emotions when they are denied the opportunity for normal and reasonable satisfaction.

THE CONQUEST OF NERVOUS TENSION

I HAVE found that this decision to adopt a reasonable program is a very great help to nervous patients, both men and women. For example, one woman was so nervous

that she thought she was going insane.

2:16.1 Mrs. D. was a woman about forty years of age who had been high strung all her life

and who had become possessed of the notion that she would have a nervous breakdown or go insane

when she passed through “the change.”

Now, in trying to help this woman out of her trouble, we had to first point out to her that “the change” was a perfectly normal thing, that it happened to every woman who reached a certain time of life; that the few trifling nervous symptoms could be easily controlled by the administration of ovarian extract from the lower animals, and that otherwise she should expect nothing out of the ordinary; and then after explaining things in this way to her, she was put upon a régime of regularity and system.

She was constantly worrying over the things she must do,

She was all the time worrying over the things that were ahead of her.

always starting one thing and dropping that to start something else (*SM* 183).

She was always starting things but never could finish them.

[contd] It was as if she were surrounded by a swarm of buzzing gadflies, which she was always trying to brush away, without ever succeeding (*SM* 183).

[contd] She was told to go about her work in her home with a notebook and pencil tied on a card fastened around her waist.

She was told to go about her work in the home with a memorandum book and pencil tied on the end of a cord which was fastened about her waist.

Every time she thought of something she ought to do, she was to jot it down in the notebook, and then go ahead with the task already started (*SM* 183).

Every time she thought of anything she should do she jotted it down in this book, meantime going straight on about the task in hand until it was finished.

[contd] If, on the way up-stairs to make the beds,

She would start upstairs

she remembered that she must answer Aunt Mary’s letter,

and remember that she had not written to Aunt Mary.

she would jot down, “Write to Aunt Mary.”

She would jot down, “Write Aunt Mary”

Then she would proceed to make the beds.

and go on about her business.

SOURCE

If, while washing the dishes, she recalled Johnny's need of new shoes,

she would write "Johnny's shoes" in the little book—

and then finish the dishes (*SM* 183).

[contd] She was given also a fairly definite program—a rough draft of how each day was to be spent.

This was a great help to her.

She learned to give precedence to essentials.

Many of us are worried and tense over things that don't matter anyway.

It is vastly important, in the cure of nervous tension, to divide things into essentials and non-essentials,

and not to worry if some or *all* of the latter are left undone (*SM* 183).

II: AMERICANITIS

While performing some other household duty, she would remember that Johnny needed a hat.

She simply jotted down, "Johnny—new hat,"

and went about her business and finished the task in hand.

In this way she overcame the tendency to flit from one thing to another, and was able to adopt as her slogan, "Do it now."³

2:16.2 This patient was also given a daily program, that is, a rough draft of how the day should be spent,⁴

when she should begin things, finish them, etc.,

and this was a great help to her.

She learned to give precedence to essentials.

How many people are worried and tense over the things that don't matter anyway.

No harm results if they are left undone,

and how wonderfully important in the cure of nervous tension to learn to divide each day's work into the essentials and non-essentials,

to do the former,

and worry not at all if some or all of the latter are left undone.

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

MENTAL MEDICINE VERSUS DRUGS

Now, what are you to do with this nervous high tension?

2:17.1 Now what are we going to do with this nervous high tension?

If you can't sleep, are you to take a sleeping powder?

When we can't sleep, take a sleeping powder?

No; except as a temporary expedient, under a doctor's

No, except only as a temporary expedient, under a doctor's orders.

When you are overwrought nervously are you to take a drug to quiet your nerves?

When we are wrought up physically shall we take a drug to quiet our nerves?

No;

No,

only in exceptional cases, when it is really necessary,

not unless the doctor prescribes it.

and then only under the doctor's advice.

And if he has prescribed it *once*, don't go on prescribing it for yourself! (*SM* 182-83)

2:17.2 When we are exhausted, and nervous prostration has come to sojourn with us, shall we take a tonic, a stimulant to buoy us up?

[contd] Do not resort to tonics, stimulants, narcotics, or drugs of any kind,

No,

not as a general rule, only in exceptional cases, and again,

except as specifically directed by your physician.

under the direction of a doctor.

Shall we resort to cocktails when we are exhausted,

If you are suffering from nervous tension,

and when the reaction of high tension plagues us?

SOURCE

II: AMERICANITIS

you cannot get health out of a pill box or a medicine bottle (SM 183).

[contd] The best way to get help is by

learning how to talk to yourself. Understand the relationship between the mind and the body.

Learn to control your actions by common sense (SM 183).

No. All these things are a snare and a delusion. You can't prevent high tension on the one hand or tone yourself up from the nervous collapse that follows it, on the other, by drugs.

You can't get health, strength and happiness out of a bottle, or a pill box.

2:17.3 When it comes to this nervous high tension,

if you are going to help yourself

you must come to understand the fundamental principles of mind over matter;

to understand the relationship between mind and body.

When we are suffering from a mental or nervous disorder you need mental medicine.

See that your physical body is in proper working order and then *learn how to talk to yourself.*

Learn how to take the ups and downs of life. How many people who suffer first from nervous high tension and then from exhaustion could help themselves if they would learn how to play the game, how to be good losers! Quit magnifying your sensations. Don't be guided and directed by your feelings.

Use common sense.

SOURCE

[*Note*: A frequent exhortation of Sadler's, which he started using in *The Science of Living* (1910).]

II: AMERICANITIS

Make up your mind to master the art of living with yourself as you are and the world as it is; and in all these matters that pertain to the nervous system, employ common sense, mental medicine, do not make the fatal mistake of resorting to the use of drugs.

2:17.4 Again, I want to caution the reader against any tendency to pick out some one or two habits or practices which I have enumerated as possible causes of Americanitis and falling into the error of blaming these special influences for all of our modern high tension. Let us consider these things altogether and not make the mistake of picking some one habit—like coffee drinking, tobacco using, or even alcohol—and holding up this isolated practice as the chief cause of modern high tension. Let us avoid extreme positions and take a broad, common-sense view of this whole question. We want to face all the facts—know all the causes of Americanitis—but we do not want to attach too much importance to any one possible cause.

1. *Compare*: Electric belts, electric pads for the shoes, porous plasters, flannel jackets, chamois vests and numerous other contraptions come into this category of appliance quackery (Harry E. Mock, B.S., M.D., F.A.C.S., *Industrial Medicine and Surgery* [1919], p. 398).

2. Sadler might have read the article in the May 1924 issue of *The Illinois Medical Journal* entitled “United States Judge Exonerates Doctor of Fraud for the Treatment of Patient by the Abrams [*i.e.* electronic] Method.” In *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* (1912), Sadler cited Abrams approvingly:

Years ago, Doctor Abrams called attention to the fact that the “blues” were due to congestion of blood in the abdominal vessels associated with the liver (p. 383).

3. In his 1923 book, *What a Salesman Should Know About His Health*, Sadler wrote:

I would like, at the very beginning, to suggest to you salesmen, what I so often suggest to my patients, particularly the business men—that you find a good efficiency motto, adopt a good working slogan. For example, for many years I have lived by a motto, worked by a slogan; it is “DO IT NOW” (p. 12).

4. Sadler lifted the idea of creating a chart of daily activities from D. Macdougall King’s 1922 book, *Nerves and Personal Power*. He used this book when writing the chapter “The Control of Reaction,” which appeared in the 1923 edition of *Worry and Nervousness*. See my parallel chart for that chapter.