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How well adjusted are You ?

Over the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi was the inscription: "Know Thyself". In this precept the ancients saw the process or law through which all success and happiness are attained.

To "know yourself" keep in mind that life is a continuing struggle between two basic drives. All of us know the urge to live, the instinct of self-preservation which is behind almost everything we plan and do. We should remember that the opposite impulse, self-destruction, is also part of our equipment and that failures and disappointments belong to the changing fortunes of every man and woman. Among the wise men of India there is the legend that when God was equipping man for his life journey, the attending angel was about to add the gift of contentment and complete satisfaction. The Infinite Mind stayed the angel's hand. "No", He said. "If you give him that, you will rob him forever of the joy of self-discovery".

The mentally healthy man accepts temporary defeats as inevitable experiences on the path to success. He does not believe that a person is a helpless puppet driven by subconscious instinctive desires and forces. He knows that the conscious mind controls and determines the content of the subconscious, that each of us selects its own goal, that no one, in the words of Tenneson, "walks with aimless feet". There are certain characteristic attitudes which, to a reasonable degree, are found in any normal, mentally healthy person; he is able to deal with the demands of life. He does this by attacking problems as they arise. He knows that the problems of tomorrow cannot be solved by worrying about them today. This is not to say that he doesn't try to avoid problems before they arise — there is a vast difference between planning and worrying; problems are never solved by daydreaming or by running away. He challenges each new obstacle he meets, gives all he has to overcoming it, then is satisfied when he has done his best.

The well-adjusted man plans for the future. He attempts to mould it to his own size. He does not know what will happen any more than anybody else does, but he does not fear the unknown. He knows that change is part of life and he welcomes it. By planning for the future he can make his own destiny. Many people get nowhere simply because they do not know where to go. The well-adjusted man accepts responsibility for making his own decisions. When he makes a mistake, he acknowledges it. But instead of crying over it he resolves never to make the same error again. He profits by his mistakes.

In short, the mentally healthy person does whatever he undertakes to the best of his ability. If the result is not perfect, he doesn't fret but tries to do better next time. He tries for goals he thinks he can achieve through his own abilities; he doesn't ask for the moon. He enjoys life.

(Condensed from an essay by John K. Williams)

—W.R.